

Editorial Foreword

Worlds of War. Ideological and methodological trends have made it easy to overlook how formative war can be. Old narratives of heroism and high politics took the importance of war for granted; but social history moved away from the decision making of the powerful, emphasizing instead the forces within which leaders worked and the way more ordinary people lived. While returning to a familiar subject, the two articles here offer some strikingly fresh conclusions. Marshall Poe's concern, the impact of the military revolution in early modern Europe, has a canonical place in the literature on state making: Costly changes in warfare required increased revenue, and the machinery to raise it became the basis of the monarchical state. In general the model may need significant modification, but it has never fit the history of the Russian state (see Rogger, in *CSSH*, 4:3; and Dewey 30:2, for an earlier period; Greenfeld, 32:3, and Kingston-Mann, 33:1, for the period just after). The Muscovite exception, Poe suggests, has been explained away in visions of Asiatic despotism; yet the impact of military reform was, if anything, greater in Eastern than in Western Europe. By rejecting another version of Orientalism, Poe opens the way for rethinking how the Russian state was formed and by implication how strong states emerged in Spain, France, and England (and compare Lissak, 9:3; Ness and Stahl, 19:1; Issawi, 22:4, and Berg, 27:2, on the response to military exigencies elsewhere). Michael Geyer and Charles Bright begin from two famous nation-building wars in the middle of the nineteenth century. They then proceed through a deft series of comparisons. Germany and the United States offer parallels so remarkable that one is surprised they are not more often noticed (see Peal, 31:2), but the limits of that comparison lead on to others until these wars about which so much has been written are placed in a global context of violence. This is history on a grand scale, obviously part of a still larger conception of world history (as with Wallerstein, 16:4; Skocpol, 18:2; Modelski, 20:2, and Smith, 20:2). The local wars that conventional diplomatic history so easily overlooked were, they maintain, not only important in themselves but expressions of significant, global processes (compare Gourevitch, 21:3). Overall, their unyielding focus on violence tends to dissolve differences of regime, economy, ideology, and intent that more familiar accounts emphasize. That interpretative shock in turn permits a revised conception of geographical fault lines, historical periodization, and global connections.

Ideologies for Living Off the Land. Life on the land so naturally seems a part of nature that customs become ideology, masking how varied, creative, and contrived human understandings of rural life can be. Each of the articles in this rubric treats a set of beliefs about what is natural behavior for those living on the land and also reminds readers of other sets of assumptions about life in

nature (some dangerously fallacious) contained within social science theories. Michael Donovan studies a period of transition in western Kenya, where colonial policy and market forces transformed the meaning of land tenure and where we automatically look for injustice, resentment, and resistance (the result of an admirable literature well exemplified by Blok, 14:4; Adas, 23:2; Scott, 29:3). Listening to the histories people imagine and the tales they tell (compare Taussig, 19:2; Rigby, 25:3; Bowen, 31:4; Slater, 33:3; Goldin and Rosenbaum, 35:1), he finds a different kind of comprehension. The changing landscape results from the art of shrewd tricksters as well as colonial policy and is explained in coherent accounts, rich both in fantasy and human agency. Robert Brightman probes our understanding of another fundamental pattern: the sexual division of labor in foraging societies (see Linke, 34:4). Preserved in subsequent societies, such gender distinctions have necessarily earned much study and many explanations. Brightman lays these out for evaluation in a logical exercise so elegant that it carries an aesthetic satisfaction of its own. He finds the standard answers largely wanting, especially rejecting functional and supposedly practical explanations of why women do not hunt (the comparably obvious rationales for the gendered division of labor in later societies may not hold up much better, see: Rogers, 20:1; Guyer, 22:3; Ross and Rapp, 23:1; Sanjek, 24:1; Roberts, 26:2; Thompson, 27:1; and McMurry, 34:2). What remains is an ideology of power and the power of ideology. Kevin McIntyre writes about ideology in a more formal sense. In face of the horrors committed by the Khmer Rouge, we naturally look for some combination of cynical calculation, irrationality, and accident (see Fein 35:4); McIntyre finds a crucial beginning in ideas. Nor are these ideas that festered from local hatreds but rather ones rooted in Marxism (see Prakash, 32:2) and formed through European training in economics—ideas, ironically enough, that incorporated the categories of French urban planning and the Orientalism of Weber. The combination of a sharp distinction between urban and rural (see Benet, 6:1), a theory of unproductive labor, and utopian visions of what a communist government could accomplish in effect required the abolition of cities.

CSSH Discussion. For some time now, anthropology has been, among the disciplines that study society, the locus of some of the most important, interesting, and heated debates over theories of how societies function and how they should be studied (note Hammel, 22:2; Ortner, 26:1; O'Hanlon and Washbrook, 34:1; and Ortner, 37:1). Melford Spiro adds to these debates in an essay written with passionate lucidity. It tackles the challenge of postmodernism, finding much that is valuable (but hardly new) and much to criticize. Charging that postmodernism would undermine not merely any science of society but the basis of rational discourse, it should provoke some valuable discussion.