

## Editorial Foreword

**PAINTING POWER** The strong attraction between power and artistry can be seen in our endless attempts to reproduce the likenesses of monarchs, messiahs, elected officials, family heads, local bigwigs, and others we respect or fear. These images accumulate in diverse media, from sculpted stone to photography, but paintings (especially official, commissioned ones) are a longstanding favorite of the high and mighty. Two contributors to this issue explore how state-sanctioned portraiture sends a complex array of political messages to heirs, followers, allies, rivals, and to pictured leaders themselves. Within these visual fields, our authors suggest, alternative historiographies are possible.

**Sumathi Ramaswamy** interprets the imperial sensibility displayed in majestic portraits of the Mughal emperor Jahanghir (r. 1605–1627), who is frequently pictured holding, receiving, standing on, or resting his feet upon a terrestrial globe. The latter object was, by the seventeenth century, firmly associated with European cartographic science, and visiting Europeans often gave Jahanghir globes as gifts that would show the emperor, “The World-Seizer,” how small his share of the planet actually was. Ramaswamy argues that Jahanghir’s artists responded to these gestures by creating portraits in which terrestrial globes are used to reassert the earthly power of their Mughal patron.

**Chang-tai Hung** considers the accomplishments of artists commissioned by the Chinese Communist Party to depict revolutionary history in original oil paintings. Their work was subject to the familiar Orwellian restraints: purged leaders were painted out of portraits; works were rejected because they did not conform to party aesthetics; rigorous visual languages were devised to convey the power of the leader, Mao Zedong, and the correctness of his thought. Hung explains why oil painting was considered important by the CCP and how it diverged from propaganda painting in the Soviet Union. Hung sees in this tradition a creative, popular, and politically effective means of communicating a revolutionary message; he also contends that, despite ideological rigidity, both the revolutionary message and the oil paintings themselves were constantly evolving as power shifted within the CCP.

**RULE AND REVOLT** The basic elements of statecraft, and of the political theory it generates, are centered on problems of order, legitimacy, and the possibility of rebellion when these are lacking. Discussions of social contracts, rights, hegemony, resistance, and power from above or below are utterly

dependent on these old fixations. In an attempt to say something new about state formation, two of our essays develop comparative arguments about how political relations between elites and commoners are (re)configured by specific institutions of rule. One essay focuses on pre-modern states, the other on conspicuously modern ones, but both emphasize technologies for the containment of revolt.

**Dylan Riley** and **Manali Desai** analyze a form of political revolution that leaves existing patterns of social inequality in place by creating new political structures controlled almost exclusively by pre-existing elite classes. These conservative transformations, or “passive revolutions,” often follow in the wake of radical social revolutions that occur in other countries. They are common, but they attract far less analytical attention than hard revolt. To test conditions favoring passive revolution, Riley and Desai compare modern Italy and India, showing how national elites piggy-backed on revolutionary consciousness and established dominant political parties that monopolized the state and held intact the basic distribution of property and social power.

**Lane Fargher** and **Richard Blanton** criticize traditional models of pre-modern state formation in which despotic non-Western polities are opposed to relatively egalitarian Western polities. Using two Western states (in medieval England and Renaissance Venice) and a non-Western state (pre-contact Aztec) as test cases, Fargher and Blanton examine how rulers gathered taxes and whether a state’s revenue base was primarily “internal” (commoner labor and production) or “external” (long-distance trade, tributes, slave labor, and rents on ruler-owned lands). The states that relied heavily on internal revenues, the authors find, allowed commoners greater “voice” and placed heavier equity demands on rulers. Fargher and Blanton claim that a generalized process of strategic behavior is operating across these cases, generating structures of accountability that can produce compliance or rebellion.

**AGAINST THE BENEFITS OF TRADE** Is there a situation of capitalist market exchange in which “everybody wins?” Despite all evidence that many people lose, and must lose, the idea that certain economic schemes will bring generalized benefits, on the order of “progress,” or “development,” or “sustainability,” is probably here to stay, as is resistance to these schemes, undertaken by people who do not buy in, or are expressly cut out of the deal. Working in early modern and colonial settings, two of our contributors examine resistance to innovations in (and the presumed benefits of) British overseas trade.

