Editorial Foreword

The Politics of Change. New nations in old societies have been among the favorite topics of political scientists for forty years. In studying these issues, they have borrowed from the stately theories of the nineteenth century; applied principles rooted in the competing ideologies of western politics; and used ideas of modernization, development, and dependency. The results, in fact, are impressive; but the worries of Thomas Hobbes are still with us. In this number of *CSSH* three quite different approaches to the politics of change are juxtaposed, and they throw interesting light on each other. Edmund Burke and Paul Lubeck focus on two oil-rich Islamic countries. They thus emphasize both the world economy and religion while using close comparisons to identify additional factors that might explain why movements of social protests were defeated in Nigeria (note Diamond on Nigeria, *CSSH* 25:3) and led to revolution in richer Iran (see Akhavi in 25:2). The two examples, they suggest, represent the extremes of likely responses among Islamic countries; and their discussion has broad implications for other nations that experience sudden wealth from exports, rapid urbanization, or social protest tied to religion (Wallis, Bruce, and Taylor discuss an Irish example in 29:2). Hans-Dieter Evers considers a different region, Southeast Asia, and a different problem, bureaucratization (Heper treated typologies of bureaucracy in 27:1; Armstrong, their role in state formation in 14:1). The similarities that Evers finds among Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia (de Vere Allen discussed Malayan bureaucracy in 12:2) lead him to emphasize recent change over ancient continuity—a classic debate among specialists of Southeast Asia (compare Lieberman on Burma, 29:1) and then to the striking conclusion that swelling bureaucracy is an outcome of revolution (Markoff noted that connection in France, 17:4; officials of course have interests of their own, a point also made by Kraus and Vanneman, 27:1, and Findley, 28:1). No wonder that Richard Sklar begins his article by talking of the dismal science. His scope is worldwide and his concern the remarkable lack of theories about how new polities might hope to achieve democracy (compare Fulbrook, 29:2, and Binder, 28:1). Rejecting the claim that authoritarianism is necessary for the stability and discipline economic growth requires—readers may be surprised to see how widespread that assumption is (a view also questioned by Mouzelis in his assessment of modern dictatorships, 28:1)—Sklar finds that the desire for democracy crops up in a variety of contexts and may well bring economic benefits. Although studies of developing states, each of these articles stresses the importance of immediate circumstances, institutions, and goals. Comparison here offers the unanticipated advantage of providing relief from reliance on a tone of tough-minded pessimism in order to seem scientific.

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The Facts of Life. Human biology makes students of society uncomfortable. It is not sex that scares sophisticated scholars but the temptations of determinism. The authors of these articles avoid that danger by looking for interconnected patterns of social relations rather than universal laws. With the ancient historian's skill at squeezing the most from limited sources, Martha Roth probes marriage documents. Cautiously and imaginatively, she asks about age at marriage and makes that reveal something of neo-Babylonian and neo-Assyrian household, family, and inheritance patterns (compare Hopkins on Roman Egypt, 22:3, and note the related issues raised by Breen, 26:4, and Goody, 15:1). Herbert Moller, who has long investigated the cultural implications of biological changes (for example in sex ratio, 1:2, and age profile, 10:2), explores the question of when young males reached puberty. He uses an extraordinary range of sources yet seeks to consider each in terms of its cultural context. Different approaches to different milennia, these essays convey the excitement of solid research into questions sharply posed while showing how much even of youth or age is the creation of culture.

Communal Strengths. Efforts to establish some perfect community, however circumscribed, are endlessly fascinating and full of paradoxes. The qualities that cause their founding may not be conducive to survival; success can be a cause of failure. Aryei Fishman investigates orthodox kibbutzim, comparing the effect of Hassidic roots (see Sharot, 16:3 and 22:3) and the secular values of the Jewish bund (its Russian experience was studied by Tobias and Woodhouse, 8:3 and 19:3). Their different understandings of communal life have striking results, and in reflecting on these outcomes Fishman is led toward evolutionary models of religion. He also recognizes the perilous effects of prosperity, part of the topic that interests Barrington Moore. His is a study of social movements that have sought to achieve equality, community, and austerity; and all of his examples are religious groups (this lively study thereby continues a discussion well-established in these pages: among several authors on the nature of monasticism, 3:4; by McClelland on Aiyetoro, 9:1; by Barkin and Bennett on kibbutzim and Hutterites, 14:4; and by Peter on Hutterites, 25:2). Between the search for personal salvation and the desire to change the world there is room (and maybe need) for many compromises; but, Moore argues, the three ideals that seem to balance that tension will themselves in turn conflict. For all that, these dreams, their failures, and the institutions they create have a universal appeal and thus a kind of durability, so that the histories of these troubled communities continue to speak to a larger and more troubled society.

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