

CSSH NOTES

Shari J. Cohen. *Politics Without a Past: The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

This is a provocative study of post-Communist politics in Slovakia. The author asks important questions and addresses significant approaches to the politics of transition. Her answers, however, will be looked upon skeptically by those who have studied politics, nationalism, and historical consciousness, whether in this region or elsewhere in democratizing nation-states. The author considers Slovakia an emblematic case, even though the particularities of Slovakian history may account for many of the points the author makes. The close analysis of certain politicians' careers and important controversies in the post-communist period are valuable contributions; the broader interpretive framework, however, is flawed.

The author, trained as a political scientist, contests two main threads of the Leninist legacy argument: (1) the return-of-history approach, and (2) historical institutionalism. The author encourages us to consider just how strong nationalism may be in the post-Communist period, and looks to the mechanisms by which the Leninist state influenced attitudes toward the past. Both are important caveats to dominant perspectives. Cohen argues that the Leninist state destroyed a common interpretive framework for the past, leaving an ideological vacuum after 1989. She further asserts that one needs ideological consensus to build institutions. As a consequence, when faced with the need to build a new polity, Slovaks were unable to create new democratic institutions, having lost a moral grounding in understanding their history. A significant consequence of Leninist "organized forgetting" was the enshrinement of egoism as the primary political motivation. Ironically, those leaders who advocated a strong ideological position—e.g. Catholic nationalists, dissident intellectuals—were undone by the adept skills of egoistic "mass-elites," a term Cohen crafts to refer to elites "who had no connection to any alternative ideology and who were solely formed by the official Leninist socialization process" (p. 5). Mečiar is a prime example of a mass-elite leader.

This reader found the use of the term historical consciousness problematic. The author does not distinguish in the analysis between symbols of one's past—a common repertoire of figures and events—and attitudes towards those events. Disagreements over whether the 1939–1944 Slovak state was fascist appear to Cohen as evidence of a lack of historical consciousness, rather than as a serious debate over motivations and meaning. Moreover, the author defines historical consciousness exclusively in terms of the events of World War II. No

reason is given for this narrow definition. The author's focus on historical consciousness also constrains how ideology is understood to play a role in the transition. If Slovaks don't care about the past, especially when electing leaders now, Cohen suggests they lack historical consciousness and so are deemed incapable of embracing democracy. This is a dubious claim. It may simply be that the Slovak electorate is concerned about employment and social welfare policies, the relative strength of the state, citizenship rights, and economic well-being. By restricting ideology to a consensual view of the past, Cohen precludes the possibility of considering this alternative perspective.

———Martha Lampland

Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosentein, eds. *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*. Center for Hellenic Studies of Harvard University, Colloquia 3. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999. 484 pp. ISBN: 0-674-94660-X. \$50.00.

The papers in this volume were first presented at the third Center for Hellenic Studies colloquium, organized by the editors in June 1996. The colloquium brought together scholars from different branches of ancient history, archaeology, and anthropology with the goal of pushing warfare studies beyond mere narrative of wars and battles to an inquiry into the influence of military conflicts on their social, political, and economic contexts, and vice versa.

Chapters discuss, respectively, warfare in early China, Japan, Egypt, the Achaemenid Empire, Archaic and Classical Greece, the Hellenistic world, Republican Rome, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, early Medieval Europe, the early Islamic Empire, and among Mayans and Aztecs in the New World. Warfare in pre-state societies receives only rudimentary and sporadic references. Some of the most warlike polities within the book's chronological framework are conspicuously absent: apparently a paper on warfare in Bronze Age Mesopotamia had to be withdrawn, but how can one talk about warfare in ancient and medieval times without discussing the Assyrian *wehrmacht* of the early first millennium B.C.E. or the Mongol juggernaut of the thirteenth century C.E.? The volume could also have benefited from a paper on Parthians and Sasanians, the nemesis of the Romans and the Byzantines in the East, to compare and contrast warfare in two contemporary and equally complex imperial formations. A paper on other archenemies of the Romans would have allowed comparison of highly professionalized warfare in a centralized imperial formation such as Rome with warfare among tribal people of Barbarian Europe such as Germans, Gauls, and Slavs. One also misses a chapter on warfare in pre-Columbian South America and its warring states such as the Moche, Wari, and Inca.

