Editorial Foreword

The Identity of Language. Indian society has for centuries provoked extraordinary scholarship, tempting learned foreigners with visions of intellectual conquest that Mogul emperors would have understood. Although academic ambitions change, India's attraction remains strong. Current scholarship is not so easily tempted by promises of mysterious wisdom or the hope for seductively veiled glimpses of how civilization (or language) began, and the scholarly interest now drawn to India brings its own preoccupation with multivalent meanings and ambiguity. For those concerns, too, the subcontinent is an endlessly rich resource. Applied to India, the intersection of Foucauldian discourse, guilty preoccupation with power, and concern for autonomy has proved especially fruitful. That literature informs David Lelyveld's erudite study of the construction of Hindustani, moving it beyond a case study of institutionalized misconceptions to an essay on how aquisitiveness, bureaucratic convenience, and linguistic practice reshaped each other (compare Mignolo on the Spanish and Amerindian languages, in *CSSH,* 34:2; and on the social utility of constructed languages, see Taylor, in 3:3, and Ewald, 30:2). By starting from the colonizers, Lelyveld studies the construction of culture; Sumathi Ramaswamy begins from the cultural capacity of language to mobilize identity and then explores the nature of nationalism (a connection explored by Laitin, 31:1, and Østergärd, 34:1). The symbols and metaphors of Tamil poetry, so culturally specific, are presented with a conceptual clarity that lets us see the power of their intertwining and that gracefully uncovers the universality within this culture's assertiveness (on the different response of the Christian missionaries in Sri Lanka, compare Scott, 34:2). Anyone who has pondered (or felt) the appeal of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe or modern Asia will find a familiar passion in these claims to mythic origins, cultural dignity, and gendered concepts of honor and loyalty.

Modern Uses of Myth. Myths, of course, are never just about the past; and Bruce Mazlish traces the way some modern Western myths moved through three extraordinary writers, whose surprising connection had largely gone unnoticed. In these myths, like those of Tamils, the eternal feminine is central. This ambivalent exoticism, permeated with imperialism, coils around ideas of Darwinian development and materialist progress; and it is equally at home in the luridness of science fiction and the echo chamber of the Freudian unconscious (on the more ancient roots of these myths, see Trompf, 31:4, and Linke, 34:4). As Mazlish shows, these constructed visions wrestle with the meaning of modernity (as anthropologists often think myths should, see Wolfe, 33:2; Beard, 34:2; and Klein, 34:3). So in a sense do the tales told in Northern Zambia about blood-drinking Catholic priests (on stories people tell, compare Marino on Italy, 24:2; Golding and Rosenbaum, 35:1; Slater, 33:3, both on Latin America). Myths embodied in the concreteness of rumors, they

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001041750001865X Published online by Cambridge University Press

thrive through their multiple meanings and evocation of tradition (note Dixon, 33:1, and Kratz, 35:1 on some uses of tradition in Africa). Luise White deftly displays all these elements while refusing to privilege any one of them in a skillful analysis that dissects without destroying. Conditions of labor, witchcraft, missionaries and the ritual of mass, bodily fluids, conceptions of color and of money swirl through a myth that lives because of all it serves. These stories, like Victorian accounts of hidden races, impress stigmata on the Other in an effort to contain it.

Violence and the State. Often about violence, myths can also encourage it. Paul Sant Cassia deals with two kinds of myth about banditry, the romantic flowers that grow in the same soil as the predatory weeds of banditry itself, and historical myths about the social aims the brigands' peasant hosts (compare the discussion of Blok and Hobsbawm, 14:4). Sant Cassia builds his discussion of banditry in Cyprus step by step; and his complex recipe includes pastoralism and a weak state, administrators and shifting political functions, nationalism and local culture. Through comparison with banditry in other Mediterranean societies (see also Brown on Egypt and Douglass and Zulaika on Spain, both in 32:2), the study of Cyprus leads to a comprehensive theory (compare Wilson on millenarianism, 6:1; Price on terrorism, 19:1; Wickham-Crowley on Latin America, 32:2; Diacon on Brazil, 32:3). In a concluding tour de force, Sant Cassia considers the practice of banditry and the official descriptions of it as a text, the ultimate useful myth superseding memory and varied accounts by incorporating them. With quite different methods, Helen Fein also uses comparison to formulate a comprehensive account of the cataclysmic violence of genocide (see Katz and Melson, both in 24:3). Starting from cool taxonomies and bone-chilling statistics, she seeks the structural origins of the murderous campaigns that exterminated millions in Indonesia and Cambodia. Political calculation uses social cleavages to make ethnicity, nativism, religion, and class into inexhaustible arsenals for hatred; ideology programatically transforms hatred into uncontrollable practice; and the power politics of the United States and an indifferent international community provide means, cover, and encouragement. Worse still, genocide works, leaving durable regimes whose crimes are half-forgotten if not quite forgiven. For more than a century following the French Revolution, European society struggled with the new knowledge that revolution was always possible. In our era the whole world knows the feasibility of genocide.

CSSH Discussion. The article in this section by Daniel Kaiser and Peyton Engel explores awareness of chronology in a pre-industrial society, in which years were marked by the memorable events they contained (see Siddiqi, 28:3). Ironically, their method permits an enviable precision in measuring peasants' blithe confusions (compare Henige, 18:4). Readers may well admire the often close approximations; middle-aged ones will envy the freedom to select a younger age five years later.

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