

Editorial Foreword

BUREAUCRATIC ANXIETIES One of the great mysteries of social theory is how bureaucracy ever came to be associated with rationality. Available evidence easily leads to other conclusions. The endless paperwork, the unrealistic exactitude of rules, the heartless procedures—all can produce exasperation, and each is as likely to undermine efficiency and fairness as to guarantee them. The better a bureaucracy operates, the better the rule breakers who will set up residence in it. Corruption is part of bureaucracy, as are the glaring exceptions and misapplications that cause us to curse, reform, and occasionally demolish the system. Yet nothing is more vexing than the realization that a malfunctioning bureaucracy can be fixed only through the crafting of new bureaucratic forms. Three of our authors take us on a global tour of bureaucracies in flux. In each case, administrators and those they administer are caught in a tangle of interests that requires working with and around existing rules. The outcome is seldom what anyone expected.

Bhavani Raman considers the bureaucratic anxieties fueled by pervasive mistrust between officials of the British East India Company in Madras, its native functionaries, and local populations. The English taste for scrupulous recordkeeping, and their insistence on signatures, opened the door to innovative techniques of forgery and faked papers, which led in turn to predictable colonial discourses about native dishonesty. Increasingly, Company officials had to rely on oaths and other forms of attestation, a system of exceptions that, Raman argues, only relocated and compounded the potential for graft within the system. In the end, not formalized writing, sworn testimony, or an Englishman's acquired knowledge of Indian habits could weed out the diverse forms of corruption that had become endemic to British administration. Most are leading a healthy postcolonial life in India and Pakistan today.

Keith Shear explores another colonial setting, again British, but the generator of bureaucratic tension in South Africa in the early twentieth century was the desire to maintain white supremacy. Administration of the country's majority black population would have been easier, and more effective, if more blacks had been brought into the colonial bureaucracies. Shear looks specifically at police forces, which relied heavily on whites even though this meant less familiarity with local populations, poorer intelligence, and limited ability to investigate crimes. These trade-offs were acceptable because they reduced the need to interact with blacks as "chiefs," a patriarchal model of authority that many white officials found demeaning because, Shear contends, it empowered blacks. To enhance their own vision of modern, rational

bureaucracy, South African authorities were willing to sacrifice administrative reach to maintain the edifice of white power.

Peter Gibbon and Lasse Folke Henriksen analyze a different Britain, this one decidedly postcolonial. Tracking government economic policy from the mid to late twentieth century, Gibbon and Henriksen locate the roots of neoliberalism in government attempts to redefine production standards for British goods, a move meant to improve competitiveness. Officialized in the early 1980s, the new guidelines enabled “government at a distance” by encouraging industries to develop their own audit procedures. This appeal to standards, which bureaucrats believed would increase accountability and quality, was quickly applied to social welfare reform, where it assumed the profile now associated with neoliberal governance. Ideologies of marketization and individual responsibility, Gibbon and Henriksen argue, originated in anxious attempts to create a new idiom of standards, one spoken by manufacturers and government bureaucrats alike, that would halt Britain’s industrial decline.

PARTS AND PARTITIONS The nation-state leads a double life. It proclaims the unity and equality of its citizens, and it divides them into separate jurisdictions and types. Not only are nation-states filled with minorities of diverse kinds, they are made up of distinct regions and administrative subsections; often, these smaller political fields existed long before the nation-state, and their hold on individual citizens can be as strong as any loyalty based in national belonging. One of the remarkable powers of nationalism is its capacity to channel, combine, and even create the solidarities of its constituent parts. When a state loses this capacity, parts become partitions. Interest groups and ethnoracial constituencies that once vied for control of a shared political space now commit their energies to monopolizing space and preventing movement across it. Two of our authors explore these logics of incorporation and separation, tracing the peculiar shifts that occur as one process disturbs and borrows from the other.

Alexandra Kowalski introduces us to heritage politics in France, a nation-state that is routinely portrayed as assimilationist and addicted to centralization. In fact, France has been propping up regional identities for decades, encouraging the expression of local heritage in public school curricula, architectural preservation, tourism, and support for regional scholarship. This interest in the local, Kowalski argues, is an “idiom of nationhood” that uses supposedly intimate, visceral connections to region, town, and neighborhood in order to build a more abstract, civic attachment to France as a whole, and vice versa. The process requires a constant “re-scaling” of the nation, and Kowalski details the intellectual and administrative history that have made the interaction of parts and wholes a crucial, but often overlooked, dimension of French nationalism.

