

Editorial Foreword

Economies of Small Scale. Theories are made to be tested; and these articles, each systematic and meticulously empirical, reach contrasting conclusions. The theories at stake explain the extraordinary success of clusters of small firms in north and central Italy. Often called the Third Italy, to distinguish it from the industrial triangle of the north and the economically less-developed regions to the south, the area is now among the most prosperous in the world. The phenomenon raises broad questions. One is whether this Italian experience can be a general model of industrialization, can be as important at a theoretical level as interpretations of Italy's industrialization in the 1890s or as valuable as an example to other countries as the Italian miracle of the 1950s was believed to be (on the Italian background, see in *CSSH* Holmes and Quataert in 28:2; Schmitter, 26:2; Silverman, 12:3; Wolf, 5:1). The economic growth of forty years ago was understood as an example of universal patterns of modernization that led to industrial giants requiring vast amounts of capital. Prosperity in the Third Italy, however, is said to result from the flexibility of many neighboring, small, and specialized firms operating in a single sector of production. The picture that emerges of individual entrepreneurs and family businesses quickly adapting to new technological and market opportunities has an appeal that extends beyond economics, but is it valid? Thomas Baker studies the intimate history of these firms with their dominant founders and subsequent family feuds. He finds many examples of individual drive and of growth built from personal savings and family sacrifice, but he also shows the value of lucky timing and an early start a generation or two earlier. If that raises questions as to how easy it would be in the future and in other places to follow the model of the Third Italy, the research of Colin Simmons and Christos Kalantaridis on garment manufacturing in Greece raises the further question of how desirable it would be to do so (compare Djurfeldt, 35:1, and Rothstein, 28:2). They describe a region on the economic periphery in which skills learned abroad are employed in producing at low wages for foreign markets. Taken together, these articles also reveal a coherent process of economic growth in which jobs abroad, remittances, and capital squeezed from family-owned real estate meet the demands of international corporations and rising consumption in the European Community—a process that continues around the world but must be seen in its specific effects to be evaluated.

Cultural Readings of Culture. Reading culture like a text and representations of reality as cultural products has made mirrors a favorite simile and made circles and spirals a common geometry in academic writing. The authors of the three articles in this section are clearly accomplished at intellectual aerobic exercise, and they value specific contexts, relating their texts to particular

places, social groups, and structural needs. These turn out to be, of course, neither what the texts in question say they are nor quite what one expects; yet these analyses firmly relate representations to the concrete realities they illuminate. Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke deftly tackles the difficulties of reading a well-known newspaper long recognized as an important reflection of Brazilian society (see Graham, 33:4, and Carvalho, 24:3; also Felstiner on revolutionary language, 25:1). She proves that this influential text was hardly an indigenous product, then moves beyond delicious paradoxes to explore how tropes about women can leap cultures and oceans, striking roots that give them authenticity. Thomas Gallant takes us back to Greece and to the sexually charged language and symbolic dramas staged by nineteenth-century peasants (compare Sant Cassia, 35:4; English Martin, 32:2). A cultural style nicely offensive to officials became an effective form of resistance, integrating taboos violated into a coherent conception of social relations that recognized peasants' place at the bottom of the structures of power and on the periphery of international capitalism. Candace Slater presents the tales that Brazilian prospectors tell (see also Slater, 33:3; Diacon, 32:3; Pang and Seckinger, 14:2; Willems, 12:1), respectfully letting their voices rise from the page. These stories about the magic of gold and about beautiful ghosts are, she shows, cultural representations that convey familiar themes of sexuality and horror which ultimately speak to social structure (compare Derby, 36:3; Taussig, 19:2). In these essays, representations never transparent create texts that even when decoded retain the many-layered complexity and ambiguity essential to cultural vitality.

Utopian Faith. Justice and equality are religious concerns, and these articles assess two striking efforts to derive social and economic policy from religious truth. Bob Scribner writes about communism among radical Protestant sects in the Reformation (see Shapiro, 15:2; François, 14:3). He explores the unique circumstances that made such communities possible (note Peter, 25:2, on the later Hutterites), asks whether the label of communism was deserved at all (compare Crone, 36:3), and considers the haunting question of whether communism is feasible. Meticulously weighing the evidence, he shows how theological justifications, sexual practices, and economic opportunity reinforced radical solutions and how these same factors could doom the experiment. Sohrab Behdad analyzes economic theory in revolutionary Iran today (see Akhavi, 25:2), identifying three competing strands, each claiming a basis in the Qur'an and Islamic teaching (on political ideas in Islam: Keddie, 36:3; Bernal, 36:1; Goldberg, 33:1). An intellectual history of economic theory in movements usually seen in other terms, this study establishes the importance of the tangled ligatures that attach economic principles to political tactics, revolutionary fervor, and ambivalent responses to the relentless challenge from the West, producing contradictory strictures on the requirements of Islamic social justice and God's will.