

OXFORD RESEARCH IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

**ABSTRACTS OF THESES
IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
FOR WHICH HIGHER DEGREES WERE AWARDED
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN 1994**

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SIMONE ALMOND ABRAM, *Recollections and Recreations: Tourism, Heritage and History in the French Auvergne*. D.Phil.

This thesis is concerned with how people represent the past, and how such representations become symbolic of local identity. Although written history is generally seen to be authoritative, other means of interpretation and representation of the past contrast with it. In particular, heritage has become a commonplace attitude to how the past should be preserved in the present, and its links with tourism are considered in relation to expressions of local-ness.

The ethnography is based on a period of participant observation in a predominantly rural highland area, the Cantal Department of the Auvergne, but it is not a village study. The thesis reflects the variety of fieldwork undertaken, both in the network of tourism administration based in the Cantal's capital and in a valley commune. The Cantal is in economic and demographic crisis and has seen drastic depopulation over the past century, so that many people say the past is being revived because the future looks so bleak. However, the past is recollected and re-created in many different ways: in written histories, biographies, at events such as fêtes or in conversation. The thesis addresses the ways in which ideas and

ideologies of heritage, history and tourism are expressed officially and locally, to suggest that there is interaction between the different arenas of understanding and representing the past.

After a preface about the fieldwork, the thesis begins with a review of relevant literature on heritage, history and anthropology, tourism, locality and community. These form the background for three subsequent chapters about different ideas of the Cantal—heritage, tourism, ecomuseums and local histories. The following three chapters consider how these ideas are represented in contrasting ways at local village fêtes run by village groups and in presentations to tourists run by a folklore society.

MUKULIKA BANERJEE, *A Study of the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, 1930-47, North-West Frontier Province, British India*. D.Phil. (BLLD 44-6148)

This thesis is a study of the *Khudai khidmatgar* (servants of God) movement in the North-West Frontier Province of British India. The movement lasted seventeen years between 1930 and 1947. This was the principal nationalist movement in the Settled Districts of the Frontier and it was affiliated to the Indian National Congress. This study aims to be a social history of the *Khudai khidmatgar* movement based on two principal sources. The first are the archival holdings in the India Office Library, London, of secret and confidential reports and correspondence between the British officials in the North-West Frontier Province, British India, and those in Whitehall. The second source is a set of seventy interviews that I held in the North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan, over three trips made between 1991 and 1993 with old men who were active participants in the *Khudai khidmatgar* movement.

The movement was based on an ethic of *khidmat* or service. It was started initially as a movement of self-reform and then grew into a political movement for independence from British rule, a well-organized task force of thousands of non-violent 'soldiers' who were deployed in extensive civil disobedience activities.

This thesis is the first historical account to ask rank-and-file members about why they joined, what they did, and how they perceived the ethics and aims of the movement. The main problematic of the thesis is: how were notoriously violent Pukhtuns converted to an ethic of non-violence? I show that this process used and transformed older social structures and combined Islamic revisionism with a redefinition of the traditional code of honour. The success of these developments shows the inadequacy and essentialism of many previous ethnographic presentations of Pukhtun culture and illustrates the problems which arise when anthropologists ignore modern political developments.

CHRISTINE DANIELS, *Defilement and Purification: Tibetan Buddhist Pilgrims at Bodhnath, Nepal*. D.Phil.

Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage places have long attracted academic interest, but accounts of the people who visit them are scant. This study focuses on pilgrims from Tibet in Bodhnath and examines how they come to assess themselves as defiled and pilgrimage as purificatory. By exploring the notions of 'ordinary people like us', I identify six forms of defilement that preoccupy pilgrims, namely wrongdoing, pollution, supernaturally caused harm, inauspiciousness, ignorance and the condition of being a woman. The journey, in turn, provides a unique combination of purificatory measures that include hardship and religious practices pertaining to the body, speech and mind, as well as blessings from individuals, objects and places regarded as sacred.

The expectations which pilgrims brought with them from Bodhnath, and their attitudes during temporary residence at the site, show an apparent homogeneity of views on pilgrimage, but on closer inspection this breaks down into diverse, though not competing, discourses. The result is a play between a standardized discourse and discursive practice that pilgrims termed 'making use of what is to hand'. Long-term residence in Bodhnath enabled me to observe the resulting ways in which they integrated, or failed to integrate, into the resident Tibetan community.

While these pilgrims invariably assess themselves as hell-bent through defilement, they simultaneously speak of pilgrimage as a happy time. In doing this, I argue, they are expressing a legacy of eschatological beliefs prevalent in the wider society. The legacy reveals attitudes to a range of everyday concerns that rule out the conception of Tibetan pilgrimage as a liminal phenomenon. Consequently, a study of Tibetan pilgrimage may tell us as much about popular concepts of gender and sexuality, for example, as about popular Tibetan practices. In this way we can finally understand how certain persons are constituted as pilgrims and, moreover, how pilgrimage constitutes, for participants, a death-ridden, suffering-laden and consequently happy experience.

