

OXFORD RESEARCH IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

ABSTRACTS OF THESES IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
FOR WHICH HIGHER DEGREES WERE AWARDED
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN 1989

1. A. E. FINK, Food Family and Ideology: Some Determinants of Social and Biological Reproduction among the Mopan Maya of Southern Belize. D.Phil. (*'Restricted' until 26th January 1994*)

The aim of this thesis is to develop an explanatory model of human behaviour which integrates historical, social (including cultural, economic and political), psychological and biological factors. The research focused on breast-feeding in a traditional Mopan Maya community, albeit within the wider context of all feeding and eating behaviour in the realisation that such a focus would necessitate the exploration of a wide range of data and the integration of many different variables.

In a community dependent on hunting, fishing, gathering and agriculture for subsistence, the means of production, distribution, processing and consumption of

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foodstuffs are shown to be closely related to the patterns of kinship and social and economic organization of the community. This thesis describes and analyses these processes and relationships and shows the continuity of present practices with past traditions. The ideology which influences how food is processed and distributed within and between households is also examined; and the repercussions of this ideology, which results in a differential distribution of food products between males and females, adults and children, is examined in terms of the nutritional effects on the health of the community.

The nutritional factors which affect biological reproduction in this community are also analysed, with some interesting results not previously reported in the biological literature. As well as the advantages, the problems of breast-feeding in traditional communities in the Third World are highlighted.

The ethnography indicates the consistency with which Mopan Maya cosmology informs the system of food classification and their notions of the relationship of food to human development and well-being in the village of San Jose, Hawiia in the Toledo District of Belize, Central America.

2. H. S. LAMBERT, *Medical Knowledge in Rural Rajasthan: Popular Constructions of Illness and Therapeutic Practice*. D.Phil.

This thesis presents ethnographic research on the cultural construction of illness and medicine in India, and discusses lay medical knowledge, forms of folk therapy, and the interpretation and management of illness by Rajasthani Hindu villagers.

The first part, 'Medical Discourses in Rajasthani Culture', looks at conceptual schemes that inform indigenous illness etiology and nosology. Chapter One describes the field research and the general ethnographic background in which the study is set. The second and third chapters successively discuss physical and metaphysical etiologies of illness. Chapter Two looks at representations of the body, and conceptions of substance and the natural environment, which are invoked in physical etiologies of illness. Chapter Three describes the powerful beings who may heal or harm, representations of death and other aspects of cosmology and mortality, and gender distributions in illness. Chapter Four concerns indigenous nosology, symptomatology and diagnosis, and the semiotic process by which signs of ill-health are socially produced, communicated and interpreted.

Part Two considers medical traditions and their practitioners. Chapter Five of this part describes the range of folk therapeutic procedures, both 'technical' (bonesetting, massage, cauterization, cupping, medication) and 'expressive' (performative ritual, *mantra* recitation, healing by deities), drawing some comparisons with learned (Ayurvedic and Yunani) Indian medicine. Chapter Six looks at roles and characteristics of rural practitioners (professional and folk,

religious and secular) and the nature of their medical knowledge, and reviews broader historical changes in medical traditions in Rajasthan.

Part Three looks at the therapeutic process from the perspective of patients and their families. Chapter Seven describes structural constraints and personal experiences which shape strategies of seeking treatment, and peoples' narratives about illness. It considers the character of lay medical knowledge and the formulation of analytic models of the therapeutic process. The final chapter discusses the treatment of the sick, representations of dangerous illness, and the meaning of illness for Rajasthanis. Describing the ritual protection of patients with certain types of illness, it shows how critical sickness is symbolically controlled through the language of purity and pollution.

