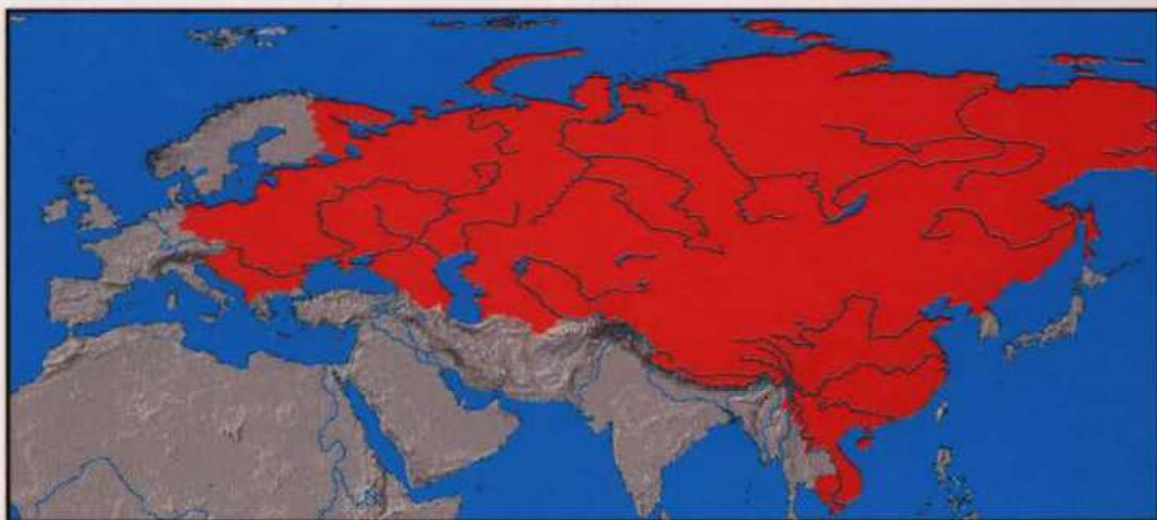




# "Not the Horse We Wanted!"

Postsocialism, Neoliberalism, and Eurasia

*Chris Hann*



## **“Not the Horse We Wanted!”**

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The substantive chapters of this volume are divided into two parts. Part One is concerned with the nexus of property, work, and exploitation, and Part Two with issues pertaining to religion, ethnicity, and citizenship. Each part concludes with a comparative essay drawing on the author's fieldwork in four locations: Hungary, Poland, Turkey, and China (Xinjiang). In addition to demonstrating how local perspectives can illuminate central problems of the contemporary world, the volume develops an original argument at another level. The postsocialist era is commonly approached in terms of accelerating globalisation or Americanisation, but Hann argues that the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the transformation of China also provide an opportunity to reconsider the long-term unity of Eurasia—and thereby to develop new agendas for the discipline of anthropology.

The opening chapters concentrate on property relations, with particular reference to decollectivisation in countries of the former Soviet bloc. The privatisation of land and other assets has led not to improved economic efficiency, as neoliberal models predict, but to irrationalities and resentment. Hann questions conventional definitions of ‘strong’ property rights and shows how postsocialist policies have disadvantaged the countryside. He then explores the changing nature of work in a variety of settings, again paying particular attention to Hungary. Part One concludes with a comparative analysis of exploitation, emphasising neoliberal trends in political economy but also attending to the moral economy; to understand the actions of rural producers (‘peasants’) it is necessary to combine the two.

Part Two is structured similarly. Market economy and private property are supplemented in neoliberal ideology by the concept of civil society, but Hann is critical of approaches which focus on NGOs and voluntary associations. He asks what is meant by a ‘strong’ civil society, and proposes a new emphasis on the term *civility* as a way to link the literatures on civil society and civil religion. The demise of socialism has sometimes led to incivility, especially with regard to the acceptance or tolerance of religious and ethnic minorities, as Hann shows with reference to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic minority in south-eastern Poland. The themes of ethnicity and cultural recognition are pursued in the context of Turkey and in a concluding comparative discussion of minority rights and the arguments for ‘multicultural citizenship’.

In the final chapter the focus shifts from contemporary social transformations to ongoing transformations of the discipline of anthropology. Motivated in part by a surfeit of Europeanism in the postsocialist political conjuncture, Hann argues that Eurasia is a more appropriate unit for anthropological analysis. The main challenge is to find new ways to relate ethnographic investigation to larger comparative and historical questions. This requires rethinking the dominant time-space framework of the modern discipline.

