

Editorial Foreword

PROPERTY In so many ways property is a category of heightened importance just now. Property has become newly strange as it expands into unfamiliar places and develops novel kinds. The exchange of communism for capitalism in Eastern Europe; the claim of property rights over their own culture by indigenous peoples in Melanesia; and the ownership of bodily tissue significant for biomedical research in New Guinea are among the property issues that have been aired in *CSSH* (see Katherine Verdery, "Faith, Hope, and *Caritas* in the Land of the Pyramids: Romania, 1990–1994," 1995:625–69; Simon Harrison, "From Prestige Goods to Legacies: Property and the Objectification of Culture in Melanesia," 2000:662–79; and Warwick Anderson, "The Possession of Kuru: Medical Science and Biocolonial Exchange," 2000:713–44). In our first two articles property under colonialism and after slavery come under scrutiny.

Sara Berry examines the colonial construction of property rights in Africa as a way of thinking through the current crisis of property in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. While landowners and international investors urge upholding the sanctity of existing property rights, she believes that debate is essential, "creating space for negotiation over competing claims to property and power, and the meaning of Africa's history for ordering political economies in the present." Ongoing debates that render titles ambiguous may have the virtue of tempering exclusion and leaving room for compromise.

Taking the final abolition of slavery as a starting point for the development of certain ideas of property and citizenship in Cuba, **Rebecca Scott** and **Michael Zeuske** trace the titles, legally precarious but remarkably durable in practice, that can be found through close examination of the on-the-ground dynamics of property among freed slaves become citizens. Such shaky tenures have nevertheless lasted more than a century, have been passed on to heirs, and have strengthened claims of former slaves to respect and citizenship.

NATIONS The rise and triumph of the nation-state form, now in its third century, is the big story of modern history, and news of the demise of the nation-state has repeatedly been shown to be premature. The next three articles take the discussion of nationalism in new directions by employing new paradigms (social memory) or rethinking old ones (the modular form of the nation-state).

Rogers Brubaker and **Margit Feischmidt** examine commemorations, in 1998, of the revolutions that swept Europe in 1848. This ambitious, wide-angle study looks at the current states into which the multi-ethnic Kingdom of Hungary of that period has fragmented, in two ways: by comparing the states—

Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia—*inter se*, and by comparing the Hungarian-speaking populations in those three states. This approach elicits telling differences that fall along two dimensions: alternative framings (universalist narratives of liberation from oppression, particularist narratives of the nation) and sacrality (as a quasi-religious civil sacrament or as a non-sacred spectacle and entertainment in the mood of the carnivalesque). How and why these contrasting features are distributed is the burden of the essay.

Jonathan Hearn also employs social memory and mood as lenses through which to examine the nation, in this case the writing of national history in Scotland. “Why and how do people invest themselves in nations and nationalism?” The author believes that national narratives and ideas of collective agency that are successful in capturing hearts and minds are those which engage and draw upon the sense of personal agency and narrative of individuals. (Also on this topic: Michael Kenny, “A Place for Memory: The Interface between Individual and Collective History,” 1999:420–37.)

The modular character of nationalism in Benedict Anderson’s classic work, *Imagined Communities*, which was devised to account for the rapid global spread and persistence of the nation-state, and to articulate its universal form amid the endless particularities of nations, is the object of critical reconstruction by **Manu Goswami**. The modular form, she finds, has four constitutive dimensions: it is transposable, dynamic, doubled (universal/particular; subjective/objective), and durable. The author seeks to bridge objectivist and subjectivist approaches to nationalism, focus attention on the global view of nationalism rather than the content of specific nationalist movements, and specify key processes in the emergence of the modular nation form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (Also by Manu Goswami: “From Swadeshi to Swaraj: Nation, Economy, Territory in Colonial South Asia, 1870 to 1907,” 1998:609–36.)

LAW AND POLITICS The production of political texts through judicial process is the focus of the next article.

Responding to the thesis of Jutta Sperling (“The Paradox of Perfection: Reproducing the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice,” 1999:3–32), that the posited perfection of the early modern state in Venice made it impossible for the ruling elite to articulate the real source of their problems without destroying their claims to legitimacy, **Jonathan Walker** argues that the paradoxes and tautologies characterizing Venetian political theory served a positive function within legal discourse. Analyzing the activities of the supreme criminal magistracy in Venice, the Council of Ten, he shows how the Council processed evidence into proof and proof into legal and political argument. In the process, exemplary stories were produced that reinforced official ideology by eliminating the destructive potential of dissent, simultaneously addressing and evading problems of social order and political legitimacy. Nevertheless a hidden tran-

script of dissent can be discerned in court transcripts and *samizdat* manuscript commentaries.

SHARING THE WEALTH The last article examines three ways of interpreting the politics of economic redistribution.

Shale Horowitz seeks to explain the hegemony of small-scale farmers in the redistributive policies of developing democracies with large rural populations, by testing the political cleavages predicted by class-based (rich v. poor), trade-based (those benefiting v. those hurt by international trade) and asset-based (focusing on rural land) approaches. The author develops the asset-based approach by theorizing the much-remarked pivotal role of agriculture in redistributive politics. Mapping the actual policy outcomes of such states suggests that, while each approach has its successes, the asset-based approach shows that it has a substantial explanatory power.

IN MEMORIAM We mark with sorrow the passing of a good friend of *CSSH* and a Consulting Editor, **John D'Arms**, who was President of the American Council of Learned Societies, following many years as Professor of Classics and Dean of the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies at the University of Michigan.