3. DOLORES P. MARTINEZ, *The Ama: Tradition and Change in a Japanese Diving Village*. D. Phil.

This thesis describes household, labour and religion in a Japanese village, Kuzaki, where some men still fish and most of the women are divers (*ama*). Kuzaki is a village very much caught up in the dynamics of change and yet managing to retain many of its traditions; as a result, it has been frequently studied by Japanese ethnographers. The central question of the thesis is: given the traditional Japanese patterns of household structure and labour in Kuzaki, how is it that an image of the *ama* has developed as unusual women, different from other Japanese women? The main research method was to spend a year (1984-85) in Kuzaki village near Toba City in Mie Prefecture, Japan. Return visits to the village were made in the summers of 1985 and 1986 and December 1987. Some comparative research was carried out in the form of interviews with diving women in Chiba Prefecture in 1985 as well as in conversations with urban women.

Chapter I looks at issues of gender and status in Japan with an emphasis on the previous literature written about the *ama*. Chapter II introduces the village: its age sets, geographical divisions, and political structure. Chapter III describes the village households as well as the division of labour within the household. Chapters IV and V are both concerned with the division of labour outside the household in, respectively, diving and fishing. Ethnographic descriptions are given of the history, current practices and rituals relating to diving and fishing. Chapter VI examines the changes in the village brought about by a growing tourist industry. Chapters VII and VIII look at the ritual roles of village men and women in Shinto and Buddhism. Chapter IX concludes with an analysis of village gender roles and then extends the model to urban women in an attempt to answer the question of whether *ama* are different from other Japanese women.

4. JACQUELINE WALDREN, *Insiders and Outsiders in a Mallourquin Village Community*. D. Phil.

Deià, on the northwest coast of the island of Mallorca, is surrounded on three sides by mountains and overlooks the Mediterranean to the west. The setting and climate of this picturesque village, once the home of an agricultural populace, have attracted outsiders for over a century. Foreigners in search of unspoiled beauty and tranquillity 'discovered' Deià and stayed. Dependent on the locals for access to housing, information and food, relationships of symbiosis developed.

By the 1970s, tourism had become the number one industry in Mallorca and completely transformed the social, economic, political and physical aspects of some coastal areas. Unlike these other parts of the island, Deià, however, seems untouched by the ravages of tourism and still the 'idyllic village' in the mountains depicted by artists and writers over the years. The village projects an image of related people, houses and families, of shared space and familiar activities carried on within ancient walls. Yet, behind this façade of 'timelessness' the people have integrated new and different relationships, beliefs, and moral values into their lives.

In local terminology people are categorized as *Deianencs*, *Foresters* and *Estrangers*. These categories are contracted, expanded and re-interpreted to fit the constantly changing 'reality' of the society. Boundaries and definitions are shifted to meet the needs of the moment. The definition of a Deianenc is seen to be tied up directly with the conception of the village as shared space, time, related people, activities and beliefs. *Foresters* are Spaniards from other villages or mainland Spain. *Estrangers* are foreigners, outsiders from other countries. The significance of being a Deianenc, an 'insider', once meant that one had a birthright, a home which gave one a sense of belonging over all the others who lived in the village. But today, half the houses in the village are owned by *foresters* and *estrangers*. Foreigners and locals are now competitors for the same resources. Competition for land, houses, consumer goods and services has replaced the interdependence of the earlier years. Foreigners, once cultural conveyors who brought cash, entertainment and expanded expectations from the outside, no longer have the status they had in the past.

This thesis is about belonging, about a village community's renewed sense of solidarity in a period of accelerated socio-economic change and threats from the different cultures, values, and aspirations that have arrived from the outside. Deianencs' consciousness of their own distinctiveness is a product of relations with the outside world rather than the result of isolation. Social and political life in Deià today is based on the adaptation of old uses in new conditions and by using old models for new purposes. By adapting old institutions, references to the past and ritual idioms to meet the needs of the twentieth century, a fictive continuity is maintained among those who identify as Deianencs. Drawing on 'traditional' aspects of their past, Deianencs have found ways to combat the disruptions caused by outsiders. The community has learned to gain full advantage from the economic opportunities opened up by foreigners without losing the fabric of social relations, the meanings and values of their culture.