

## Editorial Foreword

**LATERAL ARCHIVALITIES** Archives, and the sedimented habits of those researching in them, too often produce siloed knowledge. Specialists of these silos can become fantastically vertical in their methods, as in the forms of knowledge they generate—impressive in their depth but perhaps horizontally impoverished, lacking in lateral vision to see out toward other silos, whether nearly adjacent, or far over the horizon. In “Toward Early Modern Archivality: The Perils of History in the Age of Neo-Eurocentrism,” **Guy Burak, E. Natalie Rothman, and Heather Ferguson** address the revival of culturalist assumptions in archival studies and propose an alternative method, one that privileges attention to textual circulation and commensurability over civilizational divides between supposedly distinct “European” and “Islamic” archivalities. The historiography on early modern archives, they argue, has perpetuated a Eurocentric view of the centralized archive as a purported key aspect of European archivality and, in turn, “Islamic archivality” has promoted an outdated understanding of “Islam” (and, indeed “Europe”) as a discrete, transhistorical phenomenon. In fact, they show, these archives share late antique genealogies of textual practices and mobilities across a vast early modern region that traverses modern continental and civilizational configurations. Here, Burak, Rothman, and Ferguson focus on intersections and circulations of documents and practices across ethnolinguistic, territorial, and juridical boundaries, taking examples from Ottoman diplomatic archives to challenge scholars of early modern archivality to attend to the social life of documents and their mutability through circulation.

In “The Mystery of the Missing Horses: How to Uncover an Ottoman Shadow Economy,” **Koh Choon Hwee** unveils another underdeveloped kind of archivality, namely that of the “shadow economy.” She explores the Ottoman postal system, a communications infrastructure that undergirded imperial power. Though that system offered capabilities of surveillance and control over the empire, it also contained mystifying gaps. To wit, bureaucrats were baffled by a constant shortage of horses that routinely delayed official correspondence. The essay reveals how official and non-official actors diverted horses toward profit-making ventures, building their own shadow economy. Ottoman bureaucrats treated reports of missing horses as discrete, unconnected events, rather than as related evidence of a systemic and competing market demand for horses in an informal economy. Just as bureaucrats in Qing China faced difficulties in

synthesizing discrete sources of intelligence from different frontiers, Ottoman bureaucrats lacked the lateral archival vision required to translate disparate information into usable knowledge. Off-the-record commercial opportunities encouraged officials to moonlight, signaling a change in the meaning of office-holding and, in turn, in the status-based Ottoman social order.

### **SPIRITUAL WARES, RETRO KITSCH, AND THEORETICAL THINGS**

**Sarah Abrevaya Stein's** "Botánica Sephardica" traces the genealogy of a Jewish-owned botánica located in East Harlem in the 1930s and 1940s. Widely known as purveyors of transatlantic Black, Latinx, and folk Catholic religious goods used in ceremonies of Santería, Vodou, and other Caribbean traditions, this particular botánica was owned by an Eastern Mediterranean Jew from Rhodes. It wove together Sephardic and Mediterranean histories and sources into its shelves. Stein's story expands out to a bigger frame, showing how Jews were pioneering spiritual merchants in the United States, building key historical and material links between Ottoman, Sephardic, Black African, and Caribbean networks of spiritual wares. Their shops and merchandise dotted cities across North America, from Charleston to Chicago, Memphis to Montreal, Los Angeles to Louisiana.

In "National Retro and the Re-mattering of History in Twenty-First-Century Hungary," **Krisztina Fehérváry** investigates the genre of "retro," Hungarian-style, deployed to rehabilitate the nation's modern past. "Hungarian Retro" repositions Hungary within Europe and the West by selecting modern consumer goods and popular culture from the past that fit with international criteria for retro and live digitally in the present. International retro fashions are domesticated in particular ways in Hungary, and work to nostalgically recall an era of national prestige, value, and economic sovereignty relative to the demoralized present. Fehérváry shows how materials and consumption patterns at once reveal and shape new, unfolding versions of social formation in post-socialist Eastern Europe.

**Xiaoxing Jin** takes us from the social lives of things to the social and national lives of theories. In "The Evolution of Social Darwinism in China, 1895–1930," Jin investigates the multiple iterations of social Darwinism in China through time. He traces the itineraries of social Darwinism in China vis-à-vis the social Darwinism of the West. In China, the social Darwinism that once envisioned a cosmological order based upon strength was transformed into a component of power politics in Republican China. Then, starting in the late 1910s, a new breed of social Darwinism arose alongside the scientific variety, one that reflected the influence of Kropotkin and de Vries. Social Darwinism was constantly reshaped in response to Western expansion and China's own internal transformations. The essay shows how, not unlike material forms, theoretical things are born of transnational linkages and rivalries, but also work recursively to shape their course.