Despite these omissions, the volume's papers are all of higher caliber, thorough, and insightful in their respective case studies. Especially useful is a con-

cluding chapter by R. Brian Ferguson that presents a judicious overview of the book's central theme, exploring the mutual impacts of warfare and social structure, economic organization, technological developments, demographic fluctuations, and the size and complexity of bureaucratic and administrative apparatus. Ferguson's cultural materialist framework is particularly useful here for moving the analytical focus from the infrastructure (e.g., internal social and economic organization) to structure (e.g., external, interpolity, economic and political interaction), to superstructure (e.g., ideology and symbolism associated with warfare), although the latter is only discussed briefly. The depth and breadth of Ferguson's paper and the diversity of the volume's case studies demonstrates that scarcely any aspect of culture is left untouched by warfare. While this is not exactly *bellum omnium mater*, it is certainly difficult and unwise for students of the past (or, the present for that matter) to ignore warfare's impact on the shape and course of human culture and history.

—————Kamyar Abdi

Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters. *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 244 pp., 3 maps. \$59.95 (cloth).

Scholarly debates concerning cities in the Islamic world have focused on whether there actually is an Islamic city, and have often been framed by the paradigms of nationalism and modernization. Declaring at the outset that they do not believe there is a typical Islamic city, the authors of this volume attempt to redirect scholarly discussion of cities in the Islamic world by presenting narratives of the socio-economic developments of early modern Ottoman Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul. They argue that the history of each city must be understood according to its internal dynamics. In so doing they aim to integrate Ottoman urban history into the study of world history and global cities, and demonstrate how fruitful comparative studies are for the field of Ottoman studies.

These three trans-cultural sites of interaction between Europeans and Ottomans, and inter-communal relations between Ottoman subjects, are remarkable for their diverse developments and characteristics. These include the role of the Ottoman government in their growth, the changing fortunes of Ottoman non-Muslim subjects and European traders, and the cooperative and antagonistic relations between groups. Bruce Masters narrates the history of Aleppo, an ancient Arab and Islamic caravan city. It benefited immensely from the important role the government played in the city's economy by developing its commercial center when it incorporated Aleppo into the empire in the sixteenth century. Europeans were residentially and socially aloof and self-contained in Aleppo, relying on local Christians and Jews as translators. Although Armenians and the English were the most influential commercial communities in the city in the seventeenth century, local Catholic and Muslim families and the

French became the most important economic forces beginning in the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century the city was reduced to being an important regional market and manufacturing center.

Daniel Goffman narrates how the upstart Anatolian city of Izmir grew against the wishes of the Ottoman government, which did not encourage commerce since it viewed the city as a source of provisions for the capital. But European traders, working with local and newly arrived non-Muslims and Muslim authorities, transformed the city into a major center of commerce in the seventeenth century. Unlike Aleppo, foreigners were visible and mixed readily with Ottoman subjects on Izmir's Street of the Franks. Although the English and Jews were most important in the city's economy in the seventeenth century, by the eighteenth century Armenians and Greeks prevailed. The English aimed to integrate Western Anatolia into their global economic order in the nineteenth century, yet could never replace the Greek intermediaries upon whom they depended.

Edhem Eldem explains how the economy of Istanbul was devoted to consumption and financial services rather than production and re-distribution. This was caused by its enormous population and by its being the seat of government and the dynasty. Armenian moneychangers lay at the heart of its network of finance and credit in the seventeenth century. As in Aleppo, the French began to conquer Istanbul's market in the eighteenth century. Unlike the English in Izmir, however, French traders in Istanbul were able to fully penetrate all aspects of the market because they adopted the methods of Ottoman traders. Similar to Izmir's very visible Street of the Franks, Galata (and its extension, Pera) was the center of the European and non-Muslim presence in Istanbul. It developed into an alternative center in the nineteenth century, as Ottoman non-Muslims and their foreign partners helped convert Istanbul into a link in the global economic system.