**Thaddeus Sunseri** analyzes grassroots Tanzanian attempts to thwart “scientific forestry” within the larger context of Cold War global economy and anti-colonial nationalist movements. As British governmental and industrial interests created huge reserves of hardwood forests in Tanzania, dressing their actions in a rhetoric of conservation, progressive resource management,

and colonial development, Tanzanians in the newly-formed reserves lost access to living space, grazing areas, new farmlands, and religious sites. Popular dissatisfaction with the reserves, and with working conditions inside them, was channeled into support for the Tanzanian independence movement. Sunseri argues that this collision of factors led to national independence far in advance of the British timetable.

**Matthew Romaniello** catalogs the repeated failures of English merchants to sell tobacco, on their terms, to Muscovite Russians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although English traders believed a vast market for tobacco awaited them in Russia, and that trade with England would civilize backward Muscovites, they were oblivious to the depths of resistance to tobacco fostered by the Russian Orthodox Church. The latter preached a disdain for foreign customs that proved very difficult for the English to circumvent, even after Peter the Great's famous opening to the West. In this culturally based rejection of trade, Romaniello sees compelling evidence for the weakness of globalizing forces in the early modern period, when certain "worldviews" could obstruct the global flow of even the most addictive commodities.

**VERNACULAR POLITICS** The rise of vernacular languages to respectability in the "age of nations" is a trend on which influential contemporary political theory has been built, and now much of that theory is being reassessed. Not only is the role of vernaculars in the development of "imagined communities" being reconceived as itself an ideological story, but it has been obvious all along that many vernaculars, especially creoles and the languages of colonial subjects, are related to national projects in ways that cannot be summed up (yet) as "modular." Two of our contributors explore the political limits and potentials of vernaculars in early, awkward, and instructively particular contexts of nation building.

**Megan Thomas** tells of the highly politicized life led by the letter "k" in anti-colonial movements. "K" is a useful tool for asserting linguistic distinction among speakers of vernaculars that have been subjected to orthographic systems dominant in the Romance languages, where "c" and "qu" are preferred. Thomas shows how speakers, and writers, of Tagalog challenged Spanish, and the cultural dominance of Spain, by introducing the letter "k," an orthographic maneuver repeated in many Spanish, French, and Portuguese colonies. "K," Thomas argues, helped differentiate Tagalog from Spanish, but it also helped the Tagalog reformers submerge and normalize words of Spanish origin in a new, nationally distinct script.

**Patrick Eisenlohr** examines language politics in Mauritius, where a local French creole is almost universally spoken, English is the official language of governance and education, French is in wide use, and several "ancestral" languages—most of them South Asian, but also Mandarin and Arabic—are taught in public schools. In this rich stew of vernaculars, the dominance of

Mauritian creole is both a problem and a solution. It represents a kind of national unity, but, as Eisenlohr explains, it cannot be officially recognized as the shared tongue in which a Mauritian nation is imagined, largely because Mauritian nationalism gives special place to the diasporic sensibilities of its South Asian majority population, who maintain ties to places, histories, and ethno-religious traditions a standardized Mauritian creole cannot effectively encompass. Oddly enough, it is the putatively modular link between a nation and its language(s) that creates this distinctively Mauritian vernacular politics.

**CSSH DISCUSSION** Scholars of race and racism have long posed Brazil as a point of contrast to the rigidly essentialized categories of “black” and “white” that prevail in the United States. In Brazil, we are told, things are more flexible; categories looser; movement between them more fluid. For much of the last century, Brazilian scholars have been willing partners in the maintenance of this distinction, which effectively let Brazil off the racist hook, or at least implied that American-style racism was not Brazil’s problem. In his review of recent studies of racial ideologies in Brazil, **John Collins** shows how this durable set of assumptions is changing, both in the analytical approaches favored by North American scholars, and (more complexly) in the practical and political discourses they encounter in Brazil.