# Editorial Foreword

*Disciplinary Delimitations.* Scholarship's claim to be cumulative rests on the recognition of specific methods and particular areas of study; yet to define a field of knowledge is to concede that much will be excluded. Most scholars, once suitably credentialed, soon proudly transgress some boundaries of field or discipline. Still, the impact of that healthy restiveness pales before another, more fundamental assault that questions the (sometimes hidden) assumptions upon which academic learning rests and the instrumental interests it serves. The three essays here mount an escalating critique of well-established academic disciplines and do so not so much for their errors, omissions, or faulty methods (as social scientists are traditionally proud to do) but for having constructed knowledge that excludes other knowledge and is in itself a cultural construction as or maybe more revealing of its creators than of its object of study. Paradoxically, such charges, no longer surprising in themselves, must then be judged much as other scholarly strategies are—by the understanding that results. Donald Lopez probes the Western invention of Tibetan Lamaism, weaving great erudition and subtle writing into a fascinating, gentle account that uncovers a tradition of intellectual myth making. (Other approaches to Buddhism in *CSSH* include Malalgoda, 12:4; Gombrich, 17:2; Strenski, 22:1; and Kemper, 26:3.) Catholic and Protestant scholars, for different if rather parallel reasons, distinguished the Buddhism of Tibet from Buddhism more generally, discovering something demonic in the Tibetan version (compare Scott, 34:2). That in turn allowed them to tell a tale that taught powerful lessons about a fall from purity and moral decay.

Susan Greenhalgh dissects the study of demography in the United States and finds, just behind its sophisticated methods and noted achievements: a way of thinking rooted in modernization theory, a tension between claims to science and applied purposes (which was sometimes hidden but not resolved), and institutional practices that fulfilled the desires of funding agencies and American foreign policy while squelching more critical thinking (compare Krause, 1:2 and 2:4; Easterlin, 2:3; Luckacs, 12:4; Plakans, 17:1; Archetti, 26:2; and Urdank, 33:3). Although Greenhalgh's performance has the decisive air of an autopsy, she nevertheless concludes that demography as a field deserves reviving and suggests that might come with greater reflexiveness and an injection of anthropology (for related criticisms, see Figlio, 19:3; Ross and Rapp, 23:1; Woolf, 31:5; and Szreter, 35:2). James Faubion's review essay, on the other hand, exposes considerable fluidity and even turmoil in anthropology. Like the other essays in this section, his concentrates on how Western scholars constructed knowledge of cultural others. Anthropologists regularly enjoy reflecting on the anthropology of anthropology; but there is a special piquancy in their new finding in ideas of kinship a key to Eurocentrism, for no part of anthropology made more universal claims nor once seemed more solid and prosaic. No wonder that the emphasis on kinship had come to seem passé, but

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in a further irony Faubion finds evidence of a current renewal of interest—the result, in his reading, of contemporary uncertainty about *European* identity.

*The Constitution of the State.* As Michael Braddick notes, much of the recent literature on the making of the modern state considers military needs and the demand for revenue they create to be the basic reasons for the growth of the state (for other approaches to the early modern state, see Zagorin, 18:2; Goldstone, 30:1; and Root, 33:2). Such hard-headed analysis hardly explains, however, how states evoke the passions of loyalty and resentment that mark their history. Furthermore, this emphasis on structural factors omits much of what it is that states do in practice. Using the English example, Braddick takes another tack. Weberian definitions of the state, he argues, are better treated as models or ideal types. We must recognize that it took a long time for states to achieve the differentiation this model demands (compare Ben-Dor, 17:3). He analyzes the partial differentiation of the English state before the revolution and finds in that an explanation for areas of strength and weakness in the state's activities. More than royal intent or class interest, the degree of differentiation helps in effect to predict where state intervention will be effective and, perhaps more important, why there was a growing emphasis in politics on law and morality. Increased differentiation brought important changes in the concept of the public good. Thus the claims made by the state on its citizens acquired new meaning, and so did their resistance to those demands. The need to tame the nobility, a classic theme, then takes its place within a theoretical understanding of state making. So does attention to communal values.

Cultural consensus is similarly stressed in William Munro's wide-ranging assessment of post-colonial African states (a topic also considered in Schneider, 7:1; Samoff, 21:1; Azarya and Chazan, 29:1; Southall, 30:1; Owusu, 31:2; Donham, 34:1; and Eriksen, 36:3; but compare Gulbrandsen, 37:3, on earlier African models). He identifies the central problem of new African states to lie in the difficulty of establishing the legitimacy of their authority, for that requires that these new states actively direct the process of change but at the same time effectively speak the language of peasant community. Munro proposes that these competing tensions can be reconciled if states recognize that the rural sense of a moral economy provides an opportunity for building firm links to society while also establishing the necessary separation between the state and civil society. These prescriptions revive the distinction between state and nation (sometimes dangerously ignored), and Lyn Spillman explores that, too, through an interesting comparison of constitutional conventions in the United States and Australia (also see Fitzgibbon on constitution making in Latin American, 3:1). Both conventions embodied political liberalism (note Appleby, 20:2 and Howe, 31:3). In both, conceptions of what the nation was were somewhat surprisingly shaped by the terms in which foreign powers were viewed. Americans and Australians differed, however, not only in their attitudes toward Great Britain but in the implied source of their national identities, ultimately ideological for one and ethnic for the other. Ideas, and maybe even ideals, turn out to be among the materials essential for the construction of the state.

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