

# Report on the 124<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) (January 7-10, 2010)

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The 124<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association took place in beautiful San Diego, California. In addition to the scheduled AHA presentations, there were numerous meetings of many smaller groups that are affiliated with the AHA. I attended the business meeting of the *Peace History Society* (PHS) and a reception that the *Society* sponsored on Saturday evening. The PHS is a small group that is nevertheless quite active during the year with activities that include a regional meeting for its members. The small size of the group makes it easy for new members to get to know others in the group, a definite plus when the conference is only about four days long. One of the highlights of the AHA annual meeting was the publishers' exhibits in the Douglas Pavilion of the Hyatt Hotel where registered attenders could peruse a seemingly unending display of new publications.

Because of the size of the AHA, numerous presentations are made during the four days, making it impossible to attend all or even a majority of them. The benefit is that, with very few exceptions, during any one time slot one can always find a presentation that is of interest. The following summaries are of sessions that I chose to attend.

### 1. **Thursday, 1/7 — “Is Google Good for History ?”**

Sponsored by the AHA Research Division and the American Association for History and Computing.

Chairman : Shawn Martin, University of Pennsylvania

Panel : 1) Daniel J. Cohen, Center for History and New Media,  
George Mason University

2) Paul Duguid, University of California at Berkeley

3) Brandon Badger, Google Representative

Daniel Cohen began the discussion by stating that Google (i.e., Google Books) has been very good for history. According to Mr. Cohen, Google has some poor scans in Google Books, but proportionately speaking, the number is quite small. Furthermore, Google has remedies for these through their “recapture” systems and Google Books has made it possible to make more comprehensive scans. He was critical, however, of the lack of openness in the way Google operates. Furthermore, one of the very serious problems of Google Books is that it is difficult to download many of the books.

Paul Duguid suggested that Google was indeed good for history, but not good enough. He complained that librarians have been too uncritical of Google. Google’s big problem is the problem of “mega-data.” As Mr. Duguid put it, it is a great “bunch of books,” but it is not a corpus. How did Google go wrong? Mr. Duguid suggested that Google may have succumbed to a naïve romanticism that made the project seem deceptively easy. One of the problems is in deciding how to judge which books should be included in Google Books. Mr. Duguid suggested that it is difficult to criticize Google Books because Google as an organization has a chameleon character and because it is free. Nevertheless, librarians and scholars need to pressure Google on this project; it is not inevitable that it will get better.

Brandon Badger (Google Representative) responded to some of the comments of the previous panelists and talked further about Google Maps,

Google World, Google Earth, and Google Web Search (the time-line view). He spoke of the universality of access enjoyed by Google's products across the world. A discussion followed Mr. Badger's presentation.

**2. Thursday, 1/7 — (Plenary Session) “Musical Encounters in the Early Atlantic : An Exploratory Performance”**

Chair : Karen Ordahl Kupperman, New York University

Additional participants : Walter W. Woodward, University of Connecticut, Richard Rath, Jeanne McDougall, Bob Zentz, and a group from the Early Music Program of the Thornton School of Music (Adam Knight Gilbert, Director) at the University of Southern California.

Ms. Kupperman began with a discussion of the early Atlantic period during which music was seen as basic to our existence. It was thought that through music one could understand the universe. Music was seen as a key to solving the problems of a universal language. She pointed out interestingly that Europeans thought that Chinese was a “sung language” because of its five tones.

Mr. Woodward followed up with a presentation entitled, “Sounding the North Americans : The European Record of Early Musical Contact.” Mr. Woodward compared the modern era of sounds (e.g., cars, motors, et al) with the sounds of the early American period, which were mostly sounds of nature. Modern people hear the world differently than early Americans did. Electricity has separated us from the source of sound's production. We need to remember that most music in history has been communal and participatory. Therefore, one should not fail to recognize the importance of music in the historical record. The sound of music was a part of the exploration of the new world. Fife and drums were a part of military life. On ship voyages, many instruments were played and there was singing and dancing ; it was one way to fight the monotony. Musicians were hired for various purposes on ships. Religious services used music and music helped to order daily activities. Furthermore, music was important for contacts with Native Ameri-

cans. Native Americans were fascinated by the music and the music helped shape the social relations between explorers and the native people. Songs definitely had a functional purpose. For example, on Frobisher's trips to Inuit areas, an instrument would be played when one of the Inuit people was near. Then, when the Inuit person came closer and closer to hear the music, someone would grab him and pull him into the boat. Woodward also pointed out that music is one of the best non-drug mind alterers.

