

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 1995**

SELINA CHING CHAN, *Tradition Inherited, Tradition Reinterpreted: A Chinese Lineage in the 1990s*. D.Phil. (BLLD 45-12419)

The thesis examines the Chinese lineage, one of the prominent social organizations in the south-eastern part of China, through a study of the Pang of the New Territories of Hong Kong. The research draws mainly on information collected from villagers during four months of anthropological fieldwork in 1991 and 1993.

Despite the tremendous changes undergone in Hong Kong, the villagers still strongly perceive their lineage as a 'traditional' village. The thesis argues that the 'traditional' lineage in the 1990s is a process of interpretation, negotiation and reinterpretation by the villagers and the colonial government.

I examine the way in which the two distinctive features of the lineage—the patrilineal descent group and lineage landholdings—have been interpreted and reinterpreted to constitute the 'traditional' lineage in the 1990s. On the one hand, the way in which the lineage has adapted itself in urbanized and industrialized Hong Kong is examined with a discussion of the decrease of lineage landholdings and an increase in community facilities. On the other hand, the paradoxical effects

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of the colonial government's respect for the 'Chinese customs' of the New Territories with regard to the issue of land is discussed.

I investigate how the patrilineal ideology and gender relationships are caught between 'tradition' and 'modernity' under the influence of the legal order. I argue that the objectified tradition as the patrilineal ideology in relation to the ownership of land by the villagers is partially a result of reinforcement of the colonial policy. At the same time, the custom and tradition interpreted and reformulated in colonial policies are interpreted by villagers in the process of the construction of the ethnicity of 'indigenous inhabitants'.

A. COLEMAN, *Community as Catalyst: A Study of Personhood and Identity in the Culture of Survival*, São Paulo, Brazil. D.Phil. Thesis restricted until 2000.

FIONA C. MAGOWAN, *Melodies of Mourning: A Study of Form and Meaning in Yolngu Women's Music and Dance in Traditional Ritual and Christian Contexts*. D.Phil. (BLLD 45-3577)

This thesis is primarily an ethnography of the role of music and dance of the Yolngu people living in north-east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia, in traditional ritual and Christian contexts. It is a study of the processes of structuration of gender relations through the meaning of sound, music, movement and dance in Yolngu performance. It explores the dynamics of interpretation, the control of knowledge and the affirmation of identities in creating a sense of cohesion amidst the constant changes in Yolngu life.

Part one examines the history of research into Aboriginal music, identifying those genres recognized by the Yolngu. The funeral context provides the setting for conceptualizing the multi-determinancy of Yolngu ritual through principles of variation, transformation and retrospective evaluation. Part two develops the hypothesis that Yolngu speech is integrally related to song. It examines a range of vocal techniques employed in different speech genres, their adaptation to music and the inscription of identities through polysemy, ambiguity and multiple referencing. Part three brings together normative statements about ritual practice with experiential perspectives on movement and dance. I show how the total sphere of signing and bodily gestures are integrally related to stylized dance actions. These are discussed in relation to spiritual and political power through which Yolngu differentially express ancestral beliefs as well as professing their faith in Christianity.

I focus largely upon Christian Yolngu in an examination of their notions of the self and the world constituted through moments of becoming in performance, an ethnographic enquiry which I hope will provide a foundation for future research into changes in performance ideology and practice.

S. M. MYERS CARRESE, Poetry, Sesotho, and the Making of the Basotho People. D.Phil. (BLLD 45-3573)

This thesis, based upon fifteen months of fieldwork and archival research undertaken in Lesotho, explores the Basotho understanding of the nature, function and form of poetry and related ideas of community and *Sesotho*.

The poetic references in Part I are to three Sesotho gestures: *Lithoko* and its sub-genres, *Lifela tsa litsamaea-naha* and *Lithothokiso*. Through an analysis of the context, form, and performance and historical context of each, the relationships between these genres become clear, as does a general, apparently stable principle through which Basotho frame poetic discourse: the dual and integrated purpose of providing instruction and pleasure.

