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S. Loten

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Steffen, Charles. *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984. Pp. xv, 296. Maps, tables, notes, index. $24.95 (U.S.).

The Mechanics of Baltimore is the tenth volume in Illinois' distinguished series, The Working Class in American History, and the first to address questions about urban artisans in the Revolutionary and Early Republican period. Charles Steffen's account of labour and politics in Baltimore in the decades surrounding the revolutionary conflict is all the more welcome given the flurry of recent attention to the theme of artisan republicanism (Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic,* 1984) and to Baltimore's role in Maryland's development (Whitman Ridgeway, *Community Leadership in Maryland, 1790-1840,* 1979 and articles by Frank Cassell and Gary Browne). Where others have positioned craftsmen and masters on the edges of political battles dominated by merchants and planters, Steffen finds them at the centre, vocal, contentious and at times militant. Where some, following Bernard Bailyn, find a unitary republican ideology traceable to the "English Commonwealth tradition," Steffen locates in local political contests rival versions of the shape and role of the state, each linked to the interests of differently placed social groups. Thus, "Historians should . . . shift their focus from republicanism to republicanisms," a conclusion that resonates with Wilentz' work on New York (p. 281).

The structure of the book is straightforward. After two introductory chapters sketching the rise of Baltimore as a major port for agricultural exporting and the parallel emergence of a flourishing artisanal sector, the rest of the work deals first with the making and then with the crisis of the mechanic community. In the first period, 1763-1800, local craftsmen "transformed themselves into a politically conscious community," often in alliance with merchant interests (p. 53). Forged in revolutionary activism, these links continued in the later 1780s as Baltimore mechanics pressed unsuccessfully for a state tariff during the Confederation period, enthusiastically backed Constitutional ratification and soon "led a nationwide drive" for the federal protective tariff of 1789 (p. 82). Battling to broaden the initially-elitist city charter, shouting their support for the French Revolution, and voting their opinions with fair consistency, Baltimore workingmen formed the base of the Republican party by 1800. Master craftsmen assumed leadership positions in militia companies and the mechanical Society, and campaigned for Republican candidates whose Federalist opponents were increasingly supported by merchants, lawyers, and the like.

Having defined a distinct "mechanic interest," the craftsmen's unity proved ephemeral. In the dozen years before the War of 1812, efforts to place workingmen or masters in office, to create a Mechanics Bank, and riotous responses to British or Federalist "outrages" exposed deep fissures within the artisan community. On local and national issues, the goals of masters clashed with those of militant journeymen. After a few heady successes, independent Republican candidates lost out to men nominated by party "conferees," and prominent masters absented themselves from increasingly violent crowd actions. Many Baltimore journeymen had participated in early and surprisingly successful efforts at union organization, outlawed as conspiracy in 1807. These rougher types "now stepped forward as crowd leaders" (p. 250). The mechanic interest was splitting into camps of proprietors and workers, and among workers, with Methodism as a litmus test, into respectable and disreputable fractions.

In assembling this chronicle of artisan republicanism, Steffen has ably used the full range of social history raw materials: newspapers, pamphlets, city directories, assessment lists, church registers and the like. His close attention to the minutiae of alternative city charter plans or drafts of Articles for the Mechanics Bank underscores the emergence of variant republicanisms. He also provides a satisfying treatment of the role of slave labour and slaveholding in the mechanical trades, and of the spatial dimension of industry and politics in Baltimore. The prose is workmanlike, and each chapter has both an introductory and concluding summary of its themes. However, these summaries do rob the text of momentum and drain much of the drama and surprise from the flow of events. Further, Steffen chooses to segregate the core historiographic challenges his work poses into passages in the Introduction and Conclusion, rather than integrating them into the exposition. The chapter on Methodism is tucked in a bit uncomfortably between the forceful discussion of the post-1800 "crisis of Republican Politics" and the Conclusion. Nonetheless, these stylistic matters little diminish Steffen's achievement, a careful linkage of Baltimore's craftsmen, their militias, societies and early unions with the dynamics of party politics and the formation of republican ideology. Urban, political and industrial historians will all find this solid monograph of genuine interest.

Philip Scranton
Department of History
Rutgers University, Camden

Kostof, Spiro. *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals.* Oxford University Press, New York, 1985. Pp. 788. More than 885 illustrations including numerous original drawings, maps, a glossary of architectural terms, bibliographies, index. $39.95 pb.

A History of Architecture is in the great tradition of James Fergusson, *History of Architecture*, 6 vols. (1893); F. M. Simpson, *A History of Architectural Development*, 3 vols. (1905); Russell Sturgis and A. L. Frothingham, *History of Architecture*, 4 vols. (1913), and Bannister Fletcher, *A His-*

tory of Architecture on the Comparative Method, (1896 — 19th edition in press). All are surveys that boldly range through the great world traditions from ancient to modern times. But while the earlier ones seek to classify architectural forms stylistically, Kostof rejects periodization as a useful framework for discussion; and, perhaps more importantly, does not set out to reduce architecture to any kind of supposedly predictable response to either historical trends or material constraints. This very welcome new work, the first serious challenger to Bannister Fletcher in the last forty years, aims instead to present the architectural accomplishments of world cultures in terms of the intentions that motivated people to build in the various and often magnificent ways that they have done. His history, then, is a history of the possibilities that different societies have perceived and emphasizes openness and the emergent character of authentic production rather than any apparent rule-boundedness or deterministic formulation of architecture within its cultural and environmental setting.