Richard Rath's presentation was entitled, "A Voyage to the Islands : Reconstructing African Music from Seventeenth-Century Jamaica." Mr. Rath played and explained several songs. He also did an impressive PowerPoint and sound track presentation to give the audience a good idea of the nature of the music he was discussing. He also pointed out that some of the names of the songs were the names of African nations. For those interested in pursuing this subject further, he suggested Hans Sloane's *Voyage to the Islands* as a good source.

This session ended with a most instructive and enjoyable performance and explanatory comments by Jeanne McDougall, Bob Zentz, and a group from the Early Music Program (Adam Knight Gilbert, Director) of the University of Southern California concerning music during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in America. Music delighted the native inhabitants of the land and turned out to be a good tool of communication. The members of this group discussed the instruments used by indigenous people during this period. And then, to the delight of the AHA audience, the group recreated (performed) some of the music from this period.

### **3. Friday, 1/8 — "War, Religion, and American National Identity"**

Chair : Laurie Maffly-Kipp, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Additional participants : Katherine Carte Engel, Texas A & M University, Edward J. Blum, San Diego State University, Matthew Avery Sutton, Washington State University

Ms. Engel began with a paper entitled “Breaking Ties : The SPG [Society for the Propagation of the Gospel], the SPCK [Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge], and International Protestantism during the American Revolution.” She spoke of various internalizing trends that developed in American Protestantism in the first half of the eighteenth century. Of particular importance in this regard were the SPCK and the SPG. The SPCK was active in Bible translation efforts and reached out to Protestants in other nations. It also worked with the British Charity Association. The SPG was the formal missionary arm of the Anglican Church and, in a sense, an agent of the British Empire. Its goal was to promote the Anglican version of the Christian religion. The SPCK took little interest in the American revolution, concentrating rather on its own annual publications and other means of advancing “true religion.”

Mr. Blum’s paper was entitled “Give the Devil His Due : National Division and Concepts of Evil in the Civil War Era.” He discussed references to the Devil in conversations during the time of the Civil War. Indeed, during this period, Satan and his minions seemed to be everywhere, i.e., talk about the Devil was almost ubiquitous. A bit ironically, however, the times were also characterized by secularization and a profound destabilization, even though no one group in particular was especially associated with evil. People often invoked Satan to explain the tumultuous events of the period. For example, James W. Hunicutt, a strict Unionist, pronounced secession as being “like the Devil,” i.e., according to Hunicutt, Satan was behind the secession movement. Many of Lincoln’s opponents often aligned him with the demonic. In an impressive Power-Point presentation, among other things Mr. Blum showed several cartoons that indicated the preoccupation with the idea of the Devil in the minds of many people during the war. On the other hand, references to the Devil were not always pejorative in nature ; e.g., it was seen as a good thing when military troops “fought like devils.” Mr. Blum further stated that

during the Civil War, devils, demons, and other manifestations of evil played an important role in sacralizing the war.

Mr. Sutton's presentation was entitled, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition: World War II, the Apocalypse, and Fundamentalist Political Activism." According to Mr. Sutton, fundamentalists like Bauman saw World War II from an apocalyptic perspective. Using the Sunday School Times as an example, Mr. Sutton pointed out how that influential church periodical had claimed that the Bible had predicted events of war. He showed how fundamental analyses affected the political policy of the time. From their premillennial theological perspective, fundamentalist Christians saw certain events and persons such as the following as having particular significance :

1. Mussolini seemed to fit the idea of an anti-Christ.
2. The Third Reich was racist and anti-Semitic.
3. The association of Russia with the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel and the fear of Communism and the "spirit of the Bolsheviks." (During this period, prophecy articles in the Sunday School Times were very popular.)
4. The threat to Christianity of the growing power of Japan. It was thought that eastern nations (especially Japan) would join the Anti-Christ and perhaps overrun Christianity.

Fundamentalists had a fatalistic theology, but nevertheless sought to fight fatalism in the world. They saw themselves as the guardians of the nation's virtue and sent forth a call to action to save American ideals.

Critical comments on the three papers were offered by Mark Noll. He remarked that the papers were well-researched, but felt that a broadened perspective would perhaps suggest a different interpretation compared to those offered by the presenters.

