

Editorial Foreword

It was only two decades ago that scholars across multiple disciplines announced the demise of the nation-state, both empirically as the central institutional channel of power, and heuristically as an indispensable social science variable. How premature that now seems in the light of subsequent events including the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the extension of U.S. state power to a network of clandestine torture camps; the Russian invasion and occupation of Ukraine; the recent “Brexit” vote and the rise of right-wing nationalist politics across Europe; the surge of state-based forces of cyber-espionage and warfare, and countless other examples. The essays in this issue are less about states per se than about their margins and interstices. Working from the edges and gaps, together they show how states are thoroughly unstable forms, and ever less defined in territorial terms even as renewed versions of nativism and ethnic purity appear to be on the rise. Rather, states are fluid alliances and social contracts, but also assemblages of ideas, aesthetic predispositions, imagined futures and much more, cross-cut by the visions of multiple groups of users and factions. They are always more precarious than their own dramatizations of fortified and time-tested monumentality suggest.

All the essays in this issue deal with states and nationhood in one way or another. Occasionally the state plays a role by virtue of its striking absence. One essay shows the insignificance of the state in Bosnian Sufis’ identifications and practices. Yet that study perhaps serves as an exception that proves the rule, given the prodigious work that making and maintaining such a “transregional ecumene” outside the state requires. Mostly, and most productively, we hear from states’ margins and the voices of dissidents, or through states’ mostly unseen forms of enactment like covert forces, the development of “national arts,” the regulating of normative sexualities, or the competing modes of materializing founding myths.

INTERSTICES, MARGINS, BORDERLANDS Alfred W. McCoy’s essay “Covert Netherworld” presents a comparative study of the expanded use by multiple states since World War II of clandestine espionage methods and military interventions. McCoy views this invisible underworld as central to any real understanding of how the modern world system works. Paradoxically, at least from the perspective of state secrets as exceptions, covert uses of power are standard and systematic, integral to the institutional toolkit of the world state system and employing millions of people, yet we have precious little knowledge of how these secret inter- and para-state organizations work.

McCoy aims to fill this silence, comparing examples of covert operations carried out by the Philippines within its own borders, the United States in Central America and Afghanistan, and by France in its former African colonies, and how covert statecraft works at local, national, and transnational levels. Ominously, McCoy's research points to the likely increase and expansion of covert forces in the future, and thus an increased gap between state-sanctioned violence and the publics such violence is alleged to serve.

"Europe" acquires particular significance depending from where in "Europe" one stands, or even within a given member state. Thus "Spain" and "Europe" both constitute uneven ground for the Andalusian *emigrantes* who long understood themselves to dwell on the margins of both, as analyzed by **Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar**. Andalusians' "regional nationalism" is laced with experiences of migration, suffering, and exile in northern Spain, France, Germany, and Belgium (during the Franco years), which they called "going to Europe," and then returning after 1975. Europe appears in their recollections as less a specific place than an assemblage of technologies, institutions, moral claims about individual rights, and habits of bodily comportment. Rogozen-Soltar shows how many emigrantes view themselves and Andalusia itself as now having "become European," in part through the influence of returning emigrants and their acquired skills and styles—their transformed personhood—in contradistinction to the *imigrantes* now arriving from Africa. These latter are placed into the same "internal other" slot that Andalusians once occupied vis-à-vis Europe, stereotyped as lazy, shiftless, and unreliable, especially by those returnees who mostly see themselves and Andalusia as now converted to modernity. Yet to the degree that being part of Europe means receiving migrants instead of sending them, the current exile of young Andalusians augurs the prospect of being cast "out of Europe" once again.

The contribution from **David Henig** takes us into the worlds of the Sufi dervish brotherhoods (*tarikats*) that crisscross the former Yugoslavia, with extensions all across the fringes of the old Ottoman Empire. The Sufis' transregional and transnational network pays little attention to state borders, living rather according to what they call the "scent of Bosphorus," which names a collective affinity based less on citizenship or state borders than on shared sensibilities of, and commitments to, certain Sufi lodges, graves, songs and musical styles, genealogies and teachers. Even those dervishes living in a specific Bosnian town can be called local cosmopolitans, Henig shows, since they experience and narrate that local place through the brotherhood's histories of circulation, and through the circulated texts that extend from communities and publishers from Southeast Europe to Detroit. Henig's essay proffers important methodological leads, attending to modes of "sonic," "graphic," and "genealogical" connectivity that maintain these fragile transregional bridges, but also to the importance of linking local ethnographies to transregional histories. What is so noteworthy in Henig's study is the absence of the state whatsoever in

dervishes' habits of identification or self-knowledge, compared with cases from other essays in this issue.

