# Editorial Foreword

*Cultures of Economy.* Arguments that value historical context will surely come as no surprise in the pages of *CSSH*; nor, nowadays, will skepticism about general laws in the social sciences. Nonetheless, the accomplishments of economic theory are impressive, and criticisms of specific theorems need to go beyond the truism that every case is different. Each of the articles in this section respectfully assesses established theoretical propositions about economic behavior. Each uses specific evidence and general argument to demonstrate that economic laws in fact depend upon and are transformed by custom and power. And each, while historical, also speaks directly to very current concerns. C.A. Gregory constructs a challenge to monetarist theory from the history of the cowrie shell, questioning with lucidity and verve some of the most familiar of economic laws. He observes his subject through the other end of the telescope of power, looking with an anthropologist's sensitivity to colonialism and culture and studying the political economy of money with the tools of history and anthropology as well as economics (compare, in *CSSH* Derby, 36:3; Taussig, 19:2 and 37:2, and Gerriets, 27:2). He finds not Adam Smith's invisible hand but the state, with its fist obscured in a velvet glove of values. Environmental depletion (note Grove, in 35:2) draws Rob Van Ginkel's attention, and he makes the oyster harvests of a Frisian island a test of theories that in a free market each actor will seek his maximal advantage (see Chang Yun-shik, 33:1). Assumptions about the anarchy of self-interest prove to be not so much wrong as inadequate in explaning the tragedy of the commons. The dominant theory tends, rather like the belated adaptation of Dutch fishermen, not to comprehend the impact of habit, technology, and the state (on other fishing societies: Thompson, 27:1; Wylie, 35:2, Byron, 36:2). Those factors are also central to Deborah Bernstein's application of the theory of split labor markets to the employment of Palestinians and Jews (see Lockman, 35:3). Here, detail is of the essence. The topic begins with the kind of sharp ethnic and religious difference that transfixes modern discussions, but Bernstein shows that the practices of the state, the organization of business and labor, and the skills required of workers are decisively important (compare Wells, 23:4; Kratoska, 24:2, Holmes and Quartaert, 28:2). Interdisciplinary and contextual, these essays honor the importance of theory by providing a fresh and subtler understanding of matters—the circulation of money, ecological depredation, and labor markets—in which the eloquence of abstraction had seemed sufficient.

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*The Missions of Religion.* As Michael Khodarkovsky makes clear, religious conversion in Russia was an instrument of Russian imperialism and state making; and his account is a valuable addition to recent literature on the Russian state, Russian identity, and the history of non-Russian populations within the Russian empire (see Rogger, 4:3; Shanin, 31:3; Greenfeld, 32:3, Kingston-Mann, 33:1). Converting the infidels in early modern Russia, he declares, was not a case just of penetrating a frontier (despite some similarities to the American West: compare Adamson, 36:3; Burns, 30:2); nor did the religious missions the Tsars encouraged have the driving energy of the missions that helped to make the Spanish empire. Although the religious communities that resulted in Russia were vastly different from those that produced the Catholic saints or the Protestant sects discussed in the accompanying review articles, many of the questions formed in the more developed literature on those topics can now be fruitfully raised with regard to the role of religion in early modern Russia.

*Playing Male Roles.* Even at the time, those who wrote about the nineteenth century tended to focus on the nature of change, and that has remained a central theme in historical study of the era. The articles here address that theme, too, but differ from the more familiar approaches in two respects. They consider the change in roles that were defined as natural (and may have had ancient roots, note Linke, 34:4) and engage the nineteenth-century's anxious preoccupation with masculinity (see Adams, 27:4). Rich in ironies, these topics reflect the impact of recent scholarship. Colin Creighton asks how it became the role of the man to provide a family with its income (an issue closely related to the process of industrialization, see Minge-Kalman, 20:3, and women's work, see Scott and Tilly, 17:1; Rogers, 20:1; Ross and Rapp, 23:1; Jordan, 31:2; McMurray, 34:2). Few social changes have been more far-reaching; and in an essay remarkably fair-minded and comprehensive, he weighs the available explanations. Their range—social custom, the labor market, capitalism, social class, employers' policies, and concepts of masculinity—underscores the significance of the subject; and Creighton's tight logic, with its comparisons of different trades and of England with other countries, clarifies an important discussion. Lenard Berlanstein shows that the social order is also complexly reflected in men's roles as played on stage by women (compare Tannenbaum, 23:3). Here, too, changing practice identifies an historical problem; and once posed, it points to evidence of shifts in gender identity and in ideas about masculinity. In the history of nineteenth-century France, those changing attitudes formed a web connecting theater, society, literature, politics.

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