

Editorial Foreword

Capitalism, Colonialism, and the Gift of the Gods. The delight of intellectual puzzles lies in their construction as well as their resolution, and K. Sivaramakrishnan's carefully structured essay allows the reader to share in both pleasures. We recognize in the topic our own heightened ecological awareness (and discover it to be neither new nor unproblematic). From a now familiar Foucauldian framework, we learn without surprise that forestry, too, was a site of discourse, focusing the intricate intersection of conceptions of science, visions of railroads and progress, and views of nature. To see all that clearly becomes another way of watching imperial power unfold (compare, Alexander and Alexander in *CSSH*, 33:2). We can anticipate the effect that economic pressures and ideologies of private property will have and can savor the irony as those effects are dressed in the rhetoric of conservancy and superior knowledge (see Grove, 35:2), but the process turns out to be more complicated than that. Regional differences prove crucial, for there are geographic constraints on biological exploitation. Historic claims, European and Indian, come into play (note the examples in Freitag, 22:4; Yang, 22:4; Cohn, 3:3). The Raj's subjects have cultures, too, with discourses of their own; and village economies have interests and social structures to defend. Sivaramakrishnan's artful discussion thus becomes a study of how protest movements mobilized through rhetoric and action and of how discourses multiplied, reshaping each other (on peasant protests, see Gallant, 36:4; Daniel, 35:3; Kincaid, 29:3; Rogers, 29:3; Scott, 29:3; Siddiqi, 28:3; and Adas, 23:2). This analysis leads back to a new understanding of the politics and policies of forest cultivation, an understanding achieved through recognition of the ways in which conflict determined outcomes by affecting comprehension, goals, and self-definition on all sides. In seeking to delineate the intersections of history and religion, nature and interests, local economies and imperial aims, Sivaramakrishnan builds a theory of change from the felling of forests.

Many of the same elements are at work in Joseph Masco's study of the famous potlatch of the Kwakwaka'wakw, whose conflicts with North American governments continue in courts to this day. Here, however, common understanding starts from the other end, from greater interest in a famous indigenous ritual than in Kwakwaka'wakw encounters with spreading imperial powers (see Klein, 34:3; Burns, 30:2; Sider, 29:1 on encounters with Native Americans). That neglect, which has been encouraged by the peculiarity that these imperial powers lacked an explicit imperial policy, is reinforced by an assumption that capitalism arrived in a flood that swamped indigenous cultures without requiring their engagement. When native concepts of nature are taken seriously, however, those assumptions are undercut and with striking results. The famed potlatch emerges as a rite transformed in the last years of the century, a creative response to capitalism and epidemic disease that reaffirmed religious notions of man and nature. The timeless customs of traditional natives turn out to be evidence once again of creative cultural adaptation.

Science and Health. Scientific paradigms became a fruitful subject of study once it was shown that they served to define the scientifically visible, forming method

and not just summarizing it; and that realization is even more germane for the history of medicine than of astronomy. In a related way, historians have made a cultural obsession with race a mainstay of American studies. These two intellectual trends come together in Melbourne Tapper's study of American medicine and sickle cell anemia (compare French physicians' view of peasants, Mitchell, 21:1). Finding sickle cells more common among African Americans than whites, doctors saw in their microscopes an internal sign of external, racial difference, an apparently empirical measure so welcome that contradictory evidence was challenged by mythic histories intended, like the epicycles added on the Ptolemaic system, to preserve for sickled cells their discriminatory power. If modern medicine bears the markers of the society that sustains it, then histories of madness and of emotions should similarly expose the hidden preoccupations of other eras. Yet, as the two review essays here make clear: In recovering the cultural constructions of the past, we risk entangling them in our own. Students of culture may today be more aware than some physiologists once were that evidence is never transparent, but problems of evidence remain at the core of their debates, as important and as difficult a problem in interpretive texts as in sterile laboratories.

Ideology Above, Belief Below. China's cultural revolution holds a fascination beyond the sinister attractions of horror and violent excess because it was so resolutely modern, so explicit in its modernizing project. Easily observed as revolution stripped naked and readily understood as the compression of a process of change that elsewhere took centuries, that awesome campaign has attracted an impressive amount of research. Andrew Kipnis starts from the ways in which Chinese communists and Western scholars alike placed programs for change on the dimension of evolutionary time as a movement consonant with urban society, progress, the state, and the future and contrary to peasant life, tradition, and rural society. Still, despite the power of the state, cultural resistance did form, even in Communist China. Kipnis finds it constructed in a bricolage (and the parallels with Sivaramakrishnan's Indian peasants are striking) cobbled from concepts of family, community, and religion (note Siu, 32:4; Harrell, 32:3; and compare Vandergeest, 35:1). But colonial India, that rewarding site for probing cultural encounters and the contradictions of imperial pressure, was very different from Communist China, and resistance was more covert. Chinese peasants constructed and reinforced an ideology of resistance with its own symbols and rites, adopting tradition, in much the way opposition movements often embrace the epithets used against them, and enabling these peasants to reinvent tradition as surely and effectively as European nationalists (on tradition, Kratz, 35:1; Shils, 13:2; Singer, 13:2). If traditions are not fixed and stable but multiple and malleable, constantly reassembled and forever changing so they can be put to new uses, neither are they benign, least of all in China's recent revolutions. Donald Sutton makes the unspeakable speak, to tell of the confluence of policy and region, ideology and ambition unleashing terrors, hatreds, local memories, and ritual practices that could foster extensive, public cannibalism (also see Li, 33:3; and on terror and violence, Fein, 35:4; Coronil and Skurski, 33:2; Taussig, 26:3; Lincoln, 27:2; and Price, 19:1). In their consideration of culture, discourse, and resistance, all the articles in this issue raise questions of method, a conjunction at the heart of Sherry Ortner's essay in the last section.