

# Editorial Foreword

*Intellectuals at Ebb Tide.* For all their vaunted independence, intellectuals are usually members of a society's elite who enjoy the social and political ties that status implies. They are also often closely connected to the state and thus subject to political fortune, which at the same time they are expected to interpret. Their role in state making, nationalism, and social change has therefore received a good deal of attention from academic intellectuals (in *CSSH*, from its first issue: see Shils and Swisher, both in 1:1; then Tangri and Wang, both in 3:4). This tie to the state becomes especially problematic and poignant in communist governments, where intellectuals are sustained by institutions that the state controls, honored by the official importance assigned ideas, and attracted by the intellectual wealth of Marxism (on that attraction, note Jefferson's early analysis of French communism, 11:3; and Kraus and Vanneman on bureaucracies in socialist governments, 27:1).

Since the collapse of the communist regimes of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (see Lempert, 35:3), the most noticed intellectuals east of the Elbe have not been the embarrassed loyalists but those who were part of the internal opposition. Just as the unexpected fall of those governments was quickly considered in retrospect to have been inevitable, so the opposition from intellectuals has been widely accepted as a natural expression of their calling. Christian Joppke, however, begins with a comparative point, calling attention to the hesitance of East German intellectuals even as resistance rose all about them. In explaining that comparative silence, he underscores the value of nationalism as a basis for opposition, the peculiar problems of legitimacy in the German Democratic Republic (compare Fulbrook, 29:2; and Pletsch on the two Germanies, 21:3), and the special burdens of German history. As his explanation unfolds, from the disjunction with the Nazi past that the GDR established by proclamation to its embrace of a particular German intellectual tradition (see Liedman, and his debate with Ringer, 28:1), Joppke recalls older interpretations of German difference and finds reason to think again about Germany's *Sonderweg*. David Allan also deals with intellectuals who, being rationalizers of difference, served as definers of their nation. To Scottish writers contemplating their native land from Renaissance Paris, the rigors of life in the north needed interpretation. Steeped in the classics, they were reminded of ancient Rome and declared the notoriously frugal diet of the highlands a source of republican virtue and military valor. Food remained a defining metaphor (compare Appadurai, 30:1, on India), part of arguments for resisting temptations to the south. English ways were to Scottish moralists as West German prosperity was to East German socialists. Those proud and eventually Protestant strictures would long resonate in Scotland, establishing a distinctive tradition connecting culture and politics (see Camic, 25:1; and Howe, 31:3).

*Constructing Identity.* In the last decades a vast literature, both theoretical and empirical, has explored the ways in which cultural and national identity is created; and the three articles in this rubric build from that base (compare Jackson and

Maddox on Bolivia and Tanzania, 35:2; Eriksen on Mauritania, 36:3) to investigate three unique examples. The first studies a case of state making in which the policies of the state are intended to reinforce national sentiment and have an effect, perhaps unintended, on the kind of state that results. The second compares two areas of colonial empire, one of which results in a single state whereas the other divides into several, and uses the comparison to test explanations of how national identities are formed. The third examines an earlier step in the construction of identity, the creation of histories meant to define and legitimate it. Uri Ben-Eliezer grounds his study of Israel in the importance of military force (on its role in state making, compare Lissak, 9:3; Ness and Stahl, 19:1; and Mazrui, 19:2). The need for military strength led the new state of Israel to become a nation-in-arms much, Ben-Eliezer argues, as France had done during the Revolution, Prussia did after its defeat by Napoleon, and Japan did following the Meiji restoration. These comparisons facilitate a discussion of how the presence of the military permeated civil society and social institutions until militarism became part of public life (compare Mouzelis on military dictatorships, 28:1). David Henley establishes a classic comparison: the fragmentation of French Indochina compared to the constitution of an Indonesian nation from part of a Malay culture (which was split between Indonesia and Malaysia) and a cluster of distinct societies (on Indonesia itself, see Stirling, 8:1; Lev, 7:2; von Mehren, 7:2; Jaspan, 7:3; Weiner, 15:2; Lane, 17:2; Kahn, 20:1; and Stoler, 31:1). In assessing these two examples, Henley applies the principal alternative interpretations for the origins of national identity and finds evidence for both. There were prior, identifiable cultures; and the role of colonial state policy was important, but neither is sufficient to differentiate between the two outcomes. After imaginatively considering other possible policies and outcomes, the importance of elite formation (compare de Carvalho, 24:3) and other Southeast Asian examples (see Evers on bureaucracy there, 29:4; Lieberman on Burma, 29:1; Peletz on Malaysia, 35:1; and Vanderveest on Thailand, 35:1), Henley concludes cautiously but with a far-reaching suggestion—timing, the chronology of state formation and of resistance, may have made the difference that permitted an Indonesian state but not an Indochinese one. Andrew Shryock's sensitive engagement with the wise elders of the Balga tribesmen provides a quite different example (note Lindner on nomadic society, 24:4 and Lindholm on kinship and authority, 28:2). For them, the state remains a shadowy if vaguely threatening presence. They feel challenged to construct a written text that will fix the standing of their lineages, and this intimate account of their competing struggles to do so explores the relationship of oral and written knowledge (see Silverblatt, 30:1; Ewald, 30:2; Niezen, 33:2; and Klein, 34:3), the flexibility of tradition and the nature of a sacred text (note Fuller, 30:2; and Kratz, 35:1), varied forms of cultural transmission (see Eickelman, 20:4; and Akinnaso, 34:1) and the instrumental construction of histories composed in the course of intense battles over sources (compare Siddiqi, 28:3; Sangren, 30:4; Bowen, 31:1; and Siu, 32:4). The bricolage that constructs identities is not lightly achieved, and the resulting formation cannot mask the materials from which it was made nor the nature of the particular instruments used.