

Editorial Foreword

The Archaeology of Power. Imbedded in time and place, archaeological evidence is sought where change has stopped. Once uncovered, that evidence is forever fixed by measurement and label. Still, there are ways to use it for exploring the process of change; and Kathleen Biddick's way is to rethink the relations between people and things. Thus she finds in the material culture of medieval England evidence of how time and space were managed (compare Keddie on material culture in Moslem societies, in *CSSH*, 26:4; and the arguments in Pryor on the spread of the plow, 27:4). Biddick suggests a transformation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; credit, writing, and law (see Gerriets, 27:2; Saltman, 29:3; Bonfield, 31:3) provided techniques of power that were related to new patterns of settlement and to the formation of villages, more active markets (compare Larson, 27:3, on Egypt) and better pottery. Such pervasive transformations, difficult to establish and easy to debate, are by definition extraordinary; yet Elinor Melville exposes another. She, too, starts with material culture and the effects of socially structured power. Her emphasis on geography and climate, which could invite a familiar kind of determinism, leads her to argue instead for the fatal importance of intervening human choice. Resources that for centuries had supported cultivation in a Mexican valley failed because Spaniards used them badly (see Otto and Anderson, 24:1). Men can make even sheep destructive. Rapid ecological change in turn encouraged the displacement of Indian agriculture and favored larger haciendas. The conqueror's economic choices and social arrangements (compare Mackie and O'Malley, 30:4) in turn soon left their mark—a barren, arid landscape, itself a kind of archaeological record. For readers in the late twentieth century, the evidence meticulously assembled here about crops and grazing in a sixteenth-century Mexican valley tells a modern morality tale.

The Culture of Politics. Great art, it is generally believed, expresses both timeless truths and some of the essence of the age in which it was created. When, however, scholars seek to establish the links between an era and its art, they find few rules to guide them and no limits as to what evidence might matter, only traditions which are themselves cultural constructs. A common approach is to treat culture and context as distinct, each with its own needs and customs. That separation acknowledges the autonomy of high culture, recognizes that in some respects it makes its own standards, moves by its own laws, defines and resolves its own problems. At the same time, space is left, by disjunction, for looking at single works of art, conceding that each is made by an individual, serves specific purposes, and captures the circumstantial in a momentary combination. Culture but not context is generalized, and the convenient distinction between them risks reducing their connection to a series of accidents. Determined to explore these illusive linkages, Arthur Steinberg and

Jonathan Wylie invoke a remarkable array of factors in a lively essay that daringly addresses one of the great periods of Venetian painting. It developed, they find, from a new technology, a political and economic crisis, and a (characteristic) turn to culture in response (note Lanoue and Korovkin, 30:4). This led to a style (see Menashe, 7:3; Hafner, 11:4; and Cameron, 27:3 on style) that posed artistic (and theological) problems, challenges gradually met in the works of Bellini, Giorgioni, and Titian. Although few societies have so creatively avoided facing their failures, Titian's triumphant colors nevertheless masked decline. Culture, the object of study for Steinberg and Wylie, provides the mode of analysis for Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky. Using Mary Douglas's four-fold table of cultural dispositions, they take a fresh look at the role of the abolitionists in the origins of the American Civil War (Degler, 2:1; Sio, 7:3; Vickery, 16:3; and Graham, 23:4 discuss American attitudes toward slavery). Their argument, subtle and complex, traces in tight logical steps America's inexorable movement toward that final schism. Debate proved fatal. The principles thus exposed evoked whole cultures at odds, dividing elites and breaking up an establishment as differences over slavery alone had failed to do.

The Invention of Anthropology. A discipline profoundly committed to the study of others could be viewed as a moral and intellectual achievement, but discussions of anthropology are more often framed by consciousness of its original sin: historic links to colonial authority. In that respect the essays in this section give little comfort, but they broaden the picture and deepen the ironies. Uli Linke finds the origins of German anthropology in bureaucracies eager to know and manipulate their own subjects, studying customs and gathering statistics in order to extend their rule (see Heper, 27:1; Woolf, 31:3). Not just distant but difficult peoples were the target of state power, and not just anthropology but all social science its instrument. Linke's conclusions reach still further; in Germany, she argues, this program preceded romantic nationalism's preoccupation with the *volk* and associated interests of the state with this German research in a way that contrasts significantly with folklore movements in Great Britain and China. Things start differently in the study by Nicholas Thomas. Benevolent colonial administrators eager to preserve Fijian culture from colonial intrusion had first to define that culture (Rutz, 29:3, on Fiji; Stoler, 31:1, on colonizers). Concerned to save a society apparently in decline, they identified the problem in kinds of behavior which they had labelled as native. They responded with colonial logic. To preserve what they had already undermined, they turned destructively to police powers, health regulations, and village relocations. Ignorance when called knowledge can still be power.