

# Editorial Foreword

*Gender, Generation, Sex.* Although the questions we pose about the past are often formed by our experience of the present, we rarely think of Europe's prehistory when considering current charges of sexism or reflect on ancient Mesopotamia when modern fathers and sons battle over rights to the family car. Both, it turns out, are relevant, as these articles suggest in the course of demonstrating how fruitfully contemporary concerns and modern theories can be applied to even the most distant history. Indeed, those who study the beginnings of civilization (of necessity adept at using diverse and indirect evidence) are especially skilled at connecting the remains of language, law, literature, and myth to potsherds and signs of settled agriculture (Frazer was much praised for that, see Beard in *CSSH*, 34:2; when applied to more recent eras, the approach is more like that of Youssef, 15:3). And these scholars can employ modern theory in addition to their more formal techniques and impressive knowledge. Gender analysis, by establishing the general point that social routines are socially constructed, invites a fresh interrogation of any custom or institution. As a result, the machinery of gendered difference has been discovered in all kinds of behaviors that present themselves as neutral or natural and independent of the relations between men and women. Although the asymmetries of modern society provide the most common target for such research, the methods used to uncover them invite continuing regression, pushing ever further back in time and deeper into purposes unperceived, an exploration facilitated by much learned weaponry. Logically, then, Uli Linke's essay should not be surprising, but it is. Using a wealth of erudition sharply focused, she probes prehistory and reaches into hidden strata of myth and language. Culture and power, early settlement and kinship, entwine so tightly with bodily fluids and fertile metaphor that the modern reader is bound to sense a troubling destiny encoded in Indo-European civilization at its origin. With sympathy and caution, Rivkah Harris similarly sifts for evidence of generational conflict in ancient Mesopotamia (compare Roth on the age of marriage in neo-Assyria and neo-Babylonia, 29:4, Hopkins on brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt, 22:2, and Goody on heirs and adoption, 15:1 and 11:1). Important for what they say about millennia past, these articles uncover an uncomfortably familiar world, a sense reinforced by Peter Laipson's review of scholarly encounters with modern attitudes toward sex.

*Imposing the Rules of Economic Behavior.* International debt, also a timely problem, provides an important measure of relations between wealthy and developing countries, and the resolution of debt crises is a significant indicator of how international capitalism works. Christian Suter and Hanspeter Stamm employ a comprehensive empirical analysis to study how these debt crises have been resolved from early in the nineteenth century to the present. The pace,

terms, and style of the settlements imposed fall into patterns that express hegemony (and account for some of the difficulties developing nations face). They also find, however, that the current reliance on international institutions for rescheduling governmental debt (compare Frieden on American policy, 31:1) has some unexpected and generally unrecognized effects. Emphasized in theories of dependency, these procedures have been critical in Latin American capital formation (see Eckstein, 25:1). Capitalism, of course, has well-studied techniques for imposing the discipline it requires not only upon debtors but on workers as well. Katharyne Mitchell addresses the question of whether or not there are identifiable methods for controlling the labor force characteristic of Communist systems and whether those methods stem from ideology, political policy, or culture (note Kraus and Vanneman, 27:1). These questions require unpacking monolithic models and call for comparison, a challenge that leads her to the particularly difficult comparison of actual practice in China and the Soviet Union (on the development of Soviet Policy, also see Rogger, 23:3; on Chinese experience, compare Wright, 23:4, and Brown, 23:3). The differences she finds say a good deal about the recent history of those two economies through the assessment of the contrasting relationships, structural and social, between manager and worker that each encourages. The historical context counts in understanding labor relations in communist countries, as in his review essay, Peter Baldwin argues that it must also if we are to understand the development of the welfare state in Europe and the United States.

*The Political Economy of Leisure.* Increase leisure, one of the achievements of modern society, followed from economic growth, a broader distribution of its benefits, and the isolation of salaried work from the rest of life. A significant marker of modern life styles, leisure and leisure activities are related to industrial society in other ways as well; and that is what these articles investigate (compare de Haas on photography, 21:3; DuBoff on the telegraph, 26:4). Jozsef Böröcz, who uses guidebooks and the borrowing of foreign words to define the geography of tourism, argues that leisure travel was not merely the beneficiary of time away from work, technology, cultural interest, and wealth but was intrinsically an expression of capitalism that paradoxically spread with industrialization (see Tannenbaum, 23:3, and Mitchell, 31:2, on views of Paris). As commerce invaded leisure itself (note Katz on the waltz, 15:3; and Stoddart on sport, 30:4, Breckenridge on exhibitions, 31:2), travel capitalism made experience of the other a commodity. By studying stamp collecting as metaphor, Steven Gelber shows how the marketplace itself moved into the world of leisure (see Borneman on horsebreeding, 30:1), blurring the distinction between work and hobby. Stamp collecting established its legitimacy by recapitulating the tensions of society at large over the roles of men and women, practical and esthetic values, individualism and capitalist ethics. Children of the middle class are nevertheless likely to recall some family memories as they read this evocative account. Reading, too, can be done at leisure and for pleasure.