MARILYN HERMAN, *Songs, Honour and Identity: The Bet Israel (Ethiopian Jews) in Israel*. D.Phil. (BLLD 44-6370)

The Bet Israel define their identity essentially in honourable terms, and largely in relation to others. Their attributed 'dishonour' in Ethiopia was defined by their perceived lack of link with the land. However, their identity as Bet Israel linked them to Israel.

Established as the Ethiopian 'ethnic group' in Israel, the Bet Israel have become characterized by their connection with Ethiopia. This may limit their honour in negatively determining perceptions of them, and in the absence of family

members who bestow 'belonging'. However, the link with Ethiopia may also be favourably evoked as a medium for the pursuit of honour.

The way in which Bet Israel identity definition is shifting in Israel can also be seen where traditional Bet Israel values associated with the Ethiopian village are essentially upheld by 'elders', defined in contrast to values, attributed to Ethiopian 'townspeople', which are gaining ground among Bet Israel youth.

The Band of Porachet HaTikva displays its ethnic group's concern with honour and aspirations to get ahead in terms of its Ethiopianness. Its repertoire includes honourable song types presented, together with the values expressed within them, as associated with the Bet Israel, and it also includes song types attributed to 'Christians' in the Ethiopian town.

An account of the music and dance of the Band of Porachet HaTikva shows the way in which songs and dance are inextricably linked, and the importance of words in a song, while their conceptualization is characterized by features cited as definitive of their identity.

The Band is expressive of the shift in Bet Israel self-definition in the extent to which it crosses, and to which it remains within the bounds of, comportment traditionally seen as integral to Bet Israel identity.

CHRISTOPHER JOHN HOLDSWORTH, *The Revolution in Anthropology: A Comparative Analysis of the Metaphysics of E. B. Tylor (1832–1917) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942)*. D.Phil.

The revolutionary changes that occurred in British social anthropology in the 1920s, usually associated with Bronislaw Malinowski, are generally perceived as methodological and epistemological. This thesis argues that fundamentally they were metaphysical: that is, that they involved changes in the basic assumptions about the nature of anthropology's subject-matter. In particular, it argues that the functionalism of the 1920s and 1930s represented a transformation of classical evolutionism's assumptions about reality, human nature, culture and society, and the character of Western and traditional cultures. It is approached through the comparative analysis of the work of two anthropologists who serve as exemplars of the anthropology of their respective periods: Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942).

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part I begins with a biographical sketch of E. B. Tylor and traces the development of his ideas within the social and intellectual context of the 1860s and 1870s. This is followed in chapter three by an analysis of his concept of culture and its underlying assumptions. Chapter four examines his view of reality, language and human nature. Chapter five looks at the relationship between the individual and society and the contradictory assumptions underlying moral and intellectual evolution that became apparent in his later work.

Part II follows a similar pattern. It begins with a brief account of the changes that occurred in anthropology between the publication of *Primitive Culture* in 1871

and *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in 1922. The remainder of the chapter traces Malinowski's intellectual development. Chapter seven examines his rejection of the evolutionary thinking of his predecessors and compares his concept of culture with Tylor's. Chapter eight compares his concept of reality and language with Tylor's, and looks at the implications for his anthropology of his view of human beings as essentially emotional and instinctive. Chapter nine examines his assumptions about the nature of society and the relationship between society and the individual and the implications this had for his general approach to understanding other cultures.

In the final chapter, Malinowski's and Tylor's metaphysics are summarized and compared, concluding that Tylor's and Malinowski's assumptions about human nature, culture, society and so on were the antithesis of each other. The suggestion is made that anthropologists need to re-examine some of their assumptions and that Tylor's metaphysics offers a fruitful alternative with respect to dealing with problems of relativism, cultural determinism and subjectivism.

DIANA MARTIN, *Pregnancy and Childbirth among the Chinese of Hong Kong*. D.Phil.

This thesis addresses the management of pregnancy, childbirth and infancy in Hong Kong.

I argue that mothers are distanced from their infants and are not regarded as indispensable to their daily care. In my view this distancing does not represent a major break with earlier practice but is making use, for different ends, of an existing ideology. The patrilineal, patrilocal Chinese family, in which the husband's mother was responsible for organizing the care of the baby, has given way to the modern, socially mobile Hong Kong family, in which the baby's mother is an essential wage-earner. I show that she prefers to return to work rather than to care for the baby on a day-to-day basis.

Hong Kong is an industrialized, urbanized community which has undergone considerable change of community and family structure in the last forty years. Marriage partners are now freely chosen. Despite neolocality, contacts with siblings and extended family remain important. The desired number of children has sharply decreased to two.

