

# ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY





NEW

SZÉCHENYI PLAN

# ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY

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# ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY

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## Week 7

Family economies, households,  
moral economies

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# Market and the household

- Provisioning for households
  - different channels for acquiring goods and services
  - groceries: garden? market? supermarket? organic delivery?
  - child care: state run day care? private run day care? child care pool? family-members? parent staying at home?
  - production, consumption and distribution are interrelated at this point
  - available/preferred channels of provisioning is a historic and social product
- Family economy, peasant economy:
  - particular type of household: production is embedded in household and kinship relations

# Peasant economies

- Specific economic position:
  - relative autonomy: retain control over land and labour
  - produce for themselves and the market at once
  - adapt flexibly to economic change:
    - crisis: support themselves, participate less in wider networks
    - boom: more integrated and less isolated
- Ambivalent representation:
  - nostalgic approach:
    - hard work
    - sustainability
    - traditional morals
  - revolutionary approach:
    - backwardness
    - lack of sense of community, centred on themselves

# Peasant economies

- Evolutionary approach:
  - Peasant halfway between tribal man and factory worker
- Problems with the approach:
  - decreasing relevance of peasantry is not a universal phenomenon, only valid for Western societies
  - specific cultural dispositions not necessarily remnants of the past, but responses to contemporary challenges
- Contemporary peasant economies integral part of capitalism
  - symbiotic relationship between industrialised agriculture and peasant economies
  - sharing labour power between family economy and agricultural wage labour



# Back to the classics: Chayanov

- Chayanov (1925)
- Analysing economic decisions of Russian peasant families
- Basic problem:
  - firms calculate profit based on wages, wages do not appear as factor for family economies
- Basic principle:
  - balance between labour and consumption
  - factors:
    - needs (how many people to feed?)
    - drudgery of work
    - tax, rent, price for tools
- Family cycles:
  - age and number of children (do they participate in work?)  $\Rightarrow$  size of the land included in agricultural production

# Boundaries of the household

- Gudeman (1978)
- Economic transition of peasant economies in Panama to capitalism
- Domestic economy:
  - kinship, household and relations of production coincide
  - economic units are dependent on kinship, because they are reproduced by kin relations
  - kin relations are at the same time relations of production
  - kin relations are based on cohabitation, cohabitation is governed by needs of production
  - kinship is a “superstructure” over production

# Moral economy

- Scott (1976)
- Explaining peasant rebellions in South East Asia in the 1930s
- Pre-capitalist societies are radically different:
  - norm of reciprocity
  - right to subsistence
- "Ethics of subsistence"
  - security and stability above all
  - social institutions reducing risks:
    - kin and family relationships build on cooperation
    - system of rights and obligations in case of economic hardship
    - paternalistic tenure system
  - moral economy: normative expectations about the operation of the local economy

# Moral economy

- Colonizing state, commercialisation of agriculture:
  - market-based insecurities  $\Rightarrow$  variability of income
  - erosion of risk-sharing institutions (kinship, village community)
  - elimination of subsidiary occupations (“safety valves”)
  - fixed charge on tenant income by landowners (end of risk sharing with landowners )
  - increase in taxes
- Social polarisation
- Changes in conflict with moral economy
  - $\Rightarrow$  protest and rebellion

# Family firms in Italy

- Yanagisako (2002)
- Como region (Northern Italy)
- Family owned silk manufactures
- Main argument:
  - making of the capitalist class a result of a process
  - struggles within and struggles with other classes
  - kinship and gender are decisive
- Internal divisions
  - upper fraction ↔ middle fraction
  - different economic, cultural and kinship patterns and practices



# Family firms in Italy

- Inheritance:
  - tradition (only boys)  $\Leftrightarrow$  law (equally shared)
  - "family and business continuity" as guiding principle
  - middle fraction: disintegration and intra-industry competition
  - upper fraction: concentration of capital and segmentation (less conflicts)
- Kinship:
  - dominated by nuclear family ("continuity")
  - status of in-laws:
    - participate in the operation of business in case of middle fraction, but not in the upper fraction
  - permanent struggle with those belonging to the family but not participating in the operation of the firm

# Family firms in Italy

- Boundaries of family and firm:
  - completely inseparable in practice (invoice for the firm for Sunday lunch ingredients at grocery)
  - very separated on the level of ideology: gender based division of labour
    - operating the firm: role of men
    - securing continuity and cohesion within the family: role of women (significant economic function: family firm)
- Female managers:
  - upper fraction: yes
  - middle fraction: no
    - indispensability of technical knowledge
    - traditional gender roles still dominate education and training