

OXFORD RESEARCH IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

**ABSTRACTS OF THESES IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
FOR WHICH HIGHER DEGREES WERE AWARDED
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN 1990**

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1. ANDREW W. BEATTY, *Exchange and Social Organization in Nias, Indonesia*. D.Phil.

Following a description of local descent groups, I analyse the structure of marriage alliance and the relation between descent groups and the parties temporarily involved in the contracting of a marriage. This is followed by a presentation of the principles involved in the calculation and determination of bridewealth with analysis of the meaning of prestations and their place in the ideology of affinity. A discussion of measurement—its techniques, symbolism and relation to types of exchange—leads into a description of the feast of merit. Two contrasted modes of exchange are identified: symmetric exchange articulates status relationships and thus position within the society as a whole; complementary exchange, exemplified in bridewealth and alliance prestations, operates in the ego-centred realm of affinity; tribute is given in return for the blessing and quasi-divine benevolent

influence of wife-giving affines. These two modes of exchange, corresponding to different levels of social structure, are seen to be interrelated in the ritual of the feast of merit. Case histories are used to explore the pragmatic and political aspects of feast giving. A chapter on status and leadership explores the relation between prestige won in feasting, rank and power. Concepts of gift, debt and credit are outlined and the politics of ceremonial exchange is analysed. The last chapter is a comparison of regional types of social structure in Nias, in which common cultural categories, values and structural principles are identified and the dimensions of variation are analysed. The thesis concludes with a brief discussion of theoretical topics in the anthropology of traditional exchange.

2. STEPHEN HOLLAND, *Development and Differentiation in Rural Thailand: A Case Study from the Central Region*. D.Phil.

This thesis is a contribution to the study of rural development and social change. The economy, polity and society of rural Thailand has undergone enormous transformations in the past century and a half. These centre on the penetration of rural communities by structures of state and capital. An important aspect of this exchange is the emergence of 'differentiation' (or 'stratification'): i.e., the development of disparities between the economic status and circumstances of households in the same locality. This thesis reports data pertaining to intra-village differentiation which were collected during an anthropological study of a rural community in Central Thailand.

Rural differentiation in Thailand is considered from a number of related perspectives. Macro-level, historical transformations of the Thai countryside are discussed, and an interpretive model of the consequent stratification discernible in the village study site are presented. Ongoing processes of differentiation, which focus on the monopolization of local resources by rural élites in the context of the developing village, are delineated. Data pertaining to informants' economic related decisions and behaviours reveal that different strata of villagers hold dissimilar 'economic attitudes': rich villagers' economic decision-making accords with Western notions of economic 'rationality', whilst poor villagers tended to be both non-accumulatory and apparently reckless in the economic arena. Middle ranking villagers tended toward economic quiescence. This phenomenon is explained by a reconstruction of some elements of poor villagers' underlying system of values of beliefs.

The consequences of intra-village differentiation for social identities and relations are discussed by reference to the 'class hypothesis': i.e., that the continued experience of increasing differentiation gives rise to class identities and, hence, class based social relations. Data suggest that, whilst stratification informs social identities and interactions to some extent, at present this is over-ridden by other, non-economic factors.

3. AKIFUMI IWABUCHI, *The Social Organization of the Alas of Northern Sumatra*. D.Phil.

This thesis is a study of the social organization of the Alas people of northern Sumatra in Indonesia, based upon field research of eighteen months in Alasland. There had been no first-hand study conducted among this ethnic group, so its aim is to give a detailed description of the social organization and to demonstrate the contrasts and resemblances between the Alas and the other ethnic groups of northern Sumatra. The thesis consists of seven chapters. In Chapter I, introductory information, such as the geography, history, language, and economy of Alasland, is provided. Chapter II is devoted to the village, which is the most important social and political unit, and to a particular village where I conducted intensive field research for nearly fourteen months. The four succeeding chapters offer an analysis of the 'kinship' system. Chapter III deals with not only the structure of family and household, but also the house and its symbolism. Chapter IV presents problems of the patrilineal descent group, which is the most noticeable characteristic of the social organization. In Chapter V, the categorical aspect of social organization, i.e. the relationship terminology, is examined. The terminology is lineal, but non-prescriptive. Chapter VI is concerned with special features in the marriage and affinal relationships, including marriage payments and dowry. The final one, Chapter VII, draws conclusions: first of all, the Alas relationship terminology is compared with the terminologies of the two neighbouring ethnic groups, viz, the Batak and Gayo; secondly, regional variations among Alas villages are discussed; thirdly, social change in Alasland is treated, because in this area, as in the whole of Indonesia, social change is caused by economic decline, migration of other ethnic groups, the introduction of universal Indonesian culture, the destruction of the ecosystem, and so forth.

