OXFORD RESEARCH IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

ABSTRACTS OF THESES IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
FOR WHICH HIGHER DEGREES WERE AWARDED
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN 1987

Compiled by Martin Stokes

1. Malcolm CHAPMAN

A Social Anthropological Study of a Breton Village, with Celtic Comparisons. D.Phil.

This thesis is a social anthropological study of a fishing village, Plouhinec, in the south west of the department of Finistere, in north-western France. It is based upon two years of participant observation.

Chapter 1 introduces the commune of Plouhinec, with some demographic, occupational and political history, and modern consequences and developments of these. The fishing industry, and the place

of tourism, are discussed.

Chapter 2 describes the experience of coastal fishing for cray-fish (*langouste*), and oceanic fishing for tuna (*thon blanc*, or *germon*).

Chapter 3 discusses the relationship between men and women, and the local history of alcohol use. The association of the marine environment with excessive alcohol consumption is stressed. The division of labour, of space, or propriety and of comportment, according to sex, are related to occupation and alcohol consumption. Comparisons are drawn with other European areas.

Chapter 4 is the heart of the thesis, treating of the relation-ship between (and opposition between) two different occupational groups, the small farmers (*paysans*) and the fishermen (*marins-pecheurs*). The difference between these two groups is discussed as it is exemplified in settlement patterns, alcohol use, attitudes to giving and selling, family relationships, and the character and re-putation of the two groups in question (as they see themselves, and as they see one another).

Chapter 5 discusses the question of *pays*, which are conceptual social and geographical units of 'belonging'; two contiguous *pays*, Cap-Sizun and the Pays Bigouden (on the frontier of which lies Plouhinec) are used as examples.

Chapter 6 discusses Breton/French bilingualism in Plouhinec, with treatment of the social and historical background to Breton use, the domestic context of bilingualism, and the problems that a language such as Breton presents to the learner and to the ethno-grapher.

2. C.I.P. DAVISON

Environments of Integration: Three Groups of Guarani Migrants in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. D.Phil.

Anthropological theories of ethnicity have often addressed the re-lationship bwteen ethnic identity and culture. This thesis ex-plores this area of interest with reference to the lives of three groups of Amerindian migrants in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. The difference between ethnic integration, where a minority popula-tion retains a separate identity while participating fully in regional society, and assimilation, where a minority's participa-tion in the wider society leads to its disappearance is explored.

The three groups of migrants, whose lives are described in the ethnographic core of the thesis, occupy three different socio-economic 'niches' within the regional society of Santa Cruz. One group live in a small village on the fringe of Santa Cruz city, an urban area containing about half a million inhabitants. This group hold a small land area and rely mainly on casual wage labour and self-employment in both the rural and urban sectors. The second

group hold a larger land area slightly further from the city, and
produce sugar-cane and other crops for the urban market. The third
group live in an ethnically mixed town which houses the employees
of an important sugar refinery. This group are the families of
full-time, waged factory workers.

The thesis examines and compares three areas of cultural life
in the three groups: community leadership, language use and house-
hold composition. It is argued that the differences in behaviour
and attitudes exhibited by the three groups are the results of the
influence of the 'environments of integration' in which they live.

3. Tamara DRAGADZE

The Domestic Unit in a Rural Area of Soviet Georgia. D.Phil.

This is a case study of a regional enclave of traditional culture
which has retained its character despite the impact of the ideology,
economics and politics of the Soviet Union of which it is a part.
To understand even partially how such a rural society persists in
the face of a Soviet communist, modernizing regime's pressures, a
description of the domestic unit is important. As an anthropo-
logical study, the thesis contributes to the more general field of
Soviet studies through its approach. By focussing on a set of vil-
lagers and one of their most intimate concerns, domestic life, we
may see how they perceive the Soviet system in which they live, and
how they have responded to its impact. Through the examination of
the relations between the structures of domestic units and their
particular social and economic context, this work adds to the gen-
eral study, in Social Anthropology, of institutions.

The Introduction locates the fieldwork village in Ratcha, a
province in the Northwestern hills of Soviet Georgia. The study
then recalls some of the most salient features of the Soviet regime
and how they relate to and are interpreted by the villagers. The
main body of the work describes and analyses the tasks and organiza-
tion of domestic units, the system of kinship and marriage within
which they are rooted, socialization and the life cycle. Attention
is also given to traditional domestic ideas and the everyday mani-
festations of morality according to age, gender and kinship status.
Relationships between domestic units and the village and wider soc-
iety are also discussed.

