

# Editorial Foreword

**HUSBANDS AND WIVES: INHERITANCE AND WORK.** If Keith Hopkins' remarkable discovery challenges a universal 'law' of the human family which has been as sacred to social science as to Christianity, it reinforces recent insistence on what a flexible institution the family is. Its varied forms (see Hammel and Laslett in 16:2) appear to be related to patterns of inheritance in Africa and Europe (Goody, 15:1) and landed property from the Baltic to Ireland (Plakans, 17:1; Gibbon and Curtin, 20:3) as well as Roman Egypt. As a unit of production, the family can triumph in modern world markets (Friedmann, 20:4) even though these may undermine traditional controls over who marries whom (Perinbaum, 19:1). Nor can any simple law of economic necessity replace the cultural ones whose universality Hopkins challenges, for the division of labor between man and woman seems, on the other hand, to follow from custom and power (see Mintz, 13:3 and Rogers, 20:1) as well as production. In her neatly constructed comparison Jane Guyer finds that the cultivation of cocoa determined the division of labor even less than the mechanics of sugar raising shaped the contrasting cultures of Puerto Rico and Jamaica (Mintz, 1:3) and contributes to the understanding of West African economies as described by Hill (18:3).

**RELIGION AND CULTURAL RESISTANCE.** When two cultures clash, one of them is usually seen as aggressive or dominant, implying both a process of change and its natural outcome. The religion of the defending culture then often becomes, depending on one's point of view, a final source of intransigence for continuing a battle lost or the bastion of heroic resistance within which the tattered remnants of a defeated culture gather. There then follow issues of acculturation (see Glick and Pi-Sunyer on Spain, 11:2; Sharot on Jewish Communities, 16:3; Rhee on Chinese Jews, 15:1) or of the ways in which whole communities can structure their defense (Barkin and Bennet on Kibbutz and Hutterites, 14:4; C. Lane on the Molokan sect, 17:2; Tessler and Rosenfeld on Jewish and Arab minorities, both in 20:3). Enormously varied in circumstance and strategy, such responses can generate innovations in ritual (Peacock, 10:3 and Crumine, 12:4) and culture that have their own integrity (see Peel on syncretism, 10:2, and Deshen on religious change, 12:3). This process of religious change, through a tragically unequal encounter, is delicately traced in Inga Clendinnen's sensitive reconstruction of the webs of symbol among the Mayans. In the heroic hope of religious movements (Lantenari, 16:4; de Craemer, Vansina, and

Fox, 18:4) and millenarianism (Wilson, 6:1; van den Kroef, 1:4; Malal-goda, 12:4), comparative study has found one of its most fruitful subjects; yet Stephen Sharot in his suggestive study of European Jews finds no laws but only general suggestions as to when millenarianism is likely to appear. Radical or defensive, religion maintains its integrative functions.

**ETHNIC ELITES.** The complicated interconnections between race and economic or political power (Kuper, 14:4; Benda, 7:3; Chance and Taylor and their critics, 19:4 and 20:3; Wilkie, 19:1) have to be separately disentangled in each case, but Robert Tignor's description of ethnic directorates in Egypt suggests a late colonial phase that, despite its roots in a cosmopolitan tradition (contrast Lebanese traders in West Africa, Winder, 4:3, or the quite different conditions of the Ottoman empire, Mardin, 11:3), was destined to be undermined by the depression, world war, and internal populism even though the indigenous middle class was weak (Perlmutter, 10:1). It may be significant, however, that in the equally complicated American experience ethnicity—as Patrick Blessing notes—is not usually associated with elites at all.

**COMPARING NATIONS.** To most people historical comparison usually means comparing countries; and among nations, the United States would seem to offer an unusually rich array of possibilities for such comparison (note the symposium in 5:3 and Hartz's essay in 5:4). The attempt remains relatively uncommon nevertheless, in part perhaps because effective analytic categories are difficult to establish on such a scale. Morton Keller, who here fruitfully compares Great Britain and the United States, argues that the parallel of simultaneously emerging industrial societies offers a framework for comparison (much as responses to economic advance in the eighteenth century did for Appleby, 20:2) which is not present for every period. Studies of modern Latin America, far more regularly put in comparative terms (Williams, 11:3) can also be cited, as in Allen Johnson's review of recent books, in favor of comparison focussed on particular themes.