

Editor's Column: Launching the Journal

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Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Cliodynamics: The Journal of Theoretical and Mathematical History*. 'Cliodynamics' is a transdisciplinary area of research integrating historical macrosociology, economic history and cliometrics, mathematical modeling of long-term social processes, and the construction and analysis of historical databases. *Cliodynamics: The Journal of Theoretical and Mathematical History* will publish original articles advancing the state of theoretical knowledge in this discipline. This includes the search for general principles explaining the functioning and dynamics of historical societies and construction of mathematical models embodying such principles. There is also empirical content that deals with discovering general empirical patterns, determining empirical adequacy of key assumptions made by models, and testing theoretical predictions with data from actual historical societies. A mature, or 'developed theory,' thus, integrates models with data.

The articles published in the first issue of *Cliodynamics* illustrate different approaches to developing such an empirically grounded theory. Randall Collins builds a model of battle dynamics using verbal arguments and flow charts. Collins is well known for precise, crisp verbal formulations that can be readily translated into mathematical models (and we hope to publish such a translation in a future issue of the journal). Sergey Gavrilets and co-authors, on the other hand, approach the question of how complex societies evolved with a spatially explicit agent-based model. Finally, the main focus of William Thompson's article is empirical, but it is motivated by a theoretical question: how can we contrast, and ultimately integrate, perspectives on global history associated with the secular cycle and leadership long cycle schools.

In the future we will continue to publish both empirical and modeling articles. Additionally, we plan to publish databases (especially those focusing on time-series data) that can serve as testbeds for theories, methodological articles relevant to the issues described above, and critical commentaries on articles published in the journal and on general issues in theoretical and quantitative history.

In addition to substantial articles, *Cliodynamics* publishes shorter reports that may present a concise research finding, or address a more speculative issue. An example in this issue is the report by Edward Turner, who presents a

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novel explanation of why the number of international non-governmental organizations has exploded in the last half-century. We will also entertain proposals for forum articles that will be accompanied by shorter commentaries.

Although *Cliodynamics* uses the relatively new concept of free-access web-based publishing (and currently we have no plans to produce a paper version), the traditional book/monograph is unrivaled for presenting complex theoretical arguments well-butressed by empirical research. In this issue, Jack Goldstone reviews one of the best examples of such work, the second volume of *Strange Parallels* by Victor Lieberman. Another globalizing history of Eurasia, *Empires of the Silk Road* by Christopher Beckwith, is discussed in Thomas Hall's review essay. Thomas Currie reviews *Natural Experiments of History*, edited by Jared Diamond and James A. Robinson. Sergey Tsirel does a great service to the English-language community with his thorough review of *Historical Macrosociology* by Nikolai Rozov, published in Russian in 2009. Finally, An Zeng and Bertrand Roehner give us two perspectives on *Bursts* by Albert-László Barabási.

Cliodynamics is a transdisciplinary and transnational journal. Contributors to this issue have extremely varied backgrounds – mathematics, natural sciences (physics and biology), and social sciences (sociology, anthropology, and political science). An article by a historian just missed this issue (it has been provisionally accepted pending revisions) and will be published in the next one. Although many authors are based in North America, others come from China, Russia, France, and United Kingdom. Our authors range from well-established scientists (including a President of the American Sociological Association) to graduate students. A rich diversity of backgrounds and points of view is absolutely necessary for sustaining vigorous scientific debate and avoiding the stasis of orthodoxy. Of course, the authors of *Cliodynamics* tend to share a commitment to the search for general patterns and explanations in history. However, we welcome considered critiques from those with different perspectives on history.