

## Editorial Foreword

**GOVERN BY NUMBER** Modern states count their citizens in order to govern them more effectively, yet beneath this ubiquitous justification for census-taking lie matters of identification that are not so easily explained. The census is a ritual of quantification in which citizens and government officials recognize (and misrecognize) each other as numbers and enumerators, but also as political actors who possess qualities that “count,” both within the apparatus of the state and in contexts of international comparison. This double meaning—counting as “being significant” and counting as “adding up”—drives the census. It also creates diverse situations in which states and their subjects draw different conclusions about who counts, what counting means, and why state officials are counting at all.

**Mara Loveman** explores the violent side of census politics in her account of “the war of the wasps,” a popular revolt inspired by the Brazilian government’s attempt, in 1852, to register births and deaths in preparation for a national census. Although Brazil’s imperial elite saw the census as a sign of progress and bureaucratic rationalization, the rural poor of the northeast suspected the headcount was a prelude to conscription and the enslavement of free people of color. The gulf between what counting meant to state officials and to state subjects was so vast that another census was not attempted until 1872. Loveman’s analysis of this definitional gap reveals key assumptions about what “official statistics” are and who they serve.

**Fran Markowitz** considers census-taking as an attempt to consolidate new national identities in the aftermath of violence. The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina conducted its first post-war census in 2002. Whereas Yugoslavian censuses had divided Bosnians into twenty-five categories, the most recent census used only four: Croat, Serb, Other, and a new term, “Bosniac.” Nearly three-fourths of the population emerged from the census as Bosniacs, a term which stands as the national twin of Muslim identity (much as Croat stands for Catholic, and Serb stands for Orthodox). Markowitz sets this new identity within the context of earlier census categories, arguing that the tripartite division endorsed by the state obscures hybrid identities that remain vital, even if (and even because) mixed and pan-Bosnian identifications are no longer counted, or tolerated, in ways they once were.

**DIALOGICS OF EMPIRE** After years of wondering whether subalterns can speak (and whether metropolitan political theorists can listen), scholars of post/colonialism have increasingly come to realize that imperial formations

were always dialogical, but in ways neither colonizers nor colonized were fully equipped to discern. The mutual constitution of center and periphery, of master and subject, was a struggle for control of land, people, and resources, but it was no less a contest over political language, over who would control the words, categories, and narratives used to describe empire and resist it. The ability of the ruled to shape local dialects of colonial power, in effect giving empire provincial accents, can be assessed in multiple ways, and the two papers featured in this section offer fascinating analytical contrasts.

**Julian Go** addresses recent claims that the United States, now (and again) an imperial nation, is an empire uniquely committed to democracy. This self-justifying model of “liberal exceptionalism” is easily picked apart, but Go refuses to give blanket endorsement to the reverse proposition: namely, that U.S. imperialism has never been committed to human rights or social justice, and that America’s democratic ideals have been corrupted by empire. The latter critique is ahistorical, he contends, and locates the defining attributes of imperialism within the national character of the empire builders. Using material from the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Samoa, and Guam, Go suggests that U.S. imperial policies are better understood as “provincial,” as localized responses to the “particularities” of the societies the United States ruled. American officials preached democratic reform when indigenous elites wanted it (as they did in the Philippines and Puerto Rico); they avoided it when their subject populations were thought to be “savages” or “innocents” who would only be disturbed by change (the situation in Samoa and Guam).

**Daniel P. S. Goh** engages similar material, working comparatively across U.S. rule in the Philippines and British rule in Malaya. Although he agrees that the distinctiveness of subject populations shaped colonial policy, Goh gives closer attention to the conceptual tools colonial officials used to render local peculiarities intelligible. In a process Goh calls “cultural transcription,” colonial administrators situated their subjects within universal ethnographic types (such as “medieval” or “savage”), each of which called for specific interventions and policies. These acts of transcription, Goh claims, had to be carried out before more familiar processes of “cultural translation” and “the inscription of modernity” were even possible, and key aspects of colonial policy, in both Malaya and the Philippines, evolved out of disputes between officials over which transcriptions were accurate and which best explained patterns of resistance to colonial rule.

**INTERWAR GLOBALISM** The period between the World Wars produced varieties of globalism immediately ancestral to those dominant today in the academy, the world economy, and the arena of international politics. A clear “family resemblance” links interwar globalisms to the present, but they are far enough away from us now to seem odd, endearing, or ill-founded, and they are filled with ideological surprises that are helpful in evaluating

current trends in globalization. The international “development expert” emerges clearly during this period, as do attempts to conceptualize a world after colonialism (divided into least and most developed zones). Solving world problems on behalf of humanity, a theme essential to internationalist discourse, required new forms of expertise and knowledge production in the 1920s, and these novelties both reinforced and undermined assumptions of Euro-American superiority.

**Margherita Zanasi** analyzes the mixed agendas of three agricultural experts sent to China by the League of Nations in the 1930s. British, Italian, and German by birth, these consultants represented a new, internationalized version of the “civilizing mission” that once had been the responsibility of colonial governments. Although these men worked on behalf of an organization that promised China (a “least developed” nation) the benefits of “Western modernity,” Zanasi argues that there was no unified conception of modernity on offer. German socialist, British liberal, and Italian fascist gave very different kinds of advice. Chinese officials had goals of their own; while some elements of fascist mobilization appealed to them, other aspects of the Western developmental models struck them as offensive, politically irrelevant, or ill adapted to local conditions. These tensions, carefully traced by Zanasi, continue to shape international development work today.

**Alison Bashford** examines the arcane, politically sensitive field of population studies in the interwar years, a field in which experts vied to shape policy on behalf of nations, regions, and the world. Focusing on the 1927 World Population Conference, held in Geneva, Bashford shows us that population expertise between the wars was far more diverse than contemporary historiography suggests. The scholars, politicians, and activists who convened in Geneva were especially concerned to address the spatial aspects of population policy (migration, density, colonization), and overpopulation, especially in Europe, was already a major concern. The framework was already conspicuously global, and Bashford argues that recent scholarship privileging reproductive sex as the primary concern of population policy has obscured interwar concerns over the redistribution of human populations as a key element of population control.

**COCAINE NATIONALISM** Location on the global periphery has a strange mix of consequences. The periphery is often a site of extreme exploitation and poverty, yet it is frequently portrayed (in the global center) as a zone of innovation, where desirable goods and cultural alternatives (many deemed illicit in the metropole) can be borrowed, purchased, copied, reinvented, or stolen. Location on the periphery colors the reputation of the nation-states found there, the knowledge produced there, and the commodity flows that link remote areas to more central ones. These effects are seldom more evident than in the complicated relationship between the coca leaf, cocaine production, and Peru.

**Paul Gootenberg** charts the brilliant and now largely forgotten career of Alfredo Bignon, a Peruvian chemist who did groundbreaking scientific studies of cocaine and invented an efficient, low-tech process for refining it from coca leaves. Working in the same period as Freud, whose cocaine research is decidedly *not* forgotten, Bignon knew the benefits and costs of science on the periphery. His efforts were supported by Peruvian nationalists, who saw coca as their gift to the world, but the knowledge he produced was “appropriated” by German pharmaceutical interests who had little need of a lone chemist, remotely situated, with ties to French drug companies. Although Bignon was cut out of “big cocaine,” local variants of his no-frills process for refining the drug surfaced decades later in “jungle labs,” where they were used to cook low-grade cocaine for a new global drug flow, this one illicit. His “cocaine science,” a product of the margins, is now central to the world market for cocaine.