Chris Hann is a director of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale, Germany.





# **Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia**

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## **Volume 10**

Chris Hann

# “Not the Horse We Wanted!”

Postsocialism, Neoliberalism, and Eurasia



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Cover: Eurasia in the heyday of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist socialism and the unifying belt of its Agrarian Empires at the beginning of the Common Era. Cartography by Jutta Turner adapted from ESRI® Data and Maps; the second map is based upon 'Ancient Empires circa A. D. 100', Denoyer-Geppert World History Series, 1965.

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# Contents

	List of Plates, Maps and Figures	vii
	Preface and Acknowledgements	ix
1	Introduction	1
	<b>PART ONE: PROPERTY, WORK, EXPLOITATION</b>	<b>15</b>
2	The Tragedy of the Privates: Efficiency, Equity, and Justice in the Postsocialist Eurasian Countryside	17
3	“Not the Horse We Wanted!” Procedure and Legitimacy in Postsocialist Privatisation in Tázlár	43
4	Proper Peasants, Stakhanovites, and the Lilies of the Field: Work and Time in Anthropological Perspective	91
5	Transforming Peasants: Exploitation and Neoliberal Markets in Four Societies	115
	<b>PART TWO: RELIGION, ETHNICITY, CITIZENSHIP</b>	<b>151</b>
6	Civil Society, Civil Religion, and Postsocialist Civility	153
7	Greek Catholicism Today	177
8	History and Ethnicity in Anatolia	195
9	Incongruent Identities in Polyphonic Polities	213
10	Conclusion: Anthropological Approaches to Eurasia	241
	Bibliography of Works by C. M. Hann, 1979–2005	257
	References	267
	Index	287





# List of Plates, Maps and Figures

## Plates (chapters 3 and 7)

1	A recently renovated <i>tanya</i>	46
2	A new private shop in the centre of the village	46
3	The Calvinist church	47
4	The village war memorial and the Catholic church	47
5	János Pozsár	49
6	Ferenc Gregus	51
7	The recently privatised plastics factory	61
8	István Gulyás	64
9	Vince Kovács	65
10	Sándor Dúl and members of his family	68
11	Ferenc Hadfi and his employee László Csapi	69
12	A <i>tanya</i> cellar of the most rudimentary type	76
13	A more typical <i>tanya</i> cellar	76
14	László Szilberhorn	77
15	The modern cellars of the Szilberhorn enterprise	77
16	The Catholic church of the upper hamlet	81
17	The greenhouses of a new entrepreneur	84
18	Seasonal workers from Transylvania	84
19	A typical dwelling from the pre-socialist period	85
20	The luxury new dwelling of a postsocialist entrepreneur	85
21	The Greek Catholic <i>cerkiew</i> of Saint Onufry	180
22	All Souls' Day in the new Roman Catholic cemetery	182
23	The grave of a Ukrainian returnee	182
24	The former Greek Catholic church in Komańcza	183
25	The Carmelite church in Przemyśl	186
26	The same church with its new 'western' spire	186
27	The new Greek Catholic church in Komańcza	191
28	The gravestone of a Ukrainian native of the upper hamlet	193

## Maps

1	The Greek Catholics of Central Europe	178
2	North-east Turkey and Adjara	196



**Figures**

1	Sources of income in Tázlár's upper hamlet, August 2001	82
2	Erik Schwimmer's matrix	96
3	Alienation and identification in modern conditions	106
4	The possibilities for alienation with two types of work	107

## Preface and Acknowledgements

While I hope that the reader will recognise many unifying threads, the work collected in this volume has disparate origins: public lectures, Working Papers and Reports of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPISA), my workplace since 1999, and papers that have appeared previously in other languages (German, Hungarian, Polish, and Turkish). I have taken the opportunity to insert new details, usually by adding footnotes, but neither the substance nor the style of the original arguments have been significantly altered. The comparative analyses found in chapters 5 and 9 are set out here for the first time, but even these rest largely on older materials.

Whereas the focus of an earlier collection, *The Skeleton at the Feast* (Hann 1995a), was confined to eastern Europe, this time the canvas is broader. This expansion is a logical consequence of attempts in recent years to deal comparatively with 'postsocialism', including cases such as China which remain formally socialist. It is now increasingly obvious that this term has outlived its usefulness, and we need to move on. I raise these problems in chapter 1 and return to them in chapter 10, where I conclude that the best way forward is to place the experience of socialism in the context of the long-term history of Eurasia. My major debts in this line of thinking are to Ernest Gellner, Jack Goody and Eric Wolf.