This is an important contribution to the study of Ottoman History and the authors' essays indicate the rich possibilities that comparative history holds for the study of diverse early modern cities. It is hoped that scholars of other regions will incorporate the material contained in this volume in their discussions of the socio-economic developments of other world cities.

———Marc David Baer

Mark Golden and Peter Toohey, eds. *Inventing Ancient Culture: Historicism, Periodization, and the Ancient World*. London: Routledge, 1997.

The editors of this volume aim to challenge the precepts of New Historicism (à la Foucault) as they bear upon historical change. If New Historicism had focussed on the 'operation of power' through time, with its implications for the periodized social construction of the individual, the editors assert that such radical discontinuity may in fact distort modern perceptions of Greek and Roman

antiquity. The essays presented, beyond addressing continuity and change in the broadest sense, are not methodologically coherent, but rather give a sampling of contemporary approaches to periodization.

Some of the authors endorse periodization, while calling into question the ability of scholars to examine it without introducing external scholarly or cultural paradigms. Amy Richlin believes that a history of the body should be written, but is perturbed by the persistence of misogynistic representations of the female body. She ultimately questions whether a history of the female body can be written. David Konstan's essay on friendship wavers between viewing Aristotle's conception of friendship as discontinuous both from modern and Hellenistic conceptions, yet hesitating to reject all similarity with modern notions of affection. Ian Morris' outstanding essay on the construction of the Heroic Age is an inquiry into periodization within the history of scholarship, which ultimately calls attention to the subjectivity of scholarly paradigms (à la Kuhn). Martin Kilmer, writing on painters and pederasty, is committed to periodization, but argues that scholars have been too rigid in discussing the *erastês/erômenos* relationship (which can reverse itself in art). Peter Toohey's essay on Trimalchio's constipation is the volume's most Foucauldian, integrating literary, philosophical, and medical writings, yet it falsely periodizes by arriving at the astounding conclusion that lovesickness was 'invented' in the early imperial era (what about Phaedra in Euripides' second *Hippolytus*, 428 B.C.E.?). Barry Strauss forcefully calls periodization itself into question, and shows that the unified view of the Peloponnesian war as one great war is not even a valid cultural, let alone scholarly, construct, since many Greeks viewed it as two wars with an intervening peace. Suzanne Dixon's paper on Roman family feelings argues that any periodization may be fundamentally flawed, while Christian Sourvinou-Inwood's superb essay on Eleusis needs periodization to explain the ideological and archaeological expansion of the Eleusinian cult in the late seventh or early sixth century. Mark Golden employs statistical occurrences of words for children in the work of four historians (three classical, one Hellenistic) to challenge whether Polybius evinces a greater interest in children, as others have argued for the Hellenistic period generally. Yet the value of periodization is confirmed in Phyllis Culham's essay on elite Roman women, whose increased public status, while chastised in the late Republic, becomes more acceptable during the principate because it results from Augustus' attempts to harmonize political rank with public benefaction.

This volume will primarily serve specialists in Classics. Even so, several of the essays leave the uneasy impression that historical discussion among Classicists is becoming dangerously self-reflexive, and that many experts may soon deny that ancient history can be written at all.

—————Derek Collins

Gavin R. G. Hambly, ed. *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

The practical problems involved in constructing a meaningful account of the lives of Muslim women during the Medieval period would seem to be considerable. Nevertheless, the project is an important one. Through the examination of court and estate records, art, coins, oral and written literature, and Western travelers' accounts, as well as contemporary chronicles, the contributors to Gavin R. G. Hambly's volume have assembled a diverse set of articles, alternately revealing, enticing, suggestive, and fragmentary.

We learn, for example, of the Meccan women who married pilgrims for their travel money—when the money was spent, they induced their new husbands to divorce them by “show(ing) the unpleasant side of (their) nature” (p. 174); of one nineteenth-century Awadh (India) emperor who expressed his Shi'a devotion by graphically enacting an Imam's birth, in the role of the birthing mother; of the Awadh woman “officer” whose regiment carried the palanquins of the emperor's wives—“a great masculine woman,” she engaged in “*badinage*” with the emperor which was “not fit for ears polite” (p. 442); of the Mughal royals whose emulation of Shix'a holy women legitimated their family's rule; as well as of many women who exercised political power with varying degrees of directness, built monuments, or engaged in scholarly endeavors. Additionally, several of the contributors have focused on the sometimes limited evidence for the texture of the lives of ordinary women. These include the seventeenth-century Isfahani (Persian) women who exchanged vows of sisterhood and then communicated using “a semiotics of cooking supplies” (p. 371); the eighteenth-century Istanbul women whose veils (appeared to) grant them “the entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery” (p. 315); and the women of pre-Islamic Persia who, following the provisions of Zoroastrian law, produced heirs for their sonless brothers or fathers.