An important theme in this work is to seek to understand
aspects of continuity and change in domestic units in Soviet times.
The last part of the thesis discusses the influences of industrializ-
ation and urbanization in the last century and up to 1921, then in
the Soviet period. I also suggest that the particular way in which
collectivization was experienced by the villagers did not represent
a radical change potent enough to challenge their customary resist-
ance to interference in their traditions.

The main thesis of this work is that villagers use traditional structures in response to the distinctive conditions of Soviet life. Particular State policies have reinforced the role of domestic units and it is to this paradox that the study has addressed itself.

4. Clare JOHNSON-KROJZL

The Social Institutions of Turkish Migrant Workers in West Berlin. D.Phil.

Based on fieldwork in West Berlin, the thesis describes Turkish migrant social institutions in the context of relations between the Berliner and Turkish communities. The international and local economic background to international Turkish migration and the historical development of industrial institutions in Berlin are presented as central to the analysis of these relations.
     In section one, chapters one and two describe migrant institutions and industrial development in Berlin and the Turkish national and household economies respectively. Section two, the ethnography, contains five chapters. Chapter three describes the Turkish village household and the conditions in which rural-urban and international migration occur. Chapter four describes the demographic and occupational background of the Turkish community in West Berlin and the economic and institutional effects of migration on the Turkish household. Chapter six gives an account of Berliner-Turkish relations in the context of important concepts and institutional trends in the host society which affect migrant institutions. Chapter seven continues this account, focusing on the second generation. A conclusion summarizes the main characteristics of the Turkish community in West Berlin in relation to the latter's own institutions.

5. Linda KING

Roots of Identity: Language and Literacy in Mexico. D.Phil.
['*Restricted*' *until 16th July 1992.*]

The thesis focuses on the relation between language and literacy in Mexico. It analyses the cultural and linguistic conflict which followed the Conquest of the Americas. At different levels it attempts to expose the underlying relationship between language and power, writing and knowledge, language and identity.
     The first section, comprising Chapter I, offers a short introduction to some theoretical approaches to the study of literacy. The problem of defining literacy is considered and the importance

of the anthropological perspective is underlined.

The second section discusses the nature of the indigenous literary tradition in Mexico, from the early Mesoamerican writing systems through to contemporary forms of Indian literacy and their relation to a modern ethnic consciousness. The concern over the place of writing in both colonial and contemporary Mexico is placed in the context of a continuing polemic over the future of the country's Indian population and the cultural identity of the nation. Chapter II offers a general account of pre-Hispanic literacy with specific reference to the Mixtec, Mayan and Aztec cultures. Chapter III describes the survival of the Mayan and Nahuatl languages during the colonial period and their adaptation to new forms of linguistic communication. Chapter IV discusses the nature of contemporary indigenous literacy.

Section three explores the relation between language, literacy and education. Chapter V offers a general description of the linguistic situation of contemporary Mexico with regard to the classification and distribution of the indigenous languages, types of bilingualism and diglossia. Chapter VI is devoted to a discussion of the pattern of illiteracy and the main theoretical arguments which have been put forward to explain this pattern. Chapter VII evaluates some of the contemporary literacy programmes for Mexican Indians.

The fourth section of the thesis concentrates on an analysis of the discourse of the illiterate in Mexico and attempts to show how cultural and linguistic conflict is reproduced at the level of discourse. Chapter VIII considers indigenous representations of language and literacy among the Purepechan, Nahua, Maya, Mixe, Totonac and Zapotec peoples. The analysis covers the relation between language, ethnic identity and historical consciousness, the role of literacy in the Indian languages and the representation of education. In Chapter IX the expression of illiteracy in the *mestizo* world is discussed and contrasted with that of the indigenous perception. Illiteracy is considered from the point of view of a culture of silence, and in terms of differing forms of mutedness, whilst literacy is, on the other hand, examined in terms of its symbolic value.

The thesis concludes with a summary of the main findings of the research and points to possible areas where anthropologists might make important contributions to the understanding both of Mexican society and of the nature of literacy.

6. Sharon MACDONALD

Social and Linguistic Identity in the Scottish *Gàidhealtachd*: A Study of Staffin, Isle of Skye. D.Phil.

