

PREFACE



THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO *ECONOMIC PERSUASIONS*, which is the third volume in the *Studies in Rhetoric and Culture* series, were originally presented in July 2005 at the University of Mainz as part of the Rhetoric Culture Project. An initial conference on rhetoric culture theory, inspired and led by Ivo Strecker, was convened during 2002 at Mainz. Attended by anthropologists and scholars from related disciplines, it became the springboard for a subsequent series of conferences on topics such as religion, social relations, politics, and economics. This volume's editor was a participant in the initial conference, but he harbored reservations about assembling a group of scholars interested in addressing the intersection of rhetoric, anthropology, and economics. The home of rhetoric seemed to be in politics, language, semiotics, and expressive culture, and not in anthropology or in its overlaps with economics. These doubts were unfounded, because it proved very easy to convene a group of scholars around the idea of persuasion and economy. Our diverse group included anthropologists, economists, and a sociologist; their topics ranged from ethnography to theory, and from history, to texts, to art. The many postings, discussions, and dialogues on rhetoric culture that emerged after the initial planning conference inspired our contributors along with the opportunity of trying to develop, with like-minded scholars, a different way of thinking about economy.

A large, intellectual venture, such as the rhetoric culture series, comes to fruition through the commitment, encouragement, and hard work of a group of individuals. Ivo Strecker, influenced by the work of Stephen Tyler, developed the idea of an encompassing rhetoric culture project, and our contribution would not have emerged without his unflagging support and encouragement. We also owe special thanks to Felix Girke, who co-organized the economics conference with this editor, and who plans to edit a second volume on economics and rhetoric. Christian Meyer, Jean Lydall, and Anna-Maria Brandstetter contributed in many ways to the success of our meetings in Mainz. The Volkswagen Foundation generously funded our conference with the others,

and we were especially pleased that the publisher, Marion Berghahn, was able to attend our conference sessions.

I close with thanks to our contributors, who were faced with a new challenge in thinking about economy in terms of rhetoric and culture. The study of market economies traditionally has been the province of economists just as everyday small-scale economies have provided the grounds for anthropological research: a breach separated the two fields so that a convincing comparative economics never developed. The essays that follow help to bridge this gap and offer an exciting way of comparing economies.