Although childbirth takes place in hospital, pregnant women follow traditional pregnancy restrictions and the expected reclusive behaviour for the month after birth. My information has been collected through interviews with women. I enumerate and try to explain the food and activity restrictions that the pregnant woman follows for the sake of her baby. I look at the different styles of birth management in three Hong Kong hospitals, and the reasons for the decline of breast-feeding. The meaning of the traditional behaviour during the month after birth is examined. Finally, I show that family attitudes to offspring in Hong Kong are 'parent-centred' and an infant is thought to have only physical needs. Thus it is acceptable to arrange weekly residential childcare away from the parents' home.

REEM SAD MIKHAIL, Peasants' Perceptions of Recent Egyptian History. D.Phil. (BLLD 44-3211)

This thesis focuses on Egyptian peasants' perceptions of recent Egyptian history. It is based mainly on material collected during one year of fieldwork in a village in the Governate of Fayoum. A starting premise is that the representation of peasants in academic literature and in the Egyptian public political discourse has suffered from 'urban bias'. I am concerned with the peasants' 'voice', not only to make up for their absence in official texts, but also because this approach is informative about the contemporary Egyptian village.

The questions with which this study deals are: (1) What is the link between personal experience and perceptions of history? (2) How do concerns of the present influence perceptions of the past? (3) How are political and economic developments at the national, and to some extent international levels reflected at the village level, and how are these developments perceived by peasants? (4) How do experiences and narratives of peasant men articulate the village and national levels, and what effects do these have within the village?

The study concludes that the village is linked to the nation on a structural as well as a discursive level. The villagers attempt to place themselves within national history, and the terms through which they express their ideas about the past are significantly influenced by economic transformations at a macro level. The social memory of Egyptian peasants is inextricably linked to their multiple identities as peasants, members of a powerless class, and as Egyptians.

JOANNA SAVORY, *Curanderismo*, 'Traditional' and 'Modern', in Galicia. D.Phil. (BLLD 44-6377)

This study is concerned with *curanderismo* (healing) in Galicia, N.W. Spain, and its 'modern' counterparts. It is also concerned with the way in which these are seen and represented within the political and religious context of the early 1990s. Traditional *curandismo* has historically been described under the auspices of 'superstition' but now, within the ethnos of *Galeguismo* (concern with Galician ethnicity), it has attained the status of being part of 'authentic Galician culture', while the increasingly popular modern forms, such as tarot-card reading, astrology and parapsychology, tend to be seen as eclectic and outside it.

Images of traditional Galician culture are studied, from the nineteenth century search for origins and the ensuing folkloric material, to present-day literature, magazine articles and television presentations. The research focuses on intensive interview material with a varied group of practitioners and their clients, the skills the practitioners claim to have, their notion of 'power', the *otro mundo* to which they refer, the importance of envy and *mal de ojo*—also the different kinds of 'seeing' involved and the shift from divination to prediction. Why do people visit

curanderos, and how do accusations and comparisons function as a way of defining the different discourses involved?

Several wider themes are drawn from the material. The popularity of esoteric themes and the fashion for parapsychology are considered within the history of European occult movements and neo-gnosticism. The role of the audio-visual material is analysed in relation to the function of 'seeing' and it is argued that, allied to this, there is a tendency towards the de-location of the symbolic, and the emergence of an abstract monism in the notion of 'energies'. Divergent 'traditionalist' and 'modernist' tendencies are identified within the plural discourses of *curanderismo*, which link with wider political and cultural trends, such as the tension between the concern for ethnic traditionalism and the desire for progress and modernization.

VERONICA STRANG, *Uncommon Ground: Concepts of Landscape and Human-Environmental Relations in Far North Queensland*. D.Phil.

This thesis is concerned with the human-environmental relationship and the creation of environmental values—why and how different groups value and care for their land in completely different ways and, in particular, what factors encourage or discourage the development of affective values and attachment to the land. This essentially cultural question is examined through a comparative analysis of two groups on the Cape York Peninsula of Far North Queensland: the Aboriginal community in Kowanyama, and the White pastoralists on the surrounding cattle stations. The thesis also considers the long-term conflicts over land in Australia, which have brought to the surface their diverse environmental values. The dynamics of their respective environmental relationships are explored, using the concept of landscape to examine the ways in which an affective response to the land is both individually and culturally constructed. By providing a common idiom, this concept shows how different values are located in the land according to social, cultural, historical and ecological factors.

The thesis outlines the human cognitive processes through which values are acquired, and considers both the universal and cultural factors that lead to the development of particular values. However, the major emphasis is on the cultural aspects of the human-environmental dynamic. It therefore focuses on the historical background of both groups, and the various cultural forms through which environmental values are created and expressed. These include land use and economic modes; socio-spatial organization; language, knowledge and socialization; forms of oral and visual representation; and cosmological beliefs and systems of law.

The central argument of the thesis is that human-environmental relations are largely an expression of cultural values; that these recur consistently in all cultural forms which, acting upon each other, form a coherent pattern of value. In

articulation with universal human imperatives and ecological pressures, this creates a particular 'mode' of interaction with the environment.

The main aim of the thesis is to explore two very different modes of environmental interaction and abstract from this analysis the particular factors that influence the development of affective concern for the environment.