**5. Saturday, 1/9 — "Gender, Sex, and Slavery in East Asia"**

Chair : Daniel V. Botsman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Additional participants : Amy B. Stanley, Northwestern University, Joy S. Kim, Princeton University, Johanna S. Ransmeier, McGill University

Ms. Stanley began with a paper entitled, “Pawned Wives, Prostitutes, and Purchased Women in Seventeenth-Century Japan.” She began her presentation by focusing on a seventeenth century Japanese woman named Kokane. Kokane had run away from her husband who had been renting her out as a prostitute. During this period of time, a wife in Inai was considered to be her master’s property ; i.e., there was a relationship between kinship and ownership. Women were bought, sold, and traded in this mining town. The judge of the domain was Masakage, and he viewed wives and children as possessions. Men would rent out their wives for money, for example, to buy a mine shaft. Women were interchangeable with currency. From Masakage’s perspective, all women could be purchased, i.e., women were viewed as commodities. Women thought that marriage should protect them from being sold as slaves.

Unfortunately, however, there was an overlap between marriage and ownership. In her paper, Ms. Stanley made the points that 1) marriage is not the same as unlimited servitude, and 2) women should have the right to claim monogamy in marriage.

Ms. Kim’s discussion was entitled, “Slavery and Literary Imagination in Late Choson Korea.” In Korea during this period, a slave was both a person and a piece of property. There was chattel slavery ; women could be bought, inherited, and sold. Sources for Ms. Kim’s research on slavery in Korea of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (a time of economic and social flux) included slavery tales that were collected in various anthologies that proliferated during this period. From these collections one can learn about the anxieties and desires of the slaves. As the power of the slave-owning elite waned, slaves began to plot against their masters, to trick them, and to run away from them. Actually, slaves were able to run away, but it was also legal for masters to pursue them. Some slaves be-

came nomads, roving bandits, and some even became wealthy. Slaves were physically marked, but the signs were temporal, i.e., the physical disfigurement was not permanent, e.g., a shaved head. According to one interesting tale, a master located a runaway slave. The master found, however, that the slave exhibited strong virtues, e.g., loyalty and chastity, and that she was sexually attractive. She was faithful to her husband ; but she was also related to her master. She even saved her father's life. In the end, the slave dies to save the life of someone else. Though all women of the time faced restrictions, in this regard female slaves were different from elite women. Elite women were restricted, but female slaves were actually much freer personally, and more uninhibited, even in the bedroom. However, female slaves could never be freed.

Ms. Ransmeier's topic was "Cost and Confucian Values : Selling Women in China." Ms. Ransmeier dealt basically with women in North China during the nineteenth century. At this time, women could be transferred from one home to another, and children could be sold. One of the serious problems was the use of forged documents in these transfers and sales. Much of the reason for selling a woman was the desperate poverty in which people at that time and place lived.

#### **6. Saturday, 1/9 — "U. S. and Transnational Perspectives on the End of Black Power"**

Chair : Waldo Emerson Martin Jr., University of California, Berkeley  
 Additional participants : Elizabeth Kai Hinton, Columbia University, Robeson T.P. Frazier, University of Southern California, Samir Meghelli, Columbia University, and Matthew Birkhold, Binghamton University, State University of New York.

Ms. Hinton presented a paper on the topic of "Nixon's War on Crime and the Rise of Federal Carceral Measures." She pointed out that Nixon's preoccupation with using "law and order" measures to quell civil disorder replaced previous federal efforts that focused on the War on Poverty. Nixon, however, was especially interested in the crime problem, and while



he was in office the federal government spent a great deal of money on law enforcement efforts. Indeed, the budget for this “war on crime” increased ten-fold to \$698 million (1972). With increasing crime, increasing problems with gangs, and with increasing numbers of black juveniles being incarcerated, the crime rate became a powerful political issue. In California, for example, the cost of incarceration had risen to \$23,000 per inmate per year.

Mr. Frazier dealt with the topic, “Winter on the Equator : The Successes and Failures of Robert Williams’ Personal Propaganda Machine.” Mr. Frazier’s focus here was on the discourse between the left community and the Black Power movement. He explained how Williams opened connections with the Chinese government under Mao. Williams then returned to Cuba saying that he had been impressed with Chinese society. However, Williams “bumped heads” with Cuban leaders over racism. Cubans basically did not support Black nationalism, because they feared that to do so would encourage black Cubans. As Frazier explained, Williams was critical of Cuban treatment of certain groups like musicians who couldn’t play jazz, gospel, et al. Many felt that Williams was too friendly with China. Ultimately, China defected from third world politics.

Mr. Meghelli’s topic was “From the Algiers Motel to Algiers, Algeria : Black Power in Transnational Perspective, 1962-78. In this discussion he spoke of the importance of the hijacking of the Delta Airlines plane in Miami (destination : Algeria) in 1972 for the wider issue of the relation between Algerians and the American Black Power movement. As Meghelli explained, Algeria was important to the American freedom movement that had begun with figures such as M.L. King and Malcolm X. Indeed, there was a solidarity between African-Black nationalism and the Algerians. After the hijacking, however, for economic reasons Algerians sought better relations with the US. As a result, sympathy for the Black Panthers (whom the Algerians had previously supported)

began to wane. In short, though the hijackers were successful in their hijacking efforts, the hijackers' acts led ultimately to a deterioration of the relationship between the Black Panthers and the Algerians.