4. BRIAN JOHN MCGOVERN, *The Idea of Applied Social Science with Special Reference to Social Anthropology*. D.Phil.

The idea of an applied social science is incoherent. I begin chapter one by demonstrating how loosely especially the phrase 'applied anthropology' is used. However, usage appears to gather what coherence it has from an association with two concepts, 'detachment' and 'participation'. From the discussion of these concepts in their relation to social science which follows, it emerges that there seem to be good logical grounds for suspicion of both 'detached' and 'committed' versions of social science. Although advertised as very different, they show an essential identity in that each bids for 'purity', which I recognize to be a religious concept. The most radical of the attempts to dispense with 'purity' in the name of society, 'critical theory', I discuss at length in chapter two, finding its 'immanent critique' of social science surprisingly valid. The logical consequence of this is more remarkable still. As I argue in the remainder of chapter two, the

success of the 'immanent critique' of social science is its abolition. The 'immanent critique' reinforces the suspicion that social science is ideology in the true sense, that there can be no applied social science because social science is *always* 'applied', and that it is its supposed 'purity' that is applied. Another alternative to 'scientism' is looked at in the third chapter, 'understanding'. In the case of arguably the greatest exponent of the method of *Verstehen*, Max Weber, it can be seen that it is impossible to accommodate understanding in the true sense with 'science'. In the case of another influential figure in this tradition, R. G. Collingwood, 'understanding' is seen to degenerate into relativism, which is indeed, as the discussion of Weber showed, rationalism's true face. In chapter four I examine the case of applied anthropology as it was between 1922 and 1945 or thereabouts, providing evidence for my contention that the idea of an applied social science is incoherent because social science is always applied. I return to the other main contention of this thesis in the final chapter, suggesting that if social science may be seen to bear a religious character, that is because such was imprinted upon it at its founding.

5. MARTIN STOKES, *Anthropological Perspectives on Music in Turkey*. D.Phil.

This thesis describes the ways in which Turkish musicians discuss, dispute and attribute meaning to their own music. It focuses primarily on the debate over a kind of music associated with Istanbul, but popular throughout Turkey, known as *arabesk*. The thesis examines the tensions between conflicting representations of society, culture and self as they are manifested in Turkish music.

The thesis falls into three sections. The introductory section presents an overview of theoretical and methodological issues. The first chapter poses the broad theoretical problem of how two conflicting concepts of music can be entertained by the same group of people. An official version of how music should be, expressed in a constructed 'folk' (*halk*) music, contests the rampant popularity of *arabesk*. Since *arabesk* is seen in Turkey as being an essentially urban phenomenon, the second and third chapters relate this issue to the ethnography of Istanbul and to current anthropological and sociological literature on the Middle Eastern city, discussing the nature of urban anthropological fieldwork.

The second part outlines the Turkish theory of culture, and its role in the creation of a national folk music. Chapter four puts the 'music reforms' in their historical context, and discusses the present-day mandate of the Turkish Radio and Television in collecting and performing *halk* music. Chapter five looks at the way in which this music has developed in relation to Turkish art-music theory, and discusses the central role played by the Turkish long-necked lute (*baglama*) and the concept of notation.

The third section focuses on *arabesk*. Chapter six discusses musicological and sociological critique of this music in relation to urbanization problems and the notion of '*dolmus* culture'. The following two chapters are concerned with the

terms in which the music (chapter seven) and the texts (chapter eight) are evaluated and discussed. Chapter nine relates the metaphorical expression of alienation in *arabesk* to the apparently similar sentiments described in religious poetry and music (*sema*), concluding with the observation that the concept of music expressed in *arabesk* is, in relation both to *sema* and *halk* music, radically opposed, the former being essentially passive and disintegrative whilst the latter are performative and integrative. 'Music' is thus an essentially ambiguous category in Turkish social experience.

6. MAI ZAKI-YAMANI, Formality and Propriety in the Hejaz. D.Phil.

Abstract not available at time of going to press.