Editorial Foreword

The Foundations of Historical Discourse. Essays about the nature of history usually wrestle with the many meanings of the term itself, seeking to sculpt the distinctions that foster analysis. Although informed by such methodological concerns, the three essays in this section nevertheless concede the persistent ambiguity about what history is and accept it as a cultural creation. Their aim is thus not so much to deconstruct history (an approach attractive to many historians, which allows them to do to each other what they have forever done to others) as to uncover the cultural process by which it is constructed. G.W. Trompf contrasts the sense of the past carried by a European missionary with Melanesian views, then builds from that to a striking and more general comparison between Melanesian and Gnostic accounts of origins and change. As cosmologies and memories are interwoven with compelling foreign accounts of wider worlds and other eras, the very concept of time must be refined and restructured (an effect considered by Taussig in *CSSH*, 19:2; Wylie, 24:3; Berg, 27:2; Sider, 29:1; and both Burns and Fuller in 30:2). This reconstruction of history, Trompf argues, is a universal process of acculturation. Beyond the familiar question of whether (and how) myth and history can be distinguished, lies the importance of myth as a means for assimilating divergent histories. (Compare Clendinnen, 22:3; Freitag, 22:4; Lincoln, 25:1; DuToit, 27:2; and Rafael, 29:2.)

History, of course, as Napoleon enjoyed noting, is often allied to power; but David Edwards looks rather at the powers of historical rhetoric by comparing English and Swat stories of a British army's encounter with an Afghan Mullah (compare Dekmejian and Wyszomirski on the Madhi of Sudan, 14:2). Deftly examining British figures of speech, he reveals their colonial function and then, in a fascinating argument, makes the case that metaphors in the English account and miracles in the Moslem one both serve to transport understanding across the frontiers that separate familiar from unfamiliar worlds (on the power of rhetoric, see Felstiner, 25:1; Ewald, 30:2). Readers will welcome a further irony: This essay on competing historical accounts, which includes both a Mad Mullah who makes bullets turn to water and the prose of Winston Churchill, is as enjoyable as any old-fashioned historical narrative. The place of narrative in historical writing, a topic much debated nowadays, is a particularly important question for anyone comparing histories produced in different cultures; and John Bowen addresses that issue directly. His study of origin narratives and political integration in the Aceh province of Indonesia thus brings us back to some of the issues discussed by Trompf and also treats, as does Edwards, the effect of colonial encounters on historiography and the place of Islam within it. In each of these cases a people's current

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500016121 Published online by Cambridge University Press

needs and recent experience are polished, set in the flow of time, and thereby connected to truths beyond time to become part of an encompassing story—a history that expresses, and in so doing, molds a collective identity. (For other approaches to this process, see Cohn, in 3:3; Pasti, 7:1; Taylor, 27:4; Grenough, Siddiqi, and Van Young, all in 28:3; Farriss, 29:3; Silverblatt, 30:1; Sangren, 30:4.)

Demands of the Market Place. Students of Latin America recognized the impact of the world economy long before conferences of bankers and government officials were forced to do so, but the scholarly emphasis has more recently taken an interesting turn, giving greater attention to the varied and creative ways in which local groups, even very subordinate ones, contrive effective adaptations and maintain sufficient autonomy to sustain unique social structures and cultures. In her essay on the *cholas,* Linda Seligmann examines a classic example of economic roles based on gender (compare by Mintz, 13:3; Scott and Tilly, 17:1; Guyer, 22:3; Roberts, 26:2; Thompson, 27:1; and Collins, 28:4), cultural brokers (see Geertz, 2:2), and ethnic division, all coming together in the marketplace. There sturdy, outspoken women make the most of their intermediate social, economic, and political position with an energetic skill that preserves their importance but lacks the force to change their situation. Surprisingly, the Chilean copper producers, whose efforts William Culver and Cornel Reinhart analyze, did relatively less well. Culver and Reinhart first demonstrate the (often overlooked) effectiveness of Chile's copper industry during the first half of the nineteenth century but do so in order to establish that its subsequent defeat in fierce competition with American producers (on American trade policies, see Frieden, 31:1) requires explanation. In that ruthless battle, they suggest, state policy could make a vital difference; and Chile's copper industry failed to wring from its government, which remained more responsive to landholding interests, the favorable treatment that the American government provided to mine owners in the United States. Starting with a classic model of capitalist competition, they arrive at politics as a factor too crucial to be left out. Important theoretical debates have also centered on the economic viability of the family farm (Friedmann, 20:4; Keegan 28:4; Adams, 30:3; Goodman and Redclift, 30:4), especially in Latin America (Powell, 13:3; Eckstein and Winson, both in 25:1; Lehmann, 28:4; Handy, 30:4). In taking up this question, Luis Llambi closely examines seven diverse cases to show the complex mixtures of region, crop, government policy, and market that allow for family farms in Latin America. Capitalism and the world system work in varied ways and are often redirected by local politics, social structure, and culture. These elements meet, of course, in markets but only about as predictably as the independent *cholas.*

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