

Editorial Foreword

It is by now commonplace to repeat the mantra that orders, boundaries, and classifications are made by human groups but exert power by coming to seem natural, inevitable, or eternal. We have long bowed before ancestors like Durkheim, who labored mightily to show how social boundaries acquire a life of their own, infiltrate consciousness, and inform social systems from religion to crime to deviance. Even so, scholars have too often fallen short in showing the fluid precarity of boundaries and borders, how they change, how they are unevenly leveraged by different groups, and how they work toward diversely imagined ends. This issue's essays engage those questions with a rare acuity. They attend to borders' making, movement, and transgression in eight sites, and deploy a varied arsenal of archival and ethnographic tools and materials. Further, and quite unlike the descendants of the French *pater familias*, they attend to the ways historical change occurs through subtle or dramatic shifts of boundaries, and the play of movement across them.

TRAVEL KNOWLEDGE Travel takes distinct forms: exploration, migration, exile, research, tourism, and more. Its modes present varying expectations of knowledge, enlightenment, enrichment, or suffering. In at least some of its modes, travelers imaginatively endow distant sites with special powers and possibilities, an expectation that can lead to disenchantment as often as transformation. **Ismail Fajrie Alatas** leads off with an analysis of a contemporary pilgrimage industry in Yemen, followed by **Claire Edington** and **Hans Pols'** study of French colonial officials' study-trips to Dutch Java to learn new, modern techniques for managing the insane and other tenants of the colony's asylums.

Alatas explores pilgrimages to Ḥaḍramawt saints' shrines undertaken by Indonesian Muslims of non-Ḥaḍramī descent. He moves beyond classic studies of pilgrimage to engage it as a "poetic project" of producing and packaging a given landscape as extraordinary yet vividly accessible. This happens through the intersections of teachers, travel guides, travel agents, hotel managers, and of course pilgrims themselves—a veritable "pilgrimage assembly line." Together, these actors assemble a series of chronotopes into meaningful alignments, rendering Ḥaḍramawt a mythic place where transcendent Islamic ideals can be realized in actual spacetime.

Edington and Pols explore the rivalries and comparisons drawn across colonial powers that helped produced "Southeast Asia" as a shared object of knowledge and management. They document French Indochina officials'

visits to Dutch Java in the early twentieth century as the French mined Dutch practices for ideas. In this transfer of “therapeutic regimes,” psychiatric managers produced the *colonie agricole* system. The system activated idealized imagined pasts of “the natives” quiet agricultural life, yet doing so required the present expropriation of land, and it harnessed that vision of idyll to the actual management of forced labor. Thus coercion and therapy were inseparably entangled. Edington and Pols offer a study of “comparative colonialism” not only as an object of academic inquiry, but also as a strategy applied by colonial powers.

SACRED POLITICS AND POLITICS OF THE SACRED The sacred is a “wobbling pivot,” as Jonathan Z. Smith called it back in 1972. The appearance of the sacred in things, places, or persons like kings requires enormous human work to be propped up and sustained, and even so, the sacred remains always a work in progress; it tilts, topples, rolls akimbo, and is raised up again. **Judith Bovensiepen** and **Frederico Delgado Rosa**, writing on sacred sites and things in East Timor, and **Kiri Paramore**, weighing in on sacred kingship in Japan, help sharpen our tools for discerning and deciphering the elusive category of the sacred.

Bovensiepen and Delgado Rosa examine the Timor notion of *lulik*, once maligned by the Portuguese as “fetishism” then later enjoined in Catholic ritual, as “sacred.” Why did twentieth-century Timorese pose no resistance to, and even welcome Portuguese colonists’ iconoclastic destruction of their sacred (*lulik*) places and things? Bovensiepen and Delgado Rosa’s wonderfully subtle argument engages with Timorese *lulik* sites and *lulik* things as historically shifting sources of both danger and potentiality. *Lulik*, they show, indexes non-differentiation, including the prospective non-differentiation of the Timorese from others. In its multivalent capacity, it brokers and mediates Timorese historical social relations with outsiders. *Lulik*, the Timorese sacred, is dangerous but necessary. It must be negotiated with care, much like foreign power. Thus the Portuguese only reinforced *lulik*’s power by destroying it, because that dangerous otherness is precisely what *lulik* is about.