Through a social anthropological study based upon participant-observation fieldwork in a Gaelic-speaking community, the means

by which people living in the Scottish *Gàidhealtachd* perceive them-
selves, the Gaelic language, and their place in the Scottish nation
is examined. In this way, a detailed ethnographic analysis is
placed within a broader historical and political framework of
attitudes towards the Scottish *Gàidhealtachd* on the part of the
wider society. The results of this analysis suggest that we cannot
understand the *Gàidhealtachd* apart from this wider framework, and
that people living within the *Gàidhealtachd* select and reconstruct
elements from outsiders' views about Scottish Gaelic culture in
defining their own identities and social values.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part one, 'Historical
Framework: Language, Land and Religion', charts a history of
attitudes towards Gaelic and their interrelationship with national
and ethnic identities; and examines the important social changes of
the nineteenth century which brought about the crofting and strict
Presbyterianism characteristic of the north-western Highlands.

Part Two, 'Social Organisation and Identity in Staffin', shows
how the history discussed in Part One informs contemporary life in
the Highland community of Staffin, and analyses the concepts and
practices through which identities are articulated. The interest
here is in localized self-classifications as well as national and
ethnic ones, and the study pays particular attention to 'community',
crofting, kinship, politics and religion.

Part Three, 'Ethnography of Language and Identity', focusses
on the decline in the number of Gaelic-speakers, the growth of
Gaelic development policies, and the way that these have been ex-
perienced within the locality. It is argued that the place that
Gaelic has in identity has changed over the last half-century, and
that this can be seen in differences of attitude and language-use
between the generations.

7. Lindi MDHLULI

Bunguni: The Zulu Constitution. D.Phil.

The development of cultural and demographic aspects of Zulu insti-
tutional identity is frequently placed in the nineteenth century.
Colonial and ideological interpretations of all cultural and envir-
onmental factors relating to the proper perception of past and con-
tinuing components of the Zulu state are responsible for the mis-
representation. In addition to tracing the early developments in
contacts from the period of Dutch immigration, those significant
constitutents of the Zulu state - primary institutional evolution,
inherited philosophical traditions, the habitational universe, pop-
ulation, self-descriptive nomenclature and its derivation, consti-
tutional organization - have all been explained and set in tradi-
tional conception and interpretation. Thus Zulu national identity
and institutional heritage have been set forth as the true markers

of an autochthonous and ancient human civilization of the African
continent. Together these bear witness of an indigenous constitu-
tion and culture.

European interpretative studies have further postulated the
disappearance of traditional African states and institutions. It
is the main conclusion of this study that Zulu state institutions
are an abiding and immutable inheritance of the region. This is
no less because of the assessment that the Zulu state is a creative
body of people pledged to maintain their inherited traditions and
institutional heritage as for the recognition of the expansive and
accommodating nature of their past state tradition.

Zulu definitions of constitutions comprehend the entire spec-
trum of cultural and demographic facts. The fundamental basis of
the population derivation of the constitution, institutional crea-
tion, and their organizational base are seen together to comprise
traditional understanding of constitutions. These values are not
separable from ideas relating to the nature and purpose of govern-
ment - *umboso* - and its institutional life. To this extent, the
permanent values in government of those institutions are seen to
derive from their time-honoured, ancient, efficacious and lasting
recognition by their indigenous inheritors.

8. Burkhard SCHNEPEL

Five Approaches to the Theory of Divine Kingship and the Kingship
of the Shilluk of the Southern Sudan. D.Phil.

My thesis is about the anthropological problem of divine kingship.
In its two parts I discuss two distinct, though in various ways
interrelated, sides or aspects of the problem in question.

In the more theoretically oriented first part I discuss five
approaches to the theory of divine kingship, those of Frazer (Ch.
I), Evans-Pritchard (Ch. II), Weber (Ch. III), Fortes (Ch. IV), and
Hocart (Ch. V). I give representative accounts of the five authors'
images or concepts of divine kingship and show how each approach
investigates the problem from a unique perspective and illuminates
aspects that are not, or not sufficiently, brought out by the other
approaches. In order to critically discuss the various approaches
and to assess their heuristic value for future anthropological re-
search, I discuss questions concerning their methodological and
theoretical tenets and examine how the authors' intellectual,
social, political, and personal positions may have influenced their
interpretations of the ethnographical data available to them.

In the more ethnographically oriented second part I examine
five aspects of the kingship of the Shilluk of the Southern Sudan
and thereby reconsider questions concerning the nature and scope of
the power wielded by the Shilluk king or *reth*. I discuss in turn
characteristic features of the Shilluk social and political

organization (Ch. VI); Shilluk royal ceremonies of death and instal-
lation (Ch. VII); the problem of the fictional continuity of the
royal office despite the death of its incumbents by examining
questions concerning regicide and royal shrines (Ch. VIII); and,
finally, power struggles and the question of succession to the
royal office, firstly from a predominantly sociological, and then
from a predominantly historical, perspective (Chs. IX and X).