I have opened up no new field sites over the last decade. Hungary and Poland were socialist when I first studied them in the 1970s, but on 1 May 2004 they became members of the European Union. Influential political scientists have argued that, for these countries at least, the era of postsocialism is now over. By contrast, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China remains nominally socialist, and the Rize region of Turkey (eastern Black Sea coast) has never been socialist. I show in chapters 5 and 9 how these studies can be brought together in comparative analysis. The final chapter offers a more ambitious synthesis, going beyond my synchronic case studies. My current location in Germany has made me much more aware of other national traditions and also of the significance of the *Volkskunde-Völkerkunde* distinction, a gulf of which the Anglophone world remains largely ignorant. Experiences in this country have also reminded me repeatedly of the indispensability of history for the entire field of the humanities and social sciences. Although fieldwork focused on the present has been the hallmark of social and cultural anthropology for the best part of a century, and although many German anthropologists have themselves abandoned their historicist traditions, I suggest that it is time for a renewed engagement with questions of diffusion and of evolution. To appre-



ciate the historical unity of Eurasia is a step in this direction, though of course it cannot be the final destination for sociocultural anthropology. The mature discipline must remain a versatile consortium, linking the social and the cultural to the biological, and drawing pragmatically on a variety of theoretical languages as it moves between ethnography and world history.

My debts are legion and cannot be listed here in full. The move to Germany to help establish a new Max Planck Institute imposed many burdens on my family, so my greatest thanks are due to them. Much of the research on which I draw was undertaken jointly with Ildikó Bellér-Hann, who has read the entire volume and made many helpful suggestions. I owe much to the Max Planck Society, which even in times of financial pressure continues to provide unrivalled conditions for the pursuit of basic research. I have been continuously stimulated over the last six years by my colleagues in Halle and by our many visitors. A collection such as this also brings vivid reminders of personal 'path-dependency' over even longer periods. The directions my work has taken owe much to previous colleagues at the University of Kent, to colleagues and teachers at Cambridge, and (perhaps especially) to teachers at Oxford in the early 1970s and at Croesyceiliog Grammar School in the distant 1960s.

I am grateful to Jane Kepp for her expert copy editing. Finally, without the assistance of a superb office team, Anke Brüning, Berit Westwood, Tobias Köllner and Annemarie Matthies, I would not have been able to complete this compilation.

Chris Hann

Halle/Saale, June 2005

## ***Chapter 1***

### **Introduction**

The collapse of the Soviet bloc between 1989 and 1993, following upon the post-Mao reforms in China, brought many changes in the lives of many people. Celebrations of the 'end of history' turned out to be premature, but as yet no consensus exists concerning the world-historical significance of classical Eurasian socialism. I begin, therefore, by posing less momentous questions. Have the recent political transformations had any impact upon the established academic division of labour in the social sciences? What light can social anthropologists shed upon Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (hereafter MLM) socialism and its demise?

The main roots of social anthropology are to be found in the investigation of the 'savage' and 'exotic' societies colonised by European powers. The 'otherness' of the MLM regimes was obviously of a quite different order. Difficulties of access limited the ability of Western researchers to investigate socialist countries and the changes they brought to the diverse forms of society they engulfed. Opportunities for Westerners to engage with the anthropologists and 'native ethnographers' (Hofer 1968) of these countries were also limited. Those who ventured to the former 'second world' met colleagues who espoused rather different approaches, from evolutionist Marxists to folklorists who continued to explore the rural culture of the nation according to principles established in the nineteenth century.

How great are the differences in the postsocialist era? What has survived from the scholarly traditions of the second world? Certainly access to this world has become a great deal easier for, say, the British social anthropologist. Yet in recent years, more and more British anthropologists, too, have been working 'at home', in their own language, thus coming to resemble the native ethnographers of eastern Europe. What are we to make of this apparent convergence? Or, as Michał Buchowski has argued (2004), is the very emergence of 'postsocialist studies' a reflection of the continued power of Western intellectuals to construct a field according to their own tendentious imaginings, analogous to their earlier construction of 'the Orient'?

