Humanitarianism in the Modern World

This is a history of famine relief and humanitarianism. The authors apply a moral economy approach to shed new light on the forces and ideas that motivated and shaped humanitarian aid during the Great Irish Famine, the famine of 1921–2 in Soviet Russia, and the 1980s Ethiopian Famine. They place these episodes within a distinctive periodisation of humanitarianism which emphasises the correlations with politico-economic regimes: the time of elitist laissez-faire liberalism in the nineteenth century as one of ad hoc humanitarianism; that of Taylorism and mass society from c. 1900–70 as one of organised humanitarianism; and the blend of individualised post-material lifestyles and neo-liberal public management since 1970 as one of expressive humanitarianism. The book as a whole shifts the focus of the history of humanitarianism from the imperatives of crisis management to the pragmatic mechanisms of fundraising, logistics on the ground, and accounting.

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Published online by Cambridge University Press

Published online by Cambridge University Press

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Published online by Cambridge University Press

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108493529
DOI: 10.1017/9781108655903

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781108655903

First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Götz, Norbert, 1965– author. | Brewis, Georgina, author. | Werther, Steffen, 1976– author.
Title: Humanitarianism in the modern world : the moral economy of famine relief / Norbert Götz, Georgina Brewis, Steffen Werther.
Description: 1 Edition. | New York : Cambridge University Press, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020009071 (print) | LCCN 2020009072 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108493529 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108737371 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108655903 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: International relief. | Fund raising. | Humanitarianism–History.
Classification: LCC HV553 .G657 2020 (print) | LCC HV553 (ebook) | DDC 363.8/526–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020009071
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020009072

ISBN 978-1-108-49352-9 Hardback

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