

# Editorial Foreward

*The Politics of Terror.* Anyone with a television set knows about political terror. Its scenes add suspense to drama and drama to news, while proffering the simplicity of pure evil as an analgesic for complexity. Terror obviously has its political uses, too, and three articles in this issue consider what those are. They look from different perspectives at quite different forms of political terror, working from the scholarly literatures of sociology, anthropology, and history to arrive in each case at some striking conclusions; political terror is rarely what it seems to be. Keeping the horror of torture, rape, and murder relentlessly in view, Timothy Wickham-Crowley nevertheless finds that the use of terror against rural populations is not always the same nor even inevitable in the guerrilla wars of Central and South America. From his comparison of six countries, he constructs a model of the intersecting circumstances likely to produce policies of terror, noting the tragedy of its continued relevance despite grim evidence that its effects are often counterproductive. (On that, other articles in *CSSH* concur, see especially Taussig in 26:3; Smith, 26:2; Handy, 30:4; Kincaid, 29:3; and Moreno, 12:2.) There are, of course, other ways of looking at political terrorism and other outcomes (compare Katz in 24:3; Melson, 24:3; and Price, 19:1). William Douglass and Joseba Zulaika begin their article with some telling warnings against instrumentalist approaches and facile assumptions. As their study of the Basque nationalist movement (see also Zirakzadeh, 31:2; and Lincoln, 27:2) demonstrates, terrorism has its romantic appeal and sometimes its own traditions—the unpredictability and potency for renewal of ritual sacrifice. That romantic appeal can also be misleading, as Nathan Brown finds in the case of nineteenth-century Egypt's rather anti-social bandits. Not only were they not the primitive rebels of historical lore (note the discussions of Blok and Hobsbawm, 14:4), but the threat they supposedly represented was largely the invention of state makers who found it useful to label resistance a wave of banditry justifying stern measures (and see Cole, 31:1, on popular resistance in Egypt). In a sense the discussion has come full circle, with political terrorism nurtured in the alienated structures that denounce it.

*Power and Popular Culture.* Because power can be expressed in subtler ways, lines of force concealed in culture need special means to make them visible, like iron filings around a magnet. Vicente Rafael considers the portraits of Imelda Marcos and constructs a remarkable mosaic of his own with which to interpret them (Borneman, 30:1; Lanoue and Korovkin, 30:4; Van Young, 28:3; Lincoln, 25:1; Freitag, 22:4; Press, 19:2; and Appel, 13:4, also probe popular symbols). It shows a myth of destiny and fate intertwined with popular attitudes and given the appeal of commercial pornography. By playing upon the

passivity encouraged by such spectacles, these devices help mask corruption and dangle the promise of patronage (on patronage, see Eisenstadt and Roniger, 22:1; Kaufman, 16:3). Rafael exposes a political system by following the paths to power, where people and rulers, sex and politics intersect in propaganda, grand gestures, and those audacious portraits. Sex and status situate ordinary lives as well, causing tensions frequently expressed, Cheryl Martin states, in popular speech. (For other studies of popular language, see Ewald, 30:2; Rafael, 29:2; Felstiner, 25:1; White, 24:2; and Vovelle, 22:4.) She uses the slander of colonial Mexico, palely preserved in legal archives, to find the outline of shifting ethnic and class relations in those angry and often touching assertions of dignity in a frontier society (note Chance and Taylor, 19:4; and the discussion among Grubessich, McCaa, Schwartz, Seed, and Rust, 21:3 and 25:4). The language of the street shocks with the shock of recognition.

*The Culture of Social Organizations.* Sexuality is also central to Peter McDonough's discussion of the Jesuits. To see the connection, he argues, between their views of gender and their policies (institutional and political), social scientists need first to take seriously the interior life of social institutions. (Compare Hunter, 29:2, and Bolle, 12:3; on other Catholic responses to social challenges, see Burns, 30:2; Taylor, 27:4; Shapiro, 23:1; and Levine, 20:4.) John Eidson, who similarly seeks to understand small-scale social organizations (the clubs of a German town) and to do so by observing them within their own context (compare Linke, 32:1, and local associations elsewhere: Clawson, 27:4; Fewsmith, 25:4; Hamilton, 21:3; Jongkind, 16:4; Willmott, 11:3; and Freedman, 3:1), also feels that he must first overcome academic prejudices, in this case primarily those of historians. Each observes new wine in old bottles, effervescent ideas among the Jesuits and mobile groups in the clubs. Both have important things to say about institutional adaptation and more generally about theories of change. Eidson's demonstration that local structures have a life of their own, independent of models of modernization or resistance, and McDonough's that religious organizations and ideas have a significance, independent of their political role, conclude by urging scholars to look at culture a little less ideologically and a lot more closely.

*CSSH Discussion.* On a larger scale, how history is constituted and the Other perceived are crucial issues. An essay in this issue uses a different optic and the latest surgical tools to make an important addition to a continuing discussion. With Foucauldian perception, Gyan Prakash tracks historiographical traditions, Orientalist especially when they meant not to be. His sensitive deconstruction speaks not just to scholars of India nor merely to historians but to all who can imagine the reconstruction of social knowledge that he bravely heralds.