

Editorial Foreword

Social Structure and the Economics of Agriculture. The economic and legal ties by which people are differentially bound to the land tell a great deal about the social structure of an agrarian society. And that truism has spurred countless anthropologists, economists, sociologists, historians, and political scientists to cadastral reconstructions as earnest and often more complete than those of tax collectors. In this issue three essays warn that the facts revealed by such meticulousness may not have the social significance commonly assigned to them. John Shepherd addresses a pattern—the increase in the number of rural tenants in late imperial and republican China—well known to specialists, who have nevertheless found it difficult to explain. As always in agricultural matters, differences of geography and crop prove crucial; but in this case, Shepard says, they demonstrate that the growing pattern of tenancy could not have followed from increased impoverishment. The evidence was valid, but the assumption—that only desperate poverty could make a peasant sell his land and become a tenant—was not. Instead, Shepherd argues that for the Chinese tenancy was a mode of management, like migration and reclamation one of many adaptations to changed conditions available in a flexible society (a finding that accords with the emphasis in Duara, *CSSH* 29:1, and Solinger, 21:2, on the adaptability of the Chinese economy). We cannot assume that tenancy (or owning estates, see Richards, 21:4, and Perkins, 28:2) has a uniform economic or social significance. Here and elsewhere (see Keegan, 28:4, on segregated South Africa) peasant responses are contingent on circumstance but also expressions of culture. Circumstances, however, tend to be more visible than culture, which is easily camouflaged as common sense or necessity. One of the most effective techniques for uncovering culturally determined behavior is systematic comparison, something Mariko Asano-Tamanoi demonstrates in her study of modern contract farming. The external pressures of industrialization, modernizing change, and state policy weigh quite similarly on the farmers of contemporary Spain and Japan. In both countries agricultural producers and their commercial customers often rely on contracts as an instrument of stability; but the effect of these contracts, Asano-Tamanoi shows, is also to mediate change and maintain familiar cultural patterns. Despite similar economic factors, the effects of contract farming are therefore different. Recognition of peasants' persistent flexibility has led to some rethinking of theories about peasant economies (Lehmann, 28:4, and Rothstein, 28:2, are important examples) and helps to explain the viability of family farms (Friedmann, 20:4), due in part to peasants' willingness to accept outside work (Collins, 28:4, discusses this for Peru; Holmes and Quataert, 28:2, for Europe). These new perspectives open in turn some interesting questions about household farms in the United States, in particular

about the choices and reallocation of tasks that have accompanied their adaptation to a modern society. In addressing these questions, Jane Adams studies what might be considered the “peasants” of southern Illinois and finds in the shifting tasks of women (compare Sanjek, 24:1, and Guyer, 22:3, on household roles in Africa) a crucial American adaptation, which for all its cultural differences is quite comparable to experience elsewhere.

Inventing Women's Roles. Women's roles, nearly everyone now agrees, are largely a matter of cultural assignment; and the study of how those assignments have evolved and been justified has become an important field of research (see Hatem, 29:4; Ross and Rapp, 23:1; Rogers, 20:1), one that can reveal much about a particular society. Susan Barham shows that to be true for Australia, using Australian patriotic lore as a kind of covert but fundamental expression of the culture's view of women (methodologically challenging, her approach invites comparison with Appadurai's study of Indian cookbooks and with Borneman's of American horse breeding as expressions of national values, both in 30:1). In contrast to such broadly contrived expressions of national feeling, Joy Parr has chosen a very precise topic: a comparison of how the same tasks were allotted by gender in English and in Canadian factories. The battles fought on the factory floor over prestige, security, and income expressed some of the central conflicts of industrial capitalism, helped define the factory system, and were crucial moments in labor history (see Cohen, 27:4, and Haydu, 27:1). Especially in the weaving industries, such issues of power and control, class, craftsmanship, and worker's rights intersected with the challenges of new technologies and the resistance of communal attitudes. In addition—and it is this that has drawn Parr to the subject—these conflicts explicitly raised the issue of what jobs should be done by women. Comparing the same industry in two countries thus provides an unusual opportunity to assess the relative weight of these factors in determining women's work. Parr's careful findings thus contribute to a growing literature (see Thompson, 27:1, Minge-Kalman, 20:3, Scott and Tilly, 17:1).

Professionalization and Formal Knowledge. The concept of professionalization is one of those unfinished Weberian classics, much referred to, accepted in varying degrees, but not well worked out. In this and, C.W.R. Gispén establishes, in much else it is like the subject of bureaucracy. Gispén tackles both the large problem the topic raises and a more specific one about the status of engineers in Germany and the United States, reaching two strong conclusions: that the distinction between Anglo-American professionalism and Continental bureaucracy has been overdrawn and that there was something unique in the subordination of German middle-class professionals (an issue that has its own history and fascination, note LaVopa, 28:2, Liedman and Ringer, 28:1, and O'Boyle, 25:1).