The history of architecture has undergone its own historical evolutions, particularly with respect to the broader disciplines of architecture, art history and humanism, with which it has been associated. Hegel's *Encyclopedia* (1817 and 1827), and Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* (1764), established theoretical frameworks from standpoints within philosophy and art history. But architectural history as a subject in itself was inaugurated by an architect, Johann Bernard Fischer Von Erlach, with his *Entwurf Einer Historischen Arkitectur* (1721), which presented a comprehensive survey of mythical and historical monuments from all civilizations including his own work, though he omitted the Gothic as too modern and shallow for serious consideration.

Many architectural historians of the nineteenth century were practising architects who regarded historical expertize as a central platform for their professional credibility and historical methodology as essentially critical — aimed at identifying the most worthy models for contemporary emulation, praising some traditions while condemning others. This view of the subject has been very resoundingly discredited in the twentieth century, and, although some architects never did reject history, the subject of architectural history itself led the profession to a new niche within art history. The more rigorous historiographic methodology in art history discouraged comprehensive survey treatments since broad surveys tend to be merely descriptive. Kostof, for example, sees the common thread that unites his disparate material as "the gift of making places for some human purpose," a framework that permits discussion of all traditions without imposing a consistent interpretive model on any.

The book has three roughly equal parts. The first part includes a general statement of methodology and intent, and covers ancient architecture — Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman, with brief forays into Oriental and Pre-Columbian. Kostof starts his history further back than most, beginning with the Old Stone Age and arguing that the original architecture was the topography of the earth, a preoccupation with morphology and tectonics that could have been more fully developed throughout the text. The second and third parts present medieval, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance through to Modern; again with relatively sketchy references to non-western traditions. The pitfall of trying to reify these historical episodes as formal architectural categories is completely avoided.

A large part of each section of the text is devoted to establishing the cultural framework within which the buildings can be interpreted and then, from the viewpoints so established, discussion focusses on a few individual works described in detail. This strategy is manageable for ancient architecture, where issues and personalities are less well known, but cannot really be maintained through the later chapters simply because there is so much more material to consider. As a result, there is not so much focussed interpretation of individual buildings in the chapters that cover the period from the Renaissance through to the present day. This is a pity. Kostof's readings of ancient and medieval architecture are brilliant and original. As he states himself, "the solid facts of architecture are the buildings." I could wish that he had devoted more space to discussion of specific aspects of particular buildings and a little less to the historical and cultural frameworks, which necessarily must be very sketchy and generalized in a work of this scope.

The methodology is based on four premises: first, that it is not just selected diagnostic features but whole buildings that form the natural units of architectural study; second, that the immediate context of any building has to be included in any account of its architecture; third, that all buildings, vernacular as well as High style, must be considered as significant to the history of architecture; and fourth, that a primary objective in historical studies must be to answer the question of "why they (the buildings) are the way they are" — that is, to offer necessarily subjective interpretations rather than apparently factual expositions.

As mentioned above, the "whole-building" approach is well developed in Part 1 in which the various regional traditions are summarized by fairly thorough interpretive descriptions of a few individual buildings. The question of the immediate context as a factor influencing the form of buildings is also able to be taken into account here. But in the later chapters this focus shifts toward a more general treatment of urbanism as a separate subject and the context issue really disappears as a basis for interpretive discussion of architecture. The third premise, that we cannot understand great works without considering the minor ones, plays only a small role in the book. The interpretation of vernacular architecture is really very different from that of the high styles and I suspect that this issue is something of a hold-over from the ideals of the modern movement in which

the identity of vernacular and formal architecture was earnestly but fruitlessly sought after. The final issue, why buildings have the form they have, is the important dimension of the book, primarily because Kostof's interpretations are not based on technical factors, but on the human purposes that transcend the immediate function that any building serves.

We are, unfortunately, accustomed to understanding architecture as the expression of social, cultural, technical and environmental forces. Kostof is particularly concerned to show how this does not happen in a deterministic way and that there is yet another dimension of even greater importance; architecture as a force in its own right, not just the resultant of other forces; a force that moulds societies, affects cultures, and bolsters belief in the values that our lives are built on. This is, of course, interpretation based on the image value of buildings, a value righteously discredited in the official dogmas of the modern movement, but now struggling to regain a legitimate and credible place in contemporary practice. This is the dimension that links the history of architecture most strongly to its practice as a profession and is the foothold from which architects are best able to exert a deeply needed influence on the character of the urban environment. For this reason, Kostof's book will be of interest to architects as much as to architectural historians and may even inspire architects to recover the study of history as a central element of their professional expertize — although that is perhaps hoping for more than can really be expected.

There are very few technical flaws in the work. The caption of Figure 4.10 places the great pyramids in the Third rather than the Fourth Dynasty but that is the only slip-up of the kind that I was able to detect. Many of the original drawings that accompany the text reveal relationships and contexts not so well illustrated even in primary source material. The book has appeared at a timely moment, when the architectural profession is moving toward a reconsideration of how and why factors such as image value legitimately and responsibly affect the form of buildings. Kostof is obviously a part of this trend. His interpretations of both buildings and historical movements have the same basis that the profession is now, with considerable difficulties, attempting to comprehend. The matter is of more than academic interest. It deeply affects the ability of practicing architects to advise clients on building investments in terms that extend beyond the immediate self-interests of particular projects. It is a concern that particularly affects public buildings and the urban environment: and has produced a great deal of superficial historicizing that trivializes the whole issue. Kostof's work will contribute to a deeper understanding of the real arguments that lie behind a new, critical modernism.

S. Loten
School of Architecture
Carleton University