

# Editorial Foreword

**SOCIAL HISTORIES OF FOOD** Three elegant articles, devoted to ancient, medieval, and modern times, exemplify very different ways of treating the social history of food.

We salute the memory of a good friend, **John D'Arms**, whose article on the Roman *convivium* or dinner party is the last of many kindnesses to *CSSH*. Elaborating on Jack Goody's *Cooking, Cuisine and Class* (1982), it joins visual images from paintings and mosaics to Latin texts to show that the convivium evolved over time in ways that we can capture. Readers will get a feast; among other things, they will learn a great deal about sows' udders, a special delicacy, and they will get a sense of the writer's fine spirit, truly convivial. We are grateful to Susan E. Alcock and W. V. Harris for their delicate editorial attentions.

**Stuart Borsch** delineates a model to explain the catastrophic collapse of the irrigation system of Egypt in the wake of the population crash caused by the Black Death. The model explains why Egypt did not follow the pattern of England where, following the Black Death, depopulation led to a "golden age of the peasantry" with low rents, high wages, and an improved standard of living. In Egypt, on the contrary, when the population fell the upkeep of the irrigation works suffered to the point of systemic collapse and a terrible emmiseration of those who survived the plague. The model has promise for the explanation of similar systemic collapses of large-scale irrigation works in the Indus Civilization, northern Afghanistan, the Yellow River of China, and the Khmer civilization on the Mekong, and may have application to other kinds of large systems.

**Lauren Maclean** shows how changes in the structure of local agrarian capitalism redefine the boundaries of family and community, producing different relations between the generations in regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Farmers in both regions once farmed cocoa, but in Ghana exploitive government policies drove farmers out of cocoa and into tomatoes. Tomato farming has caused social support networks to become more diversified among friends, and family members near and far, and horizontally orientated among members of the same age set. In Cote d'Ivoire where cocoa farming continues, social support networks are more concentrated and vertically oriented, linking the old to the young within families. Intergenerational solidarity is weakened in Ghana and reinforced in Cote d'Ivoire as unintended yet powerful consequences of state economic policies.

**CLUBMEN** The next essay takes us on a journey from India to England to America and back again, through a history of a certain regimen of bodily exercise.

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**Joseph S. Alter** tells the story of the Indian club and club-swinging exercise routines, and their migration from the body-building men's gymnasia of India, via the British Army, to wildly popular adoption in England and post-Civil War America. As they migrate clubs change form (becoming lighter), meaning (the restoration of enervated masculinity in cities and the promotion of Muscular Christianity), gender (being adapted to women's physical culture), sociality (collective formations instead of individual ones), and objectives (from body-building to flexibility and overall health). The Indian club both loses its past—being identified, in America, with Native American war clubs—and returns, transformed, to India, where it takes on nationalist forms. Following up on Andrew Morris' fine study of sport and nationalism in China in this journal ("To Make the Four Hundred Million Move': The Late Qing Dynasty Origins of Modern Chinese Sport and Physical Culture," 2000: 876–906), Alter finds that in its global circulation the Indian club gets parochialized in distinctive ways that make all the difference to a seemingly unitary but continuously morphing object.

**IDEOLOGIES OF MEASUREMENT** The social contexts of knowledge-making are especially invisible in respect of means of measurement that seem purely technical. All the more important to ferret them out. A good example from a previous issue is David Darrow, "From Commune to Household: Statistics and the Social Construction of Chaianov's Theory of Peasant Economy," 2001: 788–818. The next essay is another.

**Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz, Angela Stach, Vrushali Patil and Timothy Patrick Moran** examine the methodological and institutional origins of two measures of national income, those based on purchasing power parities and those based on rates of exchange. The matter is urgent because the two methods yield different answers when we ask whether income inequalities are increasing or decreasing worldwide. The authors follow the institutional processes that account for the differential success of the two measures in establishing themselves as disinterested facts.

**DESCENT AND ALLIANCE** The two intersecting axes of kinship studies are the theme of the final two essays.

**Peter Parkes** gives us the third of a fine trio of articles on fosterage and "milk kinship" in Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia (see "Alternative Social Structures and Foster Relations in the Hindu Kush: Milk Kinship Allegiance in Former Mountain Kingdoms of Northern Pakistan," 2001: 4–36; and "Fostering Fealty: A Comparative Analysis of Tributary Allegiances of Adoptive Kinship" in 2003: 741–82). This one shows, through study of legends, the very great extent of milk kinship and "allegiance fosterage" in the medieval period. Allegiance fosterage acquired a bad reputation among imperial masters and in modern times, as an enemy of kinship relations—"milk thicker than blood."

The author uses this external and *post hoc* prejudice to explain why allegiance fosterage is a hidden institution unknown to historians of medieval Europe, among others.

In post-emancipation societies the descendants of slaves often bear an enduring stigma. **Margaret Brown** examines why it is that this stigma, which is generally found in Madagascar, is very much less in the northeastern part of the island. Three factors seem to be at work: open kinship, a local abundance of natural resources at abolition, and a regional history of ethnic mixing and population flows.