Mr. Birkhold's paper was entitled, "Eventually They'll Have to Move the Factory Out of Detroit or Give It to Us' : The Rise and Demise of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers." He pointed to the interesting fact that though interest in the Black Power movement has recently been increasing, there seems to be little interest in the issue of black labor. In his discussion of the historical background of the issue, Mr. Birkhold explained that before 1941, white capitalists used black workers to break strikes, and in the early part of the twentieth century, immigrants were hired to work in factories (especially automobile factories). The generations of immigrants differed in their attitudes toward work in America. First generation immigrants faced the issue of whether to stay in America and build a life or to return to Europe after making enough money to do so. Second generation immigrants were more interested in unionization because they definitely wanted to build a good life in America. They were very concerned about issues such as the long-range impact that decentralization and automation had on workers. Around 1962, Marxist-Leninism began to have a major impact on workers, especially black workers. For example, over a long period of time, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers gradually moved toward Marxist-Leninism. As Mr. Birkhold pointed out, this was not a "fly-by-night" development, for the League had long been concerned with the importance of seizing state power. In reality, however, this turned out to be impossible because of various capitalistic developments, e.g., decentralization.

Mr. Martin concluded the session by offering a few questions for future consideration and a few critical comments on the presentations. He thought it was important to determine just what Black Power is. Furthermore, he asked, to what extent was the War on Poverty actually a war on poverty? He made an important point about Nixon's "law and order"

perspective, pointing to the difference between social control and social uplift and suggesting that Nixon had no real concern for social uplift, but rather was more concerned about social control.

### **7. Sunday, 1/10 — “Whither the History of the Emotions”**

Chair : Peter N. Stearns, George Mason University

Additional participants : Susan J. Matt, Weber State University, Barbara H. Rosenwein, Loyola University, Chicago, Darrin McMahan, Florida State University, Nicole E. Eustace, New York University

Ms. Matt began with a presentation entitled, “Technology and the Emotions.” This was basically a short, interpretive history of technological developments in communications. She spoke initially of the value of photographs, which early on gave families a sense of their intimate connections with relatives and friends. She explained that the Post Office developed because of the emotional need to have contact with separated family members and friends. As time went on, electronic means of communication like telephones and telegraphs made physical proximity less and less necessary for informative communication. In short, people have a basic need to reach out to others and this need was one of the main drivers of communication technology.

Mr. Stearns’ presentation was entitled, “Emotion and Media.” He began with a discussion in which he compared the reactions of people after the “9-11” bombing of the World Trade Center in New York with the reactions of people after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. For example, after the Pearl Harbor bombing, there was not a great deal of media influence on the way people felt about the event. In contrast, after the “9-11” events there was a powerful phenomenon, viz., the “mediation of emotion,” that created from the event a vivid fear that affected even people beyond America’s borders. Mr. Stearns further discussed the role of this phenomenon in events such as the recent murders at Virginia Tech University as compared to its less prominent role in events such as the assassinations that took place in Texas. Though there was no national attempt

to memorialize the Texas assassinations, there was a strong response in favor of some kind of memorialization in the case of the Virginia Tech murders. The *mediation of emotion* is a very real phenomenon with very real and profound effects. It can even be perceived in commercial advertising, e.g., the famous commercial run by the Lyndon Johnson presidential campaign in 1964 that filmed a child and a nuclear bomb cloud in the background. (The purpose of the commercial was to create fear of the Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater, in the minds of the voters.) Indeed, the *mediation of emotion* offers many opportunities for political manipulation. Mr. Stearns spoke of the need for historians to do more interdisciplinary research on this topic.

Ms. Rosenwein's paper was entitled, "Modernity and the Emotions." Her discussion dealt with the topic of "emotional communities" and the role that conceptions of emotions play in the shaping of those emotions. In fact, she explained, theories affect our emotions. One result of this is that certain groups in society become self-reflective, and some groups do not.

Ms. Eustace's paper dealt with the topic of "Nationalism and Emotion." She discussed men's attitudes toward women and men's perceptions of female beauty, comparing this with male attitudes toward the nation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I regret that I have no notes from the presentation by Darrin McMahon that was scheduled for this session. He may have been absent from the meeting, though I cannot with certainty recall if that was the case.