

# Editorial Foreword

There is, at the back of this issue, a lengthy topical index to the twenty issues of *CSSH* published in the last five years. A reflection of the remarkable range of interests *CSSH* has addressed in this period, this index also serves, on a larger scale, one of the purposes of these editorial forewords—establishing contexts for comparison. The task is a critical one; otherwise, comparisons could overwhelm comprehension, just as striking all the musical chords at once makes noise. Because comparisons give larger meaning to limited examples, the temptation to compare is almost irresistible. Because each instance of human behavior could be compared to any other, the possibilities for comparison are limitless. The needed focus requires that a framework be imposed, a context established that makes some comparisons seem more appropriate or promising than others. Somewhat disappointingly, analytic contexts are easier to conceive and generally more convincing when conventional, and those most commonly chosen lie close to the traditions of discourse that have shaped a given topic, to the customary concerns of a particular discipline, or to the preoccupations current in society. Comparison, however, tends to make these conventions explicit (and therefore contestable); and comparison then becomes fruitful as some important assumption is challenged, some problem is newly posed, some hypothesis or theory is tested, some general proposition is set forth. Very often an article in *CSSH* must create its own context. A topical index similarly invites readers to create the different contexts, the overlapping circles of curiosity, that will be most valuable for them. A fairly straightforward listing of universally recognized categories—of place, time, topic, and kind of problem—this index can become a tool for breaking out of established frameworks. Readers who want to do that will wish to look also at the earlier indexes in 25:4, 20:4, 15:4, and 11:4.

*Cultural Power.* Social science enjoys no more productive conundrum than how culture connects to social structure and power. The articles in this rubric, which have an enormous literature on which to build, have another point in common: Each fights the tendency to interpret one side of that connection as more fundamental than the other. For Michael Kenny, the essential feature of the sophisticated Ganda monarchy lay in its being secular and also sacred in both action and theory. (Modern research has underscored the importance of the African experience of the state, as a subject in itself and as a stimulus to comparison. In *CSSH* see Ewald, 30:2; Southall, 30:1; Azarya and Chazan, 29:1; Strickland, 18:3; Kottak, 14:3). Guy Lanoue and Michael Korovkin argue that culture is a kind of reflection on society (more than a reflection of society) that in turn acts upon it, and they develop their argument through an unusual comparison of well-studied American Indian communities in the

Pacific northwest and of the ritual processions (and mobile totems) in two towns in contemporary Italy. Considering sport as cultural ritual (see Roberts on cricket, 27:3), Brian Stoddart achieves a fresh look at imperialism's cultural domination, both imposed and adopted (compare Hind, 26:3 and 26:1). For Steven Sangren, the legitimacy and power of the Ma Tsu cult in Taiwan rests on a history interwoven of strands that are social and religious, official and popular.

*The Persistence of Local Interests.* Something about our era, methods, and theories leads us to keep rediscovering that change is not a juggernaut. The articles and reviews in this section all deal with unevenness in the process of change, especially in rural society. Adding to earlier articles that dealt with the impact of revolution in rural Guatemala (Wasserstrom, 17:4; Smith, 26:2), Jim Handy presents a study of the Arbenz period based on carefully assembled historical research. He emphasizes the continuity within local communities and examines how their flexible adaptability in the revolutionary period did, in the face of contrary economic pressures and political policies, produce real social change (compare Rambo, 19:2; Skinner, 13:2). J.A.C. Mackie and W.J. O'Malley look at the transformation in Indonesia's sugar industry and find that progressive reform and market pressures led to changes that maintained production but lowered efficiency, the effect of a continuing alliance between local elites and officials. The point is not simply that reforms do not always have the desired results (see Tuma, 21:1). The adaptive responses of peasants and farmers (compare Scott, 29:2, and Asano-Tamanoi, 30:3) combined with the growth of bureaucracy (treated by Evers in 29:3) to limit the social impact of significant changes in land ownership, the cultivation of sugar, and the control of labor.

*CSSH Discussion.* Stephen Wilson sensitively sets forth some unusual data on a painful subject (he has demonstrated before that intelligent counting can reveal much about popular belief, 22:4), and in doing so he continues a long-standing discussion of attitudes toward family and birth control practices (Archetti, 26:2; Neumann, 20:3; McLaren, 18:2; Tomasson, 18:2; Plakans, 17:1).