Editorial Foreword

The Unexpected Origins of Social Policy. Among the biases social scientists bring to their work, one is so worthy in its ambition that it often passes unnoticed. The broadest coherent explanation tends to be the one preferred, investing the particular with general significance, discerning patterns applicable elsewhere, and describing trends that invite comparison. If there is a danger here, it lies not so much in this preference (which many would want to encourage) but just beyond it, in the invisible weight of conventional thinking. Claims to broad significance become more credible when they point to conclusions widely shared, patterns more acceptable when familiar, trends more convincing when already well described in the scholarly literature. The temptation is to discover what readers will know to be true. The cases in point in this issue of *CSSH* are the progressive social programs of Scandinavia and the centralized social policies of modern China. Widely shared impressions of each of those societies readily combine with general lore, about the development of social legislation and about China's revolutionary government, to provide interpretations shown here to be inadequate. Instead, these social policies and practices turn out, as on reflection we should have expected, to be very deeply rooted in the societies that produced them. Peter Baldwin shows the heralded welfare programs of Denmark and Sweden to have arisen not from social democratic pressure but from within political systems that adapted their institutions and traditions in response to agrarian interests (compare Levine on Danish welfare legislation as well as Dunn on transport policy in Britain and the United States, both in *CSSH*, 20:1; Stone on welfare policy in Latin America, 17:3, and Remlinger on social security in the U.S. and the USSR, 4:1). Mayfair Yang similarly looks closely at actual political practice and the importance of shared values in a richly complex analysis of how such critical needs as housing and food are allocated in contemporary China. Using Foucaultian concepts, she identifies the unanticipated consequence, a vigorous gift economy in which social values mediate and subvert state power and policy (a paradox others have found in China; see Duara, 29:1, Mann, 26:3, and Fewsmith, 25:4; Dirks studied a different use of the gift in India, 28:3). Well-grounded research, sensitive to theory, leads these articles to conclusions that challenge several sets of familiar assumptions.

The United States in the International Economy. American foreign policy has been well studied; but the excellent diplomatic histories, the research on international trade, and the work on imperialism are not easily brought together. Jeffry Frieden suggests a way of accomplishing this. Attentive to the kinds of products traded, he connects changes in the goals and tactics of

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American policy toward less developed countries to changes in the domestic economies at both ends of the exchange. The shift from gunboat to good neighbor followed long-term economic developments (compare Modelski's scheme, 20:2). The process by which diplomacy and economic opportunities are interconnected, through domestic politics, is nicely illustrated in David Lake's crisp study of American agriculture and the international economy (the relationship of agriculture, the state, and markets was looked at from a different perspective by Adams and by Asano-Tamanoi, 30:4; Winson, 25:1, and Friedmann, 20:4).

Colonial Boundaries. The great nineteenth-century riots and uprisings against Europe's growing imperial presence around the world usually triggered a reaction so forceful that riot and response are often treated as a single incident, a dramatic but unsurprising escalation in the encounters from which empires were built. Juan Cole presents a different view, by drawing our attention to riot itself. The outburst in Alexandria (which was followed by the British bombardment of the city and their occupation of the country) began, he suggests, in spontaneous, local conflict; and it became more than a port-city brawl neither because of some conspiracy nor because of some local elite (two common views). The crowds themselves made it something more. On one side were people from different occupations and regions who came to see themselves as Egyptians and Moslems while on the other foreigners from different nations responded as Europeans. The anger and thus the violence, more than merely xenophobic, was rooted in an awareness of the pattern of European incursions and of the tightening vise closing on the Egyptian government. Similar politicization, he argues, occurred elsewhere in the Islamic world under similar conditions. Firmer cultural boundaries were being drawn. The process by which colonial Europeans also created such boundaries is the subject of Ann Stoler's study of Europeans in Sumatra (on the process among Indonesians a generation later, see Kahn, 20:1). Intersecting cultures, Stoler argues, do not simply impose themselves or resist intrusions; they remake themselves (a point made from very different examples by Bentley, 29:1; Wesler, 25:4, and Clendinnen, 22:3). Thus colonizers, too, can fit under the ethnographer's microscope, where they reveal themselves to be busily constructing more impassable cultural boundaries from the familiar materials of gender and class (compare Sider, 29:1, and Hind, 26:1).

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