

## Book Reviews

### *In Humboldt's Shadow: A Tragic History of German Ethnology*

H. Glenn Penny, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021, ISBN: 9780691211145, 234 pp., Hb. £25.00, \$29.95

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*In Humboldt's Shadow* explores the trajectory of the Ethnological Museum of Berlin (hereafter, the Museum), one of the largest and most important anthropological museums of the world. The founding director of the Museum, Adolf Bastian, was inspired by Alexander von Humboldt's inclusive vision of the world and his inductive method. He believed that everyday objects produced by ordinary men bear the impressions of their worldviews. So he travelled across the globe to collect such objects for his museum where they could be scrutinised to reveal a total human history through a vast comparative analysis of the diverse worldviews that made them. Chapter One details Bastian's adventurous journeys through the non-Western worlds, against the backdrop of European imperialism, and the exhaustive travel accounts that he eventually wrote describing almost everything that he had encountered on his way. In the course of these arduous voyages, he not only collected material traces of human history but also established enduring networks. His contacts often went out of their way to secure objects for his museum.

Bastian feared that ethnographic objects would soon become rare as their commercial, scientific and political value was steadily rising. Hence, he sent out collectors to acquire as many such objects as possible, as fast as possible, before Christianity and the money economy devastated them. He raised additional funds from private donors for this purpose. Bastian believed that large-scale ethnological collections could help him determine how folk ideas grew out of elementary ideas, basic patterns of thought, as people adapted to environments and specific historical developments within particular ge-

ographies. The first part of Chapter Two documents the highly successful expedition of one such collector in British Columbia. The second part explains the problems faced by Bastian and his assistants to arrange and display the collections. The chaos that had plagued the Museum became a major issue of public criticism during the turn of the twentieth century.

The first part of Chapter Three narrates how Felix Von Luschan secured the largest and most unique collection of the bronze statues seized by the British soldiers during a punitive expedition to Benin in 1897 from private collectors and antiquities dealers while competing against other museum directors. The second part demonstrates how Luschan's analysis of the Benin artefacts debunked racism and anti-Semitism. It also shows how colonialism enabled the growth of German ethnology. Another common problem highlighted by Chapters Two and Three is that often the collectors, due to lack of proper training, did not gather any ethnological information along with the objects, making it difficult for the curators and ethnologists to study them.

Big and small museums that came up in Germany during the turn of the twentieth century competed and collaborated among themselves to expand their holdings. Each of them developed their own collecting networks that drew on German communities abroad. Not only did the Germans living in the non-European lands regularly ship artefacts to the museums in their homeland but they also hosted collectors and ethnologists from Germany, provided them with all kinds of logistical aids and even accompanied them on their research trips. Chapter Four offers a vivid account of how those global networks operated. It unveils how even after the death of Franz Termer, who conducted several long-term research trips to Guatemala on behalf of Museum of Ethnology of Hamburg, his Museum kept on acquiring objects from Central America through the connections he forged.

The management of the Museum increasingly found it difficult to accommodate the ever-growing



collections due to space pressures. After repeated appeals, the city authority decided to set up a new museum complex in Dahlem. But its construction was stopped mid-way due to financial crisis. Major scientific expeditions were also brought to a halt. In the meantime, the science of prehistory gained prominence as it could legitimise claims that Germany's natural borders lay far beyond those of the Weimar Republic. Consequently, research grants were redirected. On the other hand, German ethnology moved from denouncing race science to actively promoting it in order to survive the Nazi regime. After the war, the scholarly community chose to forget ethnology's role in abetting National Socialism. It was only in the 1970s that university students started revolting against the previous generation's complicity. As the discipline was coming to terms with the past, the Museum management tried hard to retrieve its holdings from the safer locations to where they were transported before the war and the allied powers that rounded them up as war trophies. Many of the objects which survived wartime ravages perished later due to negligence. The process of fetching them was protracted and strenuous. The reassembled Museum prioritised displaying representative objects over research under the influence of the art historians. The Bastian vision was thus completely lost. It was only during the late twentieth century that curators and ethnologists started making efforts to transform the Museum into a working space by inviting members of indigenous communities to see the objects produced by their ancestors and contribute to our understanding of total human history.

