

Editorial Foreword

THE THIN LINE OF CULTURE. The encounter of distinctive cultures is the human experience that most consistently occasions fresh perceptions about society, perceptions expressed in poetry and literature and codified over and over in all the social sciences. In our century the fascination with strange customs, the charm of misunderstanding, and the search for laws of development have all been overshadowed by the theme of cultural domination. Understood in various ways—as a psychological disposition, as an expression of culture in itself, as the result of raw power, as the asymmetrical effect of trade, and as the goal of the state—cultural domination remains the great, guilty achievement of the West. These topics have filled many pages of *CSSH*, and in this issue they return, to be discussed outside the familiar frameworks of theory (and accusation) associated with terms like imperialism, dependency, and the world system. Sooner or later, of course, discussions of cultural dominance are likely to become discussions of anthropology; and in part that is true here, too (continuing the earlier discussions of Apapadurai, Hannerz, and Yengoyan in *CSSH* 28:2; Ortner in 26:1; Clifford and Pletsch, both in 23:4; Cohn and Hammel, both in 22:2; and Bock in 16:2 and 8:3). But the focus is on cultural perception and social practice and how one forms the other.

Gerald Sider explores the white man's discovery of the American Indian whom Europeans saw in terms of the fantasies and fears they brought with them. From their almost candid texts, he sensitively squeezes a revealing subtext, using techniques once associated more with literary analysis or psychology than social science. He argues not only that cultural domination builds upon self-deception but that it in turn leads dominated peoples to reorganize their cultures (including their own self-deceptions), so that both cultures are reshaped as they are renewed (compare Wesler on Iroquoia trade, 25:4, and Clendinnen on Mayan culture under the Spanish conquest, 22:3). Carter Bentley makes two related points in his discussion of ethnic identity. Like Sider, he finds the experience of differentiation to be the source of new tensions requiring a cultural response; and that response, he argues, rests upon a people's daily experience, the social practice or habitus (in Bourdieu's term), of a culture. He illustrates his argument with the case of a Maranao woman, a daughter of Islam in the Americanized Philippines (an example that suggests the painful position of colonial elites in any number of nations, a problem often considered in *CSSH*; also note Hechter on ethnic separatism, 21:1). Nancy Scheper-Hughes also quotes Foucault and comments on the current hermeneutic trend in cultural analysis. The anthropologist's intrusive need to know is thus related to the way knowledge and observation can be used to dominate at home in the West as well as abroad (see Hind on internal

colonialism and Taussig's evocation of Roger Casement, both in 26:3). By comparing responses among the Irish and among native Americans to cultural domination, Scheper-Hughes makes the topic both clearer and more poignant. Discussions of anthropology lead to reflections on history, and Hans Medick's carefully structured analysis argues not only that historians have much to learn from anthropology but that social history as currently practiced can avoid some characteristic deadends and false dilemmas through a deft, sensitive, and essentially anthropological understanding of culture. He would also have that understanding firmly tied to the social structure and the nature of social relations, thus implying solutions to some classic dilemmas of anthropology.

ESCAPING THE STATE. State making has become a term so common that social scientists sometimes sound as if they could sell the recipe. But modern studies of the state have come to emphasize the remarkable array of restrictions and resistance states everywhere have faced in their perennial efforts to mobilize, tax, and command. This research has brought an important modification of the older literature on bureaucracy (Eisenstadt, 1:1; Markoff, 17:4; and Heper as well as Kraus and Vanneman in 27:1), and in this issue Naomi Chazan and Victor Azarya look beyond established elites to consider social responses to the state in two contemporary African nations. Despite their different colonial experiences under Great Britain and France and the differences in their histories before and since, these two states are found to face very similar patterns of withdrawal that undermine the state's effectiveness without challenging its monopoly of coercive force (also see Mouzelis on military dictatorships, 28:1). In China Prasenjit Duara observes a still more complex paradox, which he labels state involution, a process whereby growth in the central state's capacity to tax was accompanied by a far greater increase in the revenue accruing to local agencies. The autonomy of local and corporate bodies in Qing and republican China (compare Fewsmith, 25:4) challenges a number of assumptions about the process of state making.

CSSH DISCUSSION. In every nation liberated from colonial rule, the importance of historical continuity is the controversial core of competing interpretations. And nowhere more so than in Southeast Asia (note Baker on the region's internal links, 23:1; Benda on elites, 7:3; de Vere Allen and the comment of Ness on Malayan bureaucracy, 12:2; and Brennan on the Rampur State, 23:3). For Burma, Victor Lieberman proposes an alternative view by considering one thousand years of history (compare Leach's concept of Burma as cultural frontier, 3:1) in which continuities of local needs and maritime influences weigh as heavily as the change in rulers. Sometimes issues of periodization, always a fundamental choice for the historian, can untie old knots.