

ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY

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Family economies, households, moral economies

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
- 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?) ⇒ 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
- Colonizing state, commercialisation of agriculture:
 - market-based insecurities ⇨ 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
 - ⇨ 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
- Inheritance:
 - tradition (only boys) ⇔ 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
- 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

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