The validity of the *reth*'s claim to legitimacy rests on the
belief in his being elected and possessed by Nyikang, the Shilluk's
mythical hero and first king. This association of an immortal and
divine being with a succession of temporary kings, as well as the
problem of regicide, have repeatedly attracted the interpretative
efforts of anthropologists and have made the Shilluk kingship into
the prime ethnographical example of divine kingship in the history
of anthropological thought. My reconsideration of the *reth*ship of
the Shilluk is, therefore, necessarily connected with questions con-
cerning the theory of divine kingship, and inevitably reflects back
upon and is in turn part of this theory.

9. Mary Alexandra SPYROPOULOS

The Parking Boys of Nairobi: A Recent Urban Phenomenon. M.Litt.

Parking boys are a distinctive group of Kenyan street-children,
mainly of Kikuyu origin, whose emergence in Nairobi dates back to
the late 1960s. The term 'parking boys' is a popular one which re-
fers to a boy who, as part of his strategy for obtaining money in
order to support himself, participates in the 'parking business'.
This involves directing motorists into empty parking spaces and
protecting cars for a fee or tip. The largest proportion of park-
ing boys cone from Mathare Valley, a notorious city slum. They are
most often from poor, single-parent families headed by women who
frequently cannot provide for their children's needs.

This thesis is based partly on my own fieldwork, carried out
in brief periods between July 1985 and August 1986, and partly on
other sources. It focusses on the following crucial aspects of the
parking boy phenomenon: the general economic and demographic envir-
onment; mothers of parking boys; organization and survival on the
streets; and sub-culture. It is argued that parking boys are a
product of rapid social and economic change in twentieth-century
Kenya. More specifically, they are a product of the way in which
such change has culminated in the existence of a group of women,
mainly, although not exclusively, of Kikuyu origin, who survive in
slums such as Mathare Valley largely as prostitutes, beer-brewers
and petty traders. In the light of comparative material from South
Africa and Zaire, it is evident, however, that Nairobi's parking
boys are not a peculiar case.

It is argued that making children the focus of this study has

anthropological, economic, social and political justifications. Finally, it is stressed that parking boys should be viewed, not as 'delinquents', but positively, as children with courage, initiative and independence trying to make the most of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

10.   Charles STEWART

Demons and the Devil: Greek Representations of the Supernatural with Special Reference to Naxos.   D.Phil.

This thesis considers a group of demonic figures known in Modern Greece as *exotica*. The presentation is divided into three parts. In Part One the island of Naxos, site of sixteen months' field research, is introduced and the values and customs of a particular village, Apeiranthos, are described. Conceptions of God and the saints are examined along with representations of the Devil and the *exotica*. At present, the *exotica* are accorded increasingly less validity as an explanation of illness and other misfortunes. Chapter Four studies this decline in relation to modernization and offers a sociological account of their disappearance.

Part Two considers the *exotica* in a pan-Hellenic perspective, adopting a synchronic approach. Doctrinal distinctions between the Devil and the proscribed *exotica* are explicated and shown to be vague, allowing for confusion of the two. The demons are further revealed to share certain characteristics with the saints and the Panagia; in opposing each other saints and demons often work through the same media and assume similar forms. The symbolism of the *exotica* as a category is then studied. Although these demons are separately named, their properties overlap to a considerable extent, and they are best understood when resolved into a common pool of symbols. The imagery of the demons is seen to express antithesis to basic social values.

Part Three examines a triad of rites: baptism, exorcism and spells. Baptism constitutes the archetypal instance of exorcism where initiates are cleansed of their impure state, which is conceived to involve contact with the demons, before being accepted into the Church. Exorcism, a rite of spiritual healing, alleviates both psychic and physical illness, by expelling malignant demons. The texts of these exorcisms contain detailed information on the operation of demons, including the parts of the body afflicted, as well as times and places of attack. In the final chapter, Naxiote spells for jaundice, erysipelas, sunstroke and the evil eye are presented and compared with similar spells from throughout Greece. Although considered as 'superstitions' by the Church, these spells depend on the power of the Christian *sacra* and do not conflict with a Christian world view. A brief conclusion summarizes the findings and relates this study to anthropological work on religion in literate societies.