

Editorial Foreword

POLITICS AND RELIGION. The relationship of religion to politics is endlessly fascinating, presumably because it is rarely direct. The *qadi* interpreting Islamic law in a French colony and the German farmer who puts down his Sunday-morning glass of wine to go vote for the Christian Democrats both stand at the intersection of religion and politics, where their behavior is shaped by—and therefore exposes for analysis—social structure, community values, institutional patterns, and current conflicts. Thus, on the basis of some remarkable research, Allan Christelow has important points to make about such major themes in the general literature as the uneven assimilationism that distinguished French imperial policy and the part played by the secular institutions of Islam in rapidly changing societies. He also adds an important case study to earlier discussions of the role of law in colonial situations (see Galanter on indigenous law in India, 14:1; Rosen on law in new nations, 20:1), and he offers a distinct example of the problems local elites faced in their inescapable role of cultural brokers (see the discussion of Binder and Geertz, 2:2, and the articles of Ekeh, 17:1; Segre, 22:1; and Smith, 22:4). These multiple and complex themes are given sharp focus, however, by the controlled comparison of Algeria and Senegal, which establishes that two different sorts of cities crucially affected the French empire's connection to local society and determined the position of the Muslim judge. At first glance, Günter Golde's approach seems quite different, as he brings to bear statistical techniques of proven effectiveness for studying electoral behavior. The relation of religion and politics—more readily seen in instances of ethnic identity, the mobilization of religious minorities, or the formation of immigrant communities—cannot be so directly measured among the stable patterns and established parties of southwestern Germany. By comparing Protestant and Catholic communities, Golde gives such critical matters as occupation and social class their due while emphasizing Catholicism's special responsiveness to the self-image of rural society in industrial Germany and to the practice of Sunday voting. His findings evoke other studies of German rural communities (Wolf, 5:1) and extend earlier work on German voting (Segal, 10:1).

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE. The debate about how best to study households has held a lively place in these pages for some time. As the two studies in this section make clear, the article by Hammel and Laslett (16:1) establishing a set of clear definitions intended to encourage the comparison of households has proved to be seminal. But like most social phenomena, coresidence turns out to be awkwardly multifaceted despite the tangible concreteness it evokes; and

so useful and simple a term as *household* is revealed to be ambiguous. There is a need to distinguish family from household and to recognize both as expressions and agents of kinship and inheritance (Goody, 11:1 and 15:1), but one must also acknowledge that the size and composition of households can variously relate to patterns of landholding (MacDonald and MacDonald, 15:2; Plakans, 17:1; Gibbon and Curtin, 20:3), forms of production (Mingel-Kalman, 20:3; Kuznesof, 22:1), and markets (Friedmann, 20:4). In addition, all these distinctive elements need to be taken into account simultaneously, a desire which led Verdon to suggest an alternative, "operational," model (22:1). Roger Sanjek combines these multiple concerns with ethnographic meticulousness, describing and categorizing the activities of people who live in one neighborhood of Accra. In doing so, he uncovers a number of patterns that common assumptions could easily have overlooked. And he adds tellingly to that analysis of how sex roles are socially structured that a number of authors have called for (Scott and Tilly, 17:1; Rogers, 20:1; Ross and Rapp, 23:1; Guyer, 22:3). Verdon had noted that the architecture of living space also deserved attention, and Sanjek mentions the role of courtyards; but Roderick Lawrence makes the "structural analysis of space" his central concern, opening a whole array of further possibilities. He compares the design of public housing in England and Australia using a sensibility and vocabulary influenced by Lévi-Strauss that adds an important and suggestive dimension to the discussion of households. That once innocent term is now subject to every dissecting tool of anthropology.

THE HUMAN NATURE OF MATERIALISM. To most ears, slash-and-burn cultivation sounds more like a stage of civilization than a description of agriculture in modern America, but J. S. Otto and N. E. Anderson have little difficulty in showing that for part of the South such techniques make sense. Nor do they sense any dissonance in combining an assessment of soil chemistry, labor supply, demographic pressures, and markets with consideration of the cultural borrowing whereby British settlers modified the techniques of cultivation they brought from the old world in order to apply others learned from the Delaware Indians. Nor do the works reviewed by Robert Burns require that priority in medieval economic history be given to religion or to commerce. Yet Eric Wolf, in his review of Marvin Harris, sees the division between materialists and mentalists to have once again become central in modern anthropology. And Jerrold Seigel finds that within Marxism itself the related problem of the relationship between theory and practice remains crucial. Most nineteenth-century thinkers would be shocked to find such questions still the subject of angry debate, but the operative division in this century may really lie between those who find these ancient dichotomies avoidable in social scientific practice and those who insist on resolving them in social scientific theory.