In the early 1990s I was not yet using the term postsocialist. Like other anthropologists, I argued that the approaches of 'transitology' specialists in other disciplines were flawed (Hann 1995a; cf. Verdery 1996, Buchowski 2001). We pointed to the inadequacies of macro-level explanations lacking a firm basis in close-up understandings of the quandaries of ordinary people as they coped with dislocation. Policy prescriptions based on unwarranted assumptions, we argued, were likely to have unfortunate consequences. My plea was for anthropologists to make their voices heard through ethnographic documentation of the 'facts' of the unprecedented social changes which the demise of MLM socialism had set in motion. The precise theoretical orientations seemed less important: the main thing was to take advantage of improved access to these countries and simply 'hang out' in regions of society which were and remain terra incognita to other disciplines. I did much of my own hanging out in the two villages in Hungary and Poland where I had begun fieldwork in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, many anthropologists have made their voices heard.<sup>2</sup> It would be misleading and complacent to suggest that the dominant paradigms of transitology have been replaced. Yet in the larger disciplines such as economics and political science there does seem to be a greater willingness to recognise complexities. The multiple paths of postsocialist transformation have been shaped by the character of the preceding socialist experience, which was far from uniform, as well as by the 'legacies' of earlier development trajectories. But 'path dependency' must also be explored in the context of contemporary institutional interplay both at the level of formal organisations and by studying informal social relations, the habitual continuities of everyday life. Some of these patterns and everyday practices have proved as resistant to recent interventions as they were formerly to the social engineering which was imposed in the name of socialism. Between 2000 and 2005, members of the 'Property Relations' Focus Group at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPISA) documented many such continuities (see Hann 2005c). Our second Focus Group, 'Religion and Civil Soci-

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<sup>1</sup> Though I am well aware that no village is a microcosm, my understandings of Hungary and Poland, and of socialism and postsocialism more generally, remain anchored in my everyday experiences in these fieldsites and the long-term relations that I have maintained with numerous inhabitants.

My principal reason for switching to social anthropology as a graduate student was emphatically empirical: I was convinced that fieldwork behind the 'iron curtain' could generate better understandings of the socialist world than those obtainable through the paradigms of political science and economics, the main disciplines I studied as an undergraduate.

<sup>2</sup> I provided a review in Hann 2002b. Of special note in recent years are the books by my co-authors on that occasion: see Humphrey 2002a and Verdery 2004. Currently the best means to stay abreast of this literature is the website of the Soyuz group: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/soyuz/>.

ety', launched in 2003, has been opening up quite different fields, but these projects, too, are based on micro-level documentation. We have sought to contribute to interdisciplinary debates primarily through research based on participant observation.

Such ethnographic studies are indispensable. They are especially valuable in times of upheaval, and not merely for the insights they provide into often painful processes of coping with the misfortunes of the moment. The need to rebuild institutions provides opportunities to recognise and analyse the enduring continuities of social life with exceptional clarity—for example in the conduct of interpersonal relations and in the values underpinning all social action. The telling illustration can provide insight into these processes of institutional construction and into dilemmas of everyday life that cannot be captured in economic statistics or in sociological surveys. Virtually every aspect of human social relations can be the object of an ethnographic analysis. Other disciplines have recognised this and such studies are proliferating (the trend is by no means restricted to the postsocialist world). Often including the word 'culture' in the title, they offer insights into fields as diverse as slums and international banks, golf clubs and scientific laboratories, corporations and kitchens, cars, corruption and cyberspace. Anthropologists may claim that their ethnographic work has more depth than that of colleagues in sociology or cultural studies—because we stay longer in the field, listen to more voices, aim at more holistic analyses, learn local languages better, re-visit more frequently, etc. These claims may be justified, but are ethnographic renderings of meaningful experience the limit of the anthropological contribution? It would be worrying if this were the case, since it is widely recognised that much has changed since the ruptures of 1989–1991. The instability which characterised most countries during the following decade has not disappeared: compared to the socialist era, for most people risk and uncertainty have increased. But even in the more turbulent cases, their parameters are nowadays better understood. Are the studies undertaken in the 1990s then to be considered obsolete?

Of course the best ethnographic work has always raised issues of more general import. What, then, are the central issues and the main results of the work that has been carried out in socialist and postsocialist societies? Which theoretical orientations are most fruitful in exploring new paths for comparison? How can the case studies help us to analyse the 'big picture' of history?

