

# Editorial Foreword

THE MEETINGS OF EAST AND WEST. Charles Issawi's analysis of the rise of the West would a century ago have seemed magnificent in its learning and strange in its tone of moral neutrality but hardly surprising in its theme or conclusions. For the past fifty years, however, the effort to exorcise ethnocentrism has been one of the defining struggles of social science (readers of Issawi's article will be interested in Hodgson's contribution to that battle in *CSSH*, 5:2; and in Hammel's and Cohn's recent comments on anthropology in 22:2). Now it requires some courage to address with modern methods and knowledge the question of when and why the West surpassed the East; and one of Issawi's contributions is to show that recent research brings new clarity to that topic. This specification of what to compare finds that military strength is not a sufficient measure (see Ness and Stahl on imperialist armies in Asia, 19:1) but avoids sweeping judgments of civilizations (note Coulborn on ancient civilizations, 8:4; D. Smith and Modelski on patterns of hegemony, 20:2). Such judgments and Western dominance were ingredients of that Orientalism criticized by Edward Said in a book reviewed here by Amal Rassam, an anthropologist (and note the earlier comment on ethnology in Yugoslavia by J. Halpern and Hammel, 11:1), and by Ross Chambers, a specialist in French literature. The ways in which one culture feeds itself by selective understanding of another is itself a significant problem for comparative analysis (see Glick and Pi-Sunyer's review of the theme of acculturation in Spanish historiography, 11:2). And that in turn points to the painful position of the Westernizing intellectual in the Orient. Earlier this year Segre suggested the range and poignance of the problem by comparing African and Zionist leaders (22:1), a problem that has attracted particular attention in modern Egypt (see the debates of M. Halpern and Perlmutter on the new middle class, 10:1, 11:1, 12:1, and Reid's analysis of the professions there, 16:1). By focussing on one Egyptian writer, Charles Smith goes beyond the concept of modernizing intellectuals developed by Edward Shils (starting with the first issue of *CSSH*) and the questions of class to complete the circle of articles in this rubric: when East meets West ambivalence is reciprocal, dominance temporary.

MEASURES OF BELIEF. Although we usually assume that systems of popular belief and patterns of social behavior are intimately related and that both, properly studied, reveal much about social structure, the methodological problems remain daunting. Survey research offers one powerful if

limited solution, applicable to contemporary societies, which in large part accounts for its widespread use in political science and sociology. In matters of religion, past and present, change and continuity in ritual also offer the advantage of a discrete body of evidence, although one difficult to analyze (see the general comments on ritual entertainment by Cumrine, 12:4; and the related studies of eighteenth-century England by Wertz, 12:1; and among the Maya by Nash and the Javanese by Peacock, 10:3). In this issue Michel Vovelle's study of New England epitaphs and Stephen Wilson's of saints' chapels in Parisian churches demonstrate that evidence permitting quantitative analysis, imaginatively probed, can be no less suggestive. (Interestingly, the results of Vovelle's deft examination fit remarkably with Howe's essay on the decline of Calvinism, 14:3). Anand Yang also starts with collective behaviour but as evidenced in a single Hindu riot; belief alone cannot account for the event, and his explanation includes formal organizations, sacred space, market networks and social structure. In her complementary article, Sandria Freitag studies somewhat more broadly the process whereby symbols are used to overcome rural divisions. These articles thus come to take up many of the issues about open and closed peasant communities debated by Skinner (13:3) and Rambo (19:2) and add to the case studies on the political mobilization of peasants by Singlemann, Waterbury, and Wasserstrom (17:4) and by Denich, Mouzelis, and Ferguson (18:1) as well as to the study of industrial violence in India by Arnold in the last issue (22:3).

DISCUSSIONS OF ECONOMIC HISTORY. Economic history has, perhaps more than any of the social sciences, generally sustained a fruitful tension between the empirical and the theoretical; and no one more consistently uses clear comparison to better effect than do economic historians. Yet even in so established a field as the economic development of early modern Europe there is, as the discussion between Joan Thirsk and Jan de Vries brings out, some question as to what theories apply. Readers of Harriet Friedman's review of recent work on the American south, impressed by the refinement of new analyses, may well wish to turn to Richard's article on estate labor (21:4) and Friedmann's earlier one on the family farm (20:4). Some may take satisfaction, too, in noting that although extensive and sometimes quantitative evidence, subtle methods, and well-elaborated theories seem to produce lucid debate—and in the case of Norman Mutton and Lewis Jones stunning brevity as well—they do not procure agreement.