ISLAMIC MODERNS The state's power and limits are again at stake for **Nadav Samin** and **Nur Amali Ibrahim**, but now cast in relation to emergent forms of Islamic authority. Samin's essay shows how the Gulf States, given their recent provenance, offer a unique window into the real-time processes by which Islamic states generate their own foundations. Unlike Saudi Arabia's tight suturing of the ruling dynasty's genealogy to Islamic creed (*da'wa*), Gulf States' forms of legitimate rule are more opaque, and summon a creative flexibility in order to imagine and found the national community. Samin leads us to two key material sites of national foundations in the United Arab Emirates: first the Family Tree Room, where the Abu Dhabi family lineage is graphically and quasi-sacredly presented for contemplation by every schoolchild, among other visitors. A second materialization is a text commissioned to trace and legitimate a particular tribal genealogy. Samin shows how these material wagers are successful to varying degrees, and always subject to possible revision or diversion. For example, at the Family Tree Room, female museum guides narrate cross-cutting genealogies that insert distinct matrilineages into the family tree of fathers and sons, thereby shifting the genealogical configuration of rule.

In another contested space of Islamic moderns, Nur Ibrahim examines the recent emergence of overt homophobia among Malay Muslims in Singapore. Ibrahim documents a recent disruption in the longstanding pattern of Islamic tolerance of alternative sexualities and traces the recent ideological furor to a complex convergence that includes multiple factors like the rise of "Asian Values" discourses casting homosexuality as a Western vice since the 1990s, and a surprising alliance between Singapore's Christian evangelicals and Muslim conservatives. These conflicts and alliances are mostly negotiated on the Internet, the new forum of Singapore's Islamic public. Ibrahim shows how this particular version of an Islamic modern is able to gain force and durability by rethinking its notions of "Islamic tradition" in relation to neighboring religious groups' positions, and discovering "traditional" reasons to work together against particular issues like homosexuality. Paradoxically then, this most strident assertion of Islamic tradition ends up seeming strongly informed and infiltrated by so-called Asian Values and Christian evangelical discourses and demands.

"CIVILIZING" ARTS **Raja Adal** invites us to consider the development of distinctive national art forms as a crucial way nation-states at once place themselves in a community of nations and distinguish themselves by developing a "national style" that transforms them into an object of attraction both for other nations and for their own citizens. The essay reveals how national styles come

into being through oscillations between mimesis of other styles, and then the creation of a putatively original national technique and national art. To show how this works, Adal documents the mimetic appropriation of the British “South Kensington Method” of geometric drawing in school pedagogies of Japan and Egypt during the 1860s and 1870s, considered a necessary technological advance, followed by its dramatic revision or rejection only a few decades later in favor of brush drawing in Japan, and the style called “Arab art” in Egypt. Thus British *technique* was replaced by Japanese or Egyptian *art*, and this progression and its narratives were constitutive to the nation-building process. Seen in a wider comparative sense, Adal points to the late nineteenth-century emergence of an entire world of analogously “cultural nations.”

Arts were also applied as social engineering programs of national assimilation in the early twentieth century. **Sayaka Chatani** directs our attention to the case of Japan’s colonization of Korea in the 1920s and 1930s. Attending to the records of mid-level Japanese bureaucrats and officials in colonial Korea, Chatani documents the social work policy intended to properly integrate Koreans, including the articulation of programs of “moral suasion” and “social education.” Ruralist discourse pervades the documents—that is, Koreans were discursively made into essentially agrarian provincials. This served at once to preserve the Koreans’ otherness and to link them to Japanese romantic ideas of agrarian life. Part of this ideological civilizing mission was devoted to “improving” Koreans’ tastes through the official cultivation of arts. On this score, Chatani highlights Japanese bureaucrats’ proposed film script competition of 1930 and the much debated status of film as a civilizing art form.

Together these essays are immensely suggestive of how states and nations are worked both from within and without. State power is secretly extended in covert operations, but also reworked and redirected from the margins and interstices, even in rare cases almost entirely effaced as a lived referent. State authority may be enforced, contested, or revised by Islamic tradition, as in United Arab Emirates and Singapore. And as is clear of all versions of state-ness, the emergence and maintenance of a national style, art, or aesthetics takes work—mimetic, aesthetic, colonial, bureaucratic.
