

Empires, Beliefs, Emotions: Cross-Cultural Affective Histories

Foreword

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The history of emotions is a field of study that has expanded rapidly in recent years, prompting a major reassessment of the significance of emotional experience in historical research. A pioneering role was played in this by the Annales School of Historians, including Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel, who argued that history should be written from the ‘bottom up’, exploring the everyday experience of men and women in Europe. The field is now vast, and divided over whether emotions are to be viewed as culturally constructed or biologically determined, as well as the importance that should be attributed to the language and cultural codes that shape and control emotional behaviour. The thematic section of issue 20 of CROMOHS focuses on the intersection between beliefs and emotions in the context of cross-cultural imperial encounters and interactions.

This issue also includes Susan Broomhall’s article exploring how interpretations and practices of entangled emotions and beliefs were critical to European engagement with Florida during the mid-sixteenth century and Benjamin Steiner’s article on ‘colonial’ spaces and emotional styles in French Senegambia (c. 1630 – c. 1730). Finally, it features two captivating interviews with prominent historians Charles Zika and Daniela Hacke.

The opening historiographic piece has been offered by Merry Wiesner-Hanks, Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, who significantly notes on p. 2:

‘New scholarly fields develop at the time they do for a reason (or more often reasons), and scholars who *are* historians of the emotions have several explanations for why the field took off when it did, some of which reflect their own personal trajectories through (and out of) the linguistic turn, gender history, cultural history, body history, and so on. More than one has pointed to an event outside the realm of academe, however, and, in fact, closely related to the politics of 2016: the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Jan Plamper has noted that although scholars were already studying affect, feelings, and the emotions, this event “catalytically sped up several interrelated processes that were already underway,” and helped create “the conditions that made the ‘emotions moment’ possible in various disciplines and fields.”

One may not agree with Plamper about the extent of the impact of 9/11 on the field as a whole, but his comments also point to the particular relevance of the conjunction of topics that is the theme of this special issue: Empires, Beliefs, Emotions. Whatever else 9/11 was, it was an event that brought these three together. Both its causes and its consequences have been cross-cultural and connected, the new course *Cromohs* has taken as a journal.⁷