Paramore revisits the familiar trope of sacred kingship insofar as it bifurcates and calibrates ritual and political forms of power. He poses an original question: Why was the state so weak in early Japanese history, even given its very abundant ritual resources for forging religio-political power? In contrast with China, Paramore argues, in Japan the arrival of Confucianism was deleterious to the state because of the mode in which rituals were performed. Whereas in China the emperor was made a descendant of heaven in a subjunctive, performative, and overtly mythic mode, in Japan that “as if” quality receded, and the emperor became “organically” a god. This limited the political possibilities for cooperation or cooption by actual rulers like shoguns. Paradoxically, by actually making the emperor a god, his political power was enfeebled.

COLONIAL SOURCES OF “RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE” Violent conflicts have long been attributed to religious extremism in one or another form, and this remains too often the case in the seemingly endless and now-international “war on terror.” Religion seems a too-convenient scapegoat and rhetorical crutch to help pundits address hard-to-explain incidents of violence. The essays by **Mark Condos** and **Joshua Schreier** each push us to see religious violence as itself historically constituted. Far from proving a reliable explanation or source, so-called religious violence is itself in dire need of critical unpacking.

Condos describes the emergence of the label “fanatic” as a colonial legal category on the frontier of British India. The label blended discourses of pathology, disease, and madness, but always also conveyed an excess beyond reason. Unlike the so-called mad or the diseased, fanatics were always executed, never imprisoned or otherwise quarantined. Thus fanatical acts were classed as something beyond possibly “political” actions, and disavowed as communicative or worthy of interpretation.

Schreier turns to the 1961 Rosh Hashanah riots in Algeria to interrogate French colonial methods of cultivating, codifying, and reifying ethno-religious difference. He shows how colonial policies were instrumental not only in essentializing, but even in constituting the categories of Muslim, Jewish, European, or indigenous identity, sometimes in combination. Building on Ann Laura Stoler’s phrase, “taxonomic state,” Schreier explains how the colonial classifications activated and applied in the riots presented very different degrees of access to nationality, citizenship, and social mobility. The “gap” opened by France between Jewish and Muslim prospects in late colonial Algeria, he shows, was also related to very distant events of the simultaneously unfolding Israel-Palestine conflict.

BOUNDARY-WORK FROM ABOVE AND BELOW Rendering consequential classifications and boundaries is often a project of elites intent on expanding their control of natural or supernatural resources, but elites are only one part of the equation. Boundaries are also imaginatively drawn and re-drawn “from below” in myriad mundane, pragmatic ways, from rice-growing to street demonstrations. What is more, elites’ projects depend for their success upon their reception, the degree to which political platforms find traction, or not, among the masses. **Marco Grdešić’s** and **Malini Sur’s** papers both have much to teach us about how borders are drawn from below.

Grdešić asks the poignant question: why did Serbia’s anti-bureaucratic revolution of 1988 work? Slobodan Milošević was a successful political operator even though his maneuvers were widely seen as a bald power grab. What makes such authoritarian power politics “work”? Grdešić argues for the elective affinities between two cultural schemas animated by Milošević—Serbian nationalism and Leninist socialism. In their reception, they interacted to

generate a kind of social combustion. “Bureaucracy,” for example, worked as floating signifier that could mobilize and generate shared resistance from both sides. Against elite theories, Grdešić shows how even apparently opposed political forces can become entwined in everyday discourses and patterns of tacit knowledge to produce what he calls “resonance,” and in turn, sometimes ominous outcomes in governance.

Sur takes us to the mid-twentieth-century borderlands between India and what was then East Pakistan to witness the fragmentation of rice fields into newly drawn postcolonial plots prior to the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. She describes both the imagined landscapes and visceral workaday lives of wet rice cultivators, but also their roles as territorial actors and even “paddy soldiers.” In the interstices of national politics, these laborers served as guardians and shifters of borders. Sur’s innovative method examines rice as a nourishing grain and natural ecology, but also as a social ecology with roots in historical anxieties of home and displacement. Rice becomes a prism for refracting and calibrating “the political” and “the everyday.” Like all of these essays, it is exciting, groundbreaking work.