Among the latter papers, Leslie Peirce's stands out as a particularly fine demonstration of the depth of understanding that can be gleaned from minimal source material. Peirce makes full use of both the text and the context of the sixteenth-century 'Aintab (Ottoman) court records that she examines. She does not treat these records as “transparent” factual accounts (p. 272), but rather demonstrates that the literal transcriptions of speech which they contain indicate the role of oral testimonies as evidence during this period. This insight allows Peirce to produce nuanced interpretations of specific divorce cases, revealing much about contemporary conceptions of marriage.

While this book constitutes an impressive foray into largely uncharted territory, it is not without faults. The range of the volume is extremely uneven; while it includes five articles on early modern India, Spain and North Africa (west of Cairo) are ignored, and coverage of the Arabic-speaking world is, on the whole, sparse. Further, the book's ‘agenda,’ to combat the common but prejudiced idea

that Medieval Muslim women were “despised and servile” (p. 3), while understandable, seems overwrought in certain articles. This single-minded aim can sometimes, as one contributor points out, lead scholars to “(diminish) Muslim women . . . by forcing them into thoroughly modern European or American ideals of womanhood” (p. 469).

———Laura Pearl

Wong Heung Wah. *Japanese Bosses, Chinese Workers: Power and Control in a Hong Kong Megastore*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

This book is an anthropological study of managerial control and power structures in the Hong Kong subsidiary of a Japanese supermarket chain (here called Fumei). The study is the result of two years of primary data collection using traditional anthropological research methods—participant observation and intensive interviewing. The book is structured around an introduction, seven chapters, a conclusion, and an afterword. The introduction places great significance on how this study supposedly distinguishes itself from earlier literature on Japanese joint-stock companies (*kaisha*) and Japanese management practices. Previous anthropological work is criticized for not having provided comparative analyses of the subjects studied.

The expectations raised in the introduction are, however, not met by the content of the chapters. Chapter 2 discusses Fumei as a company in Japan, whereas the focus should have been Fumei as a Japanese corporation operating *overseas*; this prevents it from being directly comparable with the stereotypical Japan-based *kaisha*. Chapter 3 then presents a discussion of the concept of *kaisha* in exactly the opposite way from that promised in the introduction: as a holistic, monolithic concept. Fumei is essentially a middle-sized enterprise, and should have been differentiated from other Japanese corporate organizations that have been studied, but Wong does not do this. Moreover, although in the introduction and conclusion the concept of power is claimed to be central to the discussion, it remains undertheorized. It is disappointing that the ethnic and gender dynamics within the Fumei power structure are not fully explored. When they are commented upon it is done in a rather naive way. This is particularly so regarding gender: comments on expatriate female staff are based on very little data, and comments on the local staff totally ignore the issue of gender, even though the majority of the local staff are women. The author could have usefully expanded upon the very interesting chapters 7 and 8, which deal with the various levels of staff relations within Fumei.

Lastly, although the book is presented as a comparative study of Chinese and Japanese management practices, interviewing Chinese employees of a Japanese company does not qualify as comparative analysis. The idea of not comparing Fumei with a European company (as stated in the introduction) is laudable;

however, the author should have made reference to a Chinese company of a comparable size and function to provide a proper comparative perspective. Overall, the theme of a Japanese company operating in a culturally different environment could have been more fully explored.

This book makes a limited theoretical contribution to the study of Japan in general, and Japanese organizational sociology in particular. Despite its shortcomings, it is an interesting ethnographic micro-study of management and workers. In literary terms it is very well written and an enjoyable read.

———Nicola Piper