The big picture means, for me, enquiring into the place of MLM socialism in world history. In what sense can the socialist world be construed as a 'civilisation'? Is the Eurasian landmass, largely unified by this socialism for much of the twentieth century, also a unity when perceived from a long-term historical perspective? How, if at all, can the unity of Eurasia in the age



of agrarian empires be connected to the unity that was forged thousands of years later under the industrialising regimes of MLM socialism? Has the demise of the latter put an end to the world-historical distinctiveness of Eurasia, or might we only now be witnessing its full-blown economic and political consolidation? Is it possible to trace commonalities in the realm of ideas, norms, and values which are only now becoming clear, after the formal 'otherness' of the second world has been overcome? What are the implications of MLM socialism for moral values, social equality, and the future bases of cohesion in the complex communities of Eurasia?

To address questions such as these is uncommon in sociocultural anthropology. Yet it ought to be possible to combine the best of the twentieth-century discipline, which I take to be high-quality ethnographic observation in the present, of the kind pioneered by Bronislaw Malinowski, with questions of world history, evolution and pre-Malinowskian intellectual agendas, some elements of which may be worth salvaging.

### **Postsocialism and Anthropological Theory**

The term postsocialism is still seemingly much in vogue in several disciplines. It is a term of the Western academy, not widely used by researchers who are citizens of the former socialist countries. What sense does it make, some 15 years after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc?

The prime justification for continuing to use the term is that many people still look back on the socialist era as a kind of baseline in their constructions of their lives. This much is clear from the research projects that MPISA has been organising in various parts of the former MLM world. The salience of the socialist experience seems to be as common in countries which have completed far-reaching economic and political transformation as in those which remain in turmoil or where little has changed since Soviet days. It is common among all social groups. Even intellectuals who may reject the term postsocialist at one level (perhaps because they feel that it distances them from 'Europe' by implying tight links to the ex-Soviet neighbour) embrace it at another, when explaining how their personal life-histories were shaped by socialism and the manner of its demise.

It might be supposed that, as the socialist era recedes farther into the past, the utility of the term postsocialist is bound to decline. Yet this cannot be taken for granted. Anatoly Khazanov recently suggested that the 'great trauma of Soviet socialism has not yet ended. Its consequences will be felt for many years, if not for generations' (2004: 50–51). It is possible that future cohorts will feel compelled to confront the more painful aspects of memory and suffering more directly than those who, today, prefer to try to forget and deploy energies in other directions. It is indisputable that many

Germans began to engage more intensively with the Nazi past in the 1980s and 1990s than they did in the 1950s and 1960s. In spite of the many differences between the two cases, it is possible that future decades will see an intensified concern with the politics of the MLM past, above all in Russia and China.

It is one thing to find postsocialism useful as a general label. It is quite another to attempt to operationalise it as a tool for academic analysis. I do not think it can serve as an analytic concept or as the basis for a theory and we have not attempted to use it in such a way in my department at MPISA. Most of our projects have been predicated upon the shift which has occurred from one-party rule to a more open public sphere and more democratic forms of government, and from central planning and collective ownership to market economy and private property. In this very general sense, the term postsocialism draws attention to a single social experiment, unique in its scale. But the policies pursued by the postsocialist countries have not been identical, and similar policies have sometimes led to highly divergent results (often due to divergent starting points). It has therefore become increasingly difficult to justify lumping all these countries together. It may, for some purposes, still be interesting to compare the former German Democratic Republic to Vietnam, or Estonia to Turkmenistan, but the differences in these cases, already considerable under socialism, are nowadays vast. There is little to be gained from lumping together postsocialist countries in comparative analyses with other 'post-authoritarian' regimes world-wide.

The term has brought no theoretical advance. Caroline Humphrey (2002b) was right to warn against any attempt to set up a new subdiscipline under the title 'postsocialism', on the grounds that it would rapidly become a ghetto. The concept has, however, played a shadowy role in a diffuse process of change which (to use old-fashioned terminology) adds up almost to a paradigm shift. When I entered the discipline of social anthropology in the 1970s, alongside the traditional emphasis upon studying social structure and social relations, a western brand of Marxism was popular. It sought (among other goals) to extend concepts such as 'mode of production' to new settings, many of them remote from the core capitalist countries. This neo-Marxism retained at least some elements of the materialism of the theories from which it derived. Its attention to political economy has been significantly undermined in recent decades by what I term more 'culturalist' perspectives. These include idealist theoretical currents which have little in common beyond an antipathy towards older descriptive and 'positivist' approaches in social analysis. Exhortations to study postsocialism from the perspective of

