

Editorial Foreword

PEASANT WORKERS. Social research regularly discovers that nothing is so neat as we remember its having seemed in earlier studies. By comparing peasant workers in two regions and different periods, Douglas Holmes and Jean Quataert find a continuity that challenges some familiar categories. Peasants who both farmed and did industrial work were not only firmly established in Saxony before the industrial era but kept that dual position through the nineteenth century, drawing new industry to the countryside. In this century the peasants of Friuli maintain a similar pattern. And that persistence calls into question some frequent assumptions about peasant economies, proto-industrialization, proletarianization, rural migration, and modernizing social change. Frances Rothstein, who studies wage-earning peasants in Mexico, places her findings in the context of the current literature on development in the third world. That leads her to reject the very concept of peasant-workers, for peasants who earn wages differ from their neighbors in their social networks, patron-client relations, expenditures, ambitions, and politics. From that perspective, the concept of peasant-workers looks like yet another imposition of Eurocentric ideal types in which local complexity is considered merely transitional, something doomed to fail under the pressures of world systems and dependency. Yet the adaptability of the domestic household in the face of economic development—in Africa (in *CSSH* see Sanjek, 24:1; Roberts, 26:2), Latin America (Kuznesof, 22:1; Archetti, 26:2), and Europe (Fischer, 15:2; Scott and Tilly, 17:1; Minge-Kalman, 20:3)—should be warning enough against reifying abstract categories. As the review essays on the rural classes of Germany and England indicate, economic structures, public policy, and family relations all connect to peasant life with effects not easily determined.

ON CONNECTING INSTITUTIONS TO SOCIAL CLASS. Although American politicians display no such hesitance, scholars have not been confident as to how in practice the Protestant ethic (however defined) relates to social mobility. Anthony La Vopa here addresses that problem through a subtle analysis of Pietistic doctrines, pedagogy, and social recruitment at the University of Halle. This treatment becomes all the more suggestive in light of Liedman and Ringer's discussion in the last issue and when compared to education in the Scottish Enlightenment (Camic, 25:1) and among the Hutterites and Mennonites (Peter and Urry, both in 25:2). J. A. Perkins also turns to a classic issue of modern historiography: the distinction between Germany east and west of the Elbe, with large estates and serf labor in the east and small peasant-holdings in the west. That institutional difference—related to differences in legal system, the strength of the state, and the role of the aristocra-

cy—is often seen as one crucial to German history and used to explain the conservatism and power of the Junker class. Like a botanist classifying species, Perkins dissects the data on land holding patterns and finds that the famous dualism hardly existed at all. Estate systems may, of course, relate to social class in other ways (compare Richards, 21:4); and other institutions may amplify differences in property or wealth (note Clawson, 27:4).

THE TIES THAT BIND. Sources of conflict but also social cement, systems of landholding, law, and kinship can work in many directions at once. In India, Nicholas Dirks points out, mutual misunderstanding on these matters lay at the heart of British rule. Mistaking Indian concepts of property for their own, the British used courts of law to maintain an order they had imagined while Indians (maintaining cultural practices that emphasize gifts and reciprocity) made the British courts an arena of political negotiation. The cultural result included unintended disruption and continuity unrecognized. In order to identify the problem he treats, Dirks must break free of some assumptions that tend to follow from the extension to India of familiar conceptions of proto-industry and world systems. Instead, he is much closer to the studies of legal systems (such as Rudolph and Rudolph, 8:1; note also the comments of Rosen, 20:1) and of property (Kemper, 26:3, Kumar, 27:2) that begin with attention to Indian culture. Similarly, Charles Lindholm must justify his break with much of the established literature (compare Lindner, 24:4) before he can develop his own tightly drawn argument. Comparison is the means to that independence, the basis for classifying systems of kinship, and the test of his conclusions. These are remarkable. Not only are there distinctive systems of political authority characteristic of the Middle East and of Central Asia, but in each culture that pattern rests on a specific kinship system. The impact of kinship on politics is not always seen in this way (compare Cornell, 6:4; Goody, 15:1; and Lewin, 21:2), but Lindholm's is the sort of finding that was once considered the purpose of a science of society.

CSSH DISCUSSION. Anthropologists have become fond of writing about the culture of anthropology as a subject in itself and of including themselves in their field work. The self-consciousness of a discipline seeking to understand the Other is hardly surprising, aside from the fact that it fits the tendencies of late-twentieth-century thought so neatly as to be a bit suspect. Continuing a discussion begun by Ortner (in 26:1, but note both Hammel and Cohn in 22:2), Arjun Appadurai focusses on the problem of place, Ulf Hannerz on the relation of culture to society, and Aram Yengoyan on the threat that specialization and materialism have come to pose for the very concept of culture. Perhaps the problems of anthropology are less unique than its ambitions, for these admirable confessions of discontent can be read by scholars in other fields with some of the benefits seventeenth-century merchants are said to have derived from works of devotion.