The central concern of the book is the changing relationship between museums, the people from whom museum collections originated, and the museum public. It highlights how museum collections, whose inherent potential to raise sensitivity about myriad human cultures are often obscured by the debates about colonialism and repatriation, can be utilised by anthropologists to recast their discipline into an applied science. The book therefore is an important contribution to the interfaces of the fields of applied anthropology and museum anthropology.

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*The Government of Emergency: Vital Systems, Expertise, and the Politics of Security*

Stephen J. Collier and Andrew Lakoff, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021, ISBN 978-0-6911-9927-6, 480 pp., Pb. £74.00, \$95.00

Reviewed by Brooke Hypes

*The Government of Emergency* begins with a clear objective: unpack the now taken-for-granted ways governments conceptualise and manage emergencies. The authors do this by tracing the genealogy of emergency management agencies and methods in the context of the American government between the presidencies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower, encompassing the successive emergencies of the Depression, World War II, the Korean War, and the early Cold War. The authors establish this as the critical period where modern understandings of emergency government emerged.

In the early twentieth century, the national economy was becoming increasingly complex and interconnected. These changes created a new set of problems related to the vulnerability of vital systems because even a local level disruption could have a catastrophic impact on the national economy. As seemingly existential threats arose related to this new type of vulnerability, a different political rationality developed. Understandings of what the government *could* and *should* do changed, allowing exceptional and often unprecedented government action.

The authors' analysis of US emergency government begins with the Great Depression and New Deal-era reforms. Because the emergency was economic, so too were the interventions. Economists and bureaucrats developed what the authors call the 'science of flows', which involved detailed study of the economic system, its vital and component industries, and how resources flowed from raw materials to end products. In the context of the Depression, officials used this science to determine which economic interventions would yield the greatest benefits.

As World War II approached, the government became less concerned with economic stimulus and more with economic mobilisation for war. The science of flows again found new applications during World War II, as economists transitioned to bombing offices responsible for selecting strategic targets. Essentially, these offices identified industrial bottlenecks, where the destruction of relatively few facilities would have a seemingly disproportionate impact on the enemy's war-making abilities. Indus-

trial facilities that produced a key input (e.g. rubber) for essential end products (e.g. tyres) made ideal targets, particularly when such facilities were few and could not be quickly repaired.

The US government soon turned this type of analysis inwards. Economists identified similar vulnerabilities in the US economy and developed plans to mitigate the associated risks. But the advent of nuclear weapons soon shifted the focus of emergency government again—emergency preparedness offices became concerned with not only industrial vulnerability but also the survival of the civilian population and critical infrastructure. Because emergency preparedness agencies could not develop plans based on experience from a prior large-scale nuclear attack, they instead had to rely on computer-based statistical modelling. In this context, federal emergency preparedness agencies constructed technical interventions, analyses, and exercises. The effectiveness of these plans, however, was limited by a lack of centralised authority.

Some might argue that the book is limited in its scope—any discussion of US emergency government risks seeming incomplete when it does not address the changes brought on by the War on Terror. The authors, however, acknowledge the counterintui-

tive scope in the preface. Whereas many would see nuclear preparedness measures during the early Cold War as a logical place to start tracing the evolution of modern emergency government, it is here the authors end their analysis. The focus on relatively obscure mid-century agencies and officials may limit the book's relevance to current emergency management practitioners, but this approach also yields benefits because it gathers and associates information in new ways. By exploring how government practices with seemingly dissimilar purposes became entwined, the authors offer a different perspective on how modern emergency government came to be.

Ultimately, the way the authors reframe the emergence of modern emergency government opens important questions. Instead of belabouring well-covered issues, such as the compatibility of emergency government with constitutional principles, the authors focus on novel questions raised by their genealogical approach. Though the story they present might seem incomplete with the omission of post-9/11 changes and limited by the still-unfolding impacts of COVID-19, the book offers a promising foundation for further study of the evolution of emergency government in the United States.