

Editorial Foreword

LOCAL CULTURE AND WORLD ECONOMY. The debate about Guatemala now going on in Washington centers on whether political instability in Central America results from poverty or conspiracy. As an anthropologist, Carol Smith poses the question differently. Although her argument—which contains an important critique of much current anthropology—also has major political implications, it is more likely to influence anthropologists than political leaders. Once fascinated by the integrity of indigenous cultures and now fixed on the relentless pressures of an external capitalist system, anthropologists have neglected, Smith argues, the importance of the mediating institutions that connect the two. These connections, uniquely shaped by local society as well as external demands, reveal how even the powerless had a part in making their own history, with quite unanticipated results. Her study thus becomes an anthropologist's social history of Guatemala that incidentally explains the cruel misperceptions of a government with weak local roots, continuing extensive discussion in *CSSH* on politics and poverty in Latin America (see Forman and Riegelhaupt, 12:2; Wasserstrom, Waterbury, 17:4; Tardanico, 24:3; and Eckstein, Winson, 25:1), on the general issue of agricultural reform (Tuma, 21:1, and Herring, 21:4), and on closed peasant societies (Skinner, 13:3, and Rambo, 19:2). Controlled comparisons to neighboring societies further Smith's argument step by step as they do also in Richard Roberts's analysis of how changing markets, Islam, and local culture intersected to alter the structures that tied Marakan men and women to property and to the family (themes addressed earlier by Youssef, 15:3; Guyer, 22:3; Ross and Rapp, 23:1; and Dumett, 25:4). Here, too, it is the complexity of social responses (in which household structures and gender relations prove remarkably adaptable) that demands attention.

DEMOGRAPHY AND DOWRY: FAMILY AND LAND. Anyone speaking today about progress in the social sciences would quickly point to demography, where the impressive results include whole batteries of assumptions quietly discarded as well as new and better evidence. In a relatively short time the achievements of historical demography have spread widely (as scientific discoveries are supposed to do), affecting many disciplines and theories. The acceptance accorded demography throughout the social sciences, which contrasts with the resistance encountered by behavioralism, quantification, structuralism, or psychohistory, may stem from the respect due technical skill and painstaking dedication (which have given demography a certain splendid isolation). It is also a response to statistical results that can be received as ideologically neutral and that gain significance with every comparison. Demographic data

are, of course, most reliable on contemporary societies (both the highly developed and some underdeveloped ones); demography's most striking historical findings have been about preindustrial society. Combined, these strengths have made demography the crucial battleground for theories about the causes and effects of industrialization. Eduardo Archetti's study of family size and household structure in Argentina and Ecuador gains special value in that context. It begins with a useful survey of the literature on the demographic transition in Europe, then uses research on Italian immigrant families to test a number of central propositions. Archetti's emphasis upon the particular articulation in each community of economy, social structure, and values reinforces some of the points made by Smith and Roberts while adding to earlier assessments of household structures (see Plakans, 17:1; Kusnesof, Verdon, 22:1; Sanjek, 24:1). Richard Breen picks up debate on the special case of Irish families and their use of dowry (see Goody, 15:1; Gibbon and Curtin, 20:3 and 25:2; Fitzpatrick, 25:2), raising his criticisms to a more general, theoretical point. As the weight of its significance pushes demographic research into more detailed and local studies, the emerging evidence displays a variety that challenges generalization.

MIGRATION. Migration is so obviously a response to large-scale economic differences that structural explanations about world systems and an international division of labor seem at first glance sufficient. Yet here, too, a closer look finds that migrants can effect some choices and that the nations exporting labor can have some influence. Beverly Lozano's work on the Spanish laborers who accepted offers of work in Hawaii finds that if their initial migration can be largely understood in structural terms, their subsequent move to California (compare Wells on agricultural labor in California, 23:4) demonstrates the importance of cultural preferences and social values. Barbara Schmitter notes that the Italian government gives institutional support to practices established by generations of migrant laborers in an effort to maintain their ties with Italy and sustain their expectation of returning home (compare Kratoska, 24:2). Perhaps there should be no surprise that structures, markets, and systems do not adequately explain particular behaviors; but the essays in this issue, while illuminating specific cases, make a larger point about method and theory, and possibly even about human freedom.