**LABOR IN THE WORLD SYSTEM** In “A Tale of Two Coffee Colonies: Environment and Slavery in Suriname and Saint-Domingue, ca. 1750–1790,” **Rafael de Bivar Marquese** returns us to the second half of the eighteenth century, when two colonies led the expansion of coffee production from Yemen to the Americas, on the backs of African slave labor: Suriname, owned by the Dutch, and Saint-Domingue, the main French colony in the Caribbean. Suriname’s growth was short-lived, Marquese shows, and was soon surpassed by the productive leap of Saint-Domingue, as Suriname’s “hydraulic” model of land-transformation was outclassed by the cheaper and more expansive fields of the French colony. Marquese’s article explores the divergent trajectories of these two colonies in rich detail, focusing on notarial records that reveal the environmental conditions that made and limited each site’s productive capacity. He shows how things changed over time as coffee-production expanded in response to new consumer tastes, but also in relation to the limits posed by the agency of enslaved groups toward revolt or marronage.

We then move from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century plantation societies of slavery to the twentieth-century’s reliance on migrant labor. Like Marquese, **Michael David Snodgrass** undertakes the risks, and reaps the rewards, of principled comparative reflection on labor regimes crossing between the Old World and the New. His contribution, “Dreams of Development in Mexico and Spain: A Comparative History of Guestworkers and Migration Diplomacy,” presents a history of Cold War-era migration policy, comparing two emblematic guestworker programs. Together, the programs recruited millions of Mexican and Spanish migrants to labor in the United States and Germany, respectively. While the programs’ advocates trumpeted the diplomatic achievements that secured contractual labor rights, improved foreign relations, and sent migrants home with savings and skills to achieve diverse development goals of the sending states, workers’ own experiences reveal more fraught and complex narratives. Snodgrass shows us a window into their lives. His dense study traces the programs’ historical and ideological roots, as well as intriguing patterns between guestworkers’ experiences as Mexican *braceros* in the United States and Spanish *gastarbeiter* in Germany.

**SOVEREIGNTIES COMPARED** **Evguenia Davidova** asks how monarchy, gender, and nationalism are entwined. In “Monarchism with a Human Face: Balkan Queens and the Social Politics of Nursing in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” she compares representative case studies from two generations of royal women in four countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Serbia/Yugoslavia. She explores the instrumentalization of nursing as an evolving relationship between state-building, warfare, welfare, and voluntary organizations. Davidova argues that queens’ interventions in nursing successfully contributed to the “naturalization” of the ruling foreign dynasties in the Balkans and to the militarization of charity in gendered terms. Through

such soft power, they mobilized nursing to carve out an autonomous space and visibility in wartime as queens-nurses and in peacetime as queens-benefactors. In both cases, royal women personified the curing and caring dimensions of the modernizing state, visibly linking the monarchy and the voluntary sector while also expanding the power of the nationalizing state. Even more, these queens promoted a gendered culture of sacrifice, idealizing women as caring “by nature.” Paradoxically, then, even as they expanded their fame, they reinforced neo-traditionalist patriarchal regimes and weakened women’s capacity to effect political and economic change.

In an alternative depiction of sovereignty and its subtle negotiation, **Devika Shankar** interrogates the role played by international law in generating novel forms of political claim-making among European and non-European powers at the twentieth century’s turn. In “A Slippery Sovereignty: International Law and the Development of British Cochin,” Shankar takes us to British Cochin, a port in southwestern India, to show how the port’s relative sovereignty vis-à-vis British colonial force was mediated by international law. But colonial force was also mitigated by a series of environmental and topographic features: Cochin’s coastlines bordered the open sea, with its own legal culture, but its landlines also neighbored princely states with yet other forms of autonomy. Via the savvy negotiation of these multiple legal regimes, Cochin leaders repeatedly thwarted British colonial authorities’ attempts to assert total control over a key port. By highlighting the Cochin State’s partially successful attempts at claiming sovereignty over the waters surrounding the harbor, the article reveals how international law emerged as a site through which semi-sovereign territories could test and extend the limits of their sovereignty.

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