In Part II, I trace the unfolding nexus of history and poetry, a process whereby the inhabitants of Lesotho, the *Basotho ba ha Moshoeshoe*, have articulated, consolidated, reassessed and asserted *Sesotho* during four historical periods. With examples chosen from each period, I make the case that from Moshoeshoe I's founding of the nation in the nineteenth century through to the present struggle to establish legitimate political authority in an independent state, Basotho responses to external pressures have been manifested in two broad ways: first, in the living tradition of Sesotho that has enabled survival as a people and a nation; and second, as a static traditionalism comprising retreat into a dead past. Throughout Part II, but particularly in the final section of each chapter, I refer to various genres of poetry that provide evidence through which to examine both the dynamism of things or practices labelled *Sesotho* and the stable idea of passing on these concepts and perpetuating the community.

In Part III, I offer an account of the life of a contemporary chief in Lesotho. I examine the details of Maama Masupha's biography; the chieftaincy and its present status in Sefikeng; Maama's insistence upon the importance of *Sesotho* in Lesotho today; and finally Maama's position as a poet, his approach to Sesotho poetry and its role in the making of history.

AYAMI NAKATANI, *Contested Time: Women's Work and Marriage in Bali*. D.Phil.

This study aims to portray women's day-to-day experiences in a Balinese village, which has undergone, and is still undergoing, substantial socio-economic transformation. The multiplicity of women's work is the central theme of the thesis; at the same time, the thesis analyses the impact of marital status upon the ways in which individual women organize their work, including both economic and non-economic activities. The research on which this thesis is based was carried out in Singarsa, Bali, where traditional textile production has grown into a major cottage industry during the past two decades.

The major research concerns lie in the following three broad areas. The first is the examination of the exact content of the work performed by women. The range of activities considered includes ritual undertakings, income-generation and household-related activities. The second point is differentiation among women in terms of their allocation of time and labour between the diverse activities mentioned above. The aspects of age, gender and position in the Balinese system of hierarchy are all important elements in determining who performs what kind of task under what conditions. While each of these variables is taken into account in the discussion of different spheres of activity, the central focus of my analysis is placed on differentiation based on women's life-cycle positions, for it is the least-studied issue and yet it poses important questions for our understanding of women's work in general, and the village of study in particular. The third area of analysis is the wider context within which such activities are necessitated and evaluated: socio-economic change of the regional and village economies, social relations within and between households, and the relationship between existing cultural ideas about gender-linked roles on the one hand and the actual practice of gender divisions of labour on the other.

The thesis begins with a review of the existing literature on women's work in Indonesia and explanations of field research and methodology. Then the general background of the research setting is presented at the levels of region, village and hamlet/ward. The subsequent chapters deal with different spheres of activity, that is, ritual undertakings, textile production and reproductive tasks. The issues involved in marriage are also discussed extensively, due to its importance in determining women's life-style in general, and their work patterns in particular.

My findings reveal a distinct pattern of work between married women and unmarried women in these spheres of activities mentioned above. Married women are required to perform all three types of work, which constrain one another. Young, single women, by contrast, bear relatively limited responsibilities in the spheres of reproductive and ritual activities, while they devote a considerable amount of time and energy to income-generating activities, foremost *songket* weaving. Acknowledging their own privileged position compared with their mothers and married sisters, these weaving daughters commonly express their unwillingness to venture into married life, which is, in their eyes, overloaded with multitudes of obligations.

Compared with other parts of the world as well as elsewhere in Indonesia, where the female work-force is increasingly displaced within traditional home-based industries, women in Singarsa still play leading roles as weavers and traders in the thriving textile sector, whose rapid development has been part and parcel of the modernization process of the region as a whole. In this particular case, women's work *per se* is not characteristically under-valued. On the contrary, Singarsa women's productive activities are fully acknowledged as 'work', despite the fact that most women engage in such undertakings within the compound, combining them with other tasks. However, the multiplicity of their culturally prescribed duties force women—married women in particular—into a constant juggling of their working hours to fulfil a number of different obligations. I argue that the tendency for a chosen single status among young women reflects the very ambiguity of the interaction between gender ideologies and actual gender relations, including performance of gender-specific roles, within a society undergoing rapid change.

PHILIP TEBBS, *Studying the Blues as Ethnomusicology*. D.Phil. Abstract not available.

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