Rebecca Bryant moves from parts to partition in Cyprus. Here, Greek and Turkish communities that were once intermingled have been separated by a closed border since 1974. The possibility of a return to shared nationhood is remote at best, and collective memories of the past are now cut into Greek and Turkish versions. Whereas Greeks pledge to remember the world before partition, Turks struggle to forget it. Even a shared emphasis on themes of martyrdom is expressed differently in Christian and Muslim contexts, as is a common perception of the ceasefire line as a wound. Since checkpoints were opened in 2003, Greek and Turkish Cypriots have come face-to-face with their different conceptualizations of the past, an encounter that makes reconciliation difficult. The parts no longer scale up to form the whole; the open border is producing even deeper wounds.

INTERVENING SPIRITS The human condition, for most of recorded history, has been one in which our bodies, minds, foods, dwellings, kin, and material possessions are constantly exposed to the influence of spirits. The latter range from meddling sprites to vengeful deities; they can be unseen or vividly present. But their intervention in our affairs has been a fact of life for all but the thin, dedicated, and fairly recent stratum of humanity that chooses not to believe in them. Even the resolutely secular world is suffused with spirits; our ability to confine them to private quarters, to the realm of the backward or unsophisticated, is limited and likely to be perceived as its own form of intolerance. Indeed, modern ideologies of religious freedom create new spirits of intervention as believers and non-believers struggle to set the terms, both moral and legal, on which spiritual jurisdictions will blend into earthly ones. Three of our authors explore this complex intermingling of powers in Egypt, where angel armies, the Virgin Mary, and American evangelical activists intervene in (trans)national politics for different reasons and with varying degrees of success.

Angie Heo asks how the Coptic Church inhabits secular and sacred space, how it endures through its ties to Christian saints and their relics, and how apparitions of the Virgin Mary continually recreate the church's special relationship to Egypt. If the saints intercede, the Virgin intervenes, appearing at times of national crisis to bring hope to Muslim and Christian alike. Marian apparitions can change the space of the Coptic community, prompting Muslim leaders to authorize the construction of new churches, and changes in Egyptian space (such as the loss of the Sinai to Israel in 1967) can cause Mary to appear. Heo analyzes several Marian apparitions, situating them in an economy of signs and sacraments that is much older than the Egyptian nation-state but is intimately connected to Egypt. Within this economy, which includes Muslims, the Coptic Church is a privileged site of intercession between heaven and earth. It is difficult for Copts to describe themselves simply as a persecuted Christian minority in Egypt; saintly intervention, Heo argues, reveals a more ambiguous history of belonging and exclusion.

Amira Mittermaier directs our attention from waking visions to dreams. Things that are normally invisible, or absent, can be seen in dreams. Many Egyptian Muslims believe the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and angel armies intervene in historical events in an expanded time/space discernible to us only in dreams. Mittermaier considers the nature of these interventions, dissecting dreams, relating them to political events, and exploring local traditions of dream-telling and interpretation. Moving beyond this array of standard analytics, Mittermaier ponders the consequences of letting dreams, and dream beings, intervene in our own habits of writing history. What would happen, she asks, if we took dreams more seriously? What kinds of history does dreaming create, and are these traditions as alien to secular modes of historiography as they seem? Rethinking our scholarly methods in relation to dreams, Mittermaier suggests, does not prevent us from engaging in modes of analysis we have always found useful; instead, it compels us to ask new questions about the role of imagination in social life.

Saba Mahmood takes us to Egypt for a third time, and the modes of intervention she examines are no less religious, but they are situated within a geopolitical field dominated by secular-liberal concerns. Primary among these are the rights (civil and human) of religious minorities. Western powers, Mahmood points out, have been especially eager to protect Christian minorities in Muslim societies. By intervening on behalf of Christians in Ottoman domains, European governments gradually transformed these populations from protected “People of the Book” into minorities of a modern type: insider-outsiders linked culturally and politically to the West. The Coptic Church resisted this relationship with Western powers, identifying instead with Arab/Muslim political authority and refusing to claim minority status in Egypt. Yet globally ascendant models of religious freedom are prompting some Copts to represent themselves, in the West and in Egypt, as a vulnerable Christian minority. This shift, Mahmood argues, is consistent with U.S. policies in support of religious liberty, which are heavily influenced today by evangelical Christian activists opposed to Islam. As Copts embrace this worldview, they recreate themselves as strangers in Egypt, a stance at odds with their own history and with the teachings and sacred terrain of the Coptic Church.