

Editorial Introduction

Given the current shift of resources away from academic enterprises in general and the social sciences in particular, the launching of a new journal in history requires at the very least a statement of purpose, if not outright justification. Ours is neither complex nor exotic. The past two decades have witnessed a movement amongst scholars towards the merging of research approaches, techniques, and agendas in allied disciplines into what has been called historical sociology or the 'new social history'. An essential element in fashioning interdisciplinary study is discourse, the sharing of hypotheses and sources, speculation and methodology. It is the intention of *Continuity and Change* to foster dialogue amongst scholars of societies in past time by providing a forum for the results of empirical and qualitative research into the history of social structure and secure their presentation in language intelligible to the non-specialist. While our range of interests in the social sciences is broad, including economics, sociology, and anthropology, our particular focus is upon two disciplines which have as yet not been fully integrated into the history of social structure: law and demography.

Continuity and Change will focus upon transitions over time in the basic institutions of society: the family, law, economic organisation, culture, and government. Three spheres are of particular interest. The first is the *history of household, family, kinship, and social relations* in their cultural, demographic and economic contexts. Contributions which explore the composition of the household, its economic and cultural functions and the role of gender are welcomed. The links between family economy and local economy, migration and the life-cycle, kin and family will be addressed.

Legal institutions conceived in their broadest perspective is our second realm. Focus will be upon how law mediated social relationships. Rather than providing narrow exegesis in the development of procedural or substantive law, articles in *Continuity and Change* will discuss the interplay between positive law and customary practices in legal systems, the nexus

between property and inheritance and their impact upon family structure and relationships, crime in its social context and the nature of the legal profession. Law will be viewed as a component of social structure and as organic, rather than as an isolated body of fixed rules.

Finally, *Continuity and Change* is about *social structure*. Of primary concern are the issues of long-term demographic change and economic organisation in relation to major structural transformations such as industrialisation, urbanisation, or the transition from traditional to modern. Likewise the impact of demographic and economic change on society, politics, and culture, as well as alterations in the role of work, gender, and status are topics of interest.

The range of *Continuity and Change* will therefore be broad: the reconstruction of past societies at all levels, people in the past, *all* the people. Yet our concern is also with the present and is introspective. Our goal must be, as the breadth of interest of our Editorial Board indicates, to bring together scholars in different countries with common interests who do not wish to have the boundaries of their interest defined by artificial disciplinary and institutional walls or traditional notions of history. For historical sociology to prosper, the barriers must be breached, and it is hoped that *Continuity and Change* will assist in this most important task.

THE EDITORS