'subaltern studies' or within the framework of a new 'theory of empire' are typical of the current literature.<sup>3</sup>

Now it goes without saying that anthropology needs good theory—but the weight of this theory should not be so great that the ethnographic realities fade from view or appear only at the level of anecdotes and vignettes. Sometimes the elaboration of theory for its own sake is divisive in the sense that it undermines bridges to other scholarly traditions. Mihály Sárkány (2002: 563) has suggested that the opportunity for eastern European scholars to take a closer look at Western sociocultural anthropology came at an 'unfortunate moment', when the pre-eminence of 'postmodern criticism ... hindered the choice of a firm paradigm'. While some 'local scholars' have invested in grappling with the latest foreign intellectual trends, others have been repelled. It is ironic that some of the *-isms* devised ostensibly to critique the asymmetries of the international academy should in practice reinforce the intellectual exclusion of large sections of the 'periphery'.

The essays gathered in this volume do not rest on any one body of theory, old or new. My department at MPISA (which no longer carries the term postsocialist in its name) is a 'broad church' which allows individual researchers substantial autonomy to select the theoretical approaches which appear optimal for the particular problems they wish to address. That is what I have done myself in this compilation, which draws freely on scholars in sociology, politics, and philosophy as well as anthropology. I concede that most of those whom I take as intellectual guides or foils are authors who write primarily in English, for Anglo-American audiences. But the foundations for much of my analysis are the four fieldwork projects I have undertaken in different parts of Eurasia, and each of these has been influenced by local voices, including local scholarly voices.

## **Globalisation and Neoliberalism: From 'Old Europe' to 'Old Eurasia'**

The background to much of the analysis in the chapters below, crucial in appraising both the legacies of socialism and postsocialist transformations, is the acceleration of globalising processes.<sup>4</sup> Another *-ism* commonly used to characterise this era is neoliberalism—though 'postliberalism' would in

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<sup>3</sup> For examples of what I have in mind see the contributions linking postsocialism and post-colonialism in *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* special issue, vol. 22, no. 2, Fall 2004.

<sup>4</sup> On the metaphor of acceleration see Hann 1994a. For a survey of the current globalisation debates see Held and McGrew 2003. A sample of recent anthropological perspectives can be found in Eriksen 2003.



some ways be more appropriate, since the affinities to classical liberal philosophy are often tenuous. Neoliberalism is a term which enjoys greater recognition than postsocialism, but both inside and outside academia the dominant usage is emphatically negative. For many participants in international protest movements, neoliberalism is used loosely as a synonym for globalisation or even for capitalism.<sup>5</sup> It is tempting to share a weary sigh with Clifford Geertz when he writes, 'Down, indeed, with "neoliberalism", the sovereign cause of everything bad' (2004: 592).

Contrary to this dismissal, I suggest that neoliberalism has to be taken seriously. I believe that the resurgence of 'free market' economic doctrines in the last decades of the twentieth century does mark a new era in world history, of which the collapse of the MLM socialist experiments is the outstanding marker. Neoliberalism means first and foremost the implementation of an open economic logic based on global competition in place of the closed, primarily political logic of the developmental state, of which the socialist states were a major variant. Under contemporary conditions this cannot possibly be a return to pre-Keynesian liberalism. If the ultimate value in classical liberal thought was the liberty of the individual citizen, then under neoliberalism it is the innovative capacity of each individual entrepreneur. Every human being is assumed to think and act as an entrepreneur, with the result that the impersonal laws of the market are drawn into all areas of human activity. In classical liberalism, property ownership was a marker of status as well as a guarantor of liberty. In the advanced economies of neoliberalism, access to goods and control over them through a proliferation of contracting often become more important than ownership per se. Nonetheless, for neoliberals it is axiomatic that making people owners is the best way to give them incentives to work harder and to invest more. An increase in the inequality of wealth distribution is justifiable as the price to be paid for an efficient economy, which is expected to raise the absolute living standard of all sections of the population.

It is too early to pronounce a definitive verdict on the consequences of the policies unleashed on the world in the decade of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. It seems clear that the 'Washington consensus' has made many poor countries poorer, in absolute as well as relative terms, as well as intensifying social inequalities within them. Some economists, convinced of the virtues of free markets, attribute all unwelcome results to 'corruption' and the 'grabbing hand' of the state. Joseph Stiglitz (1999) has demonstrated

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<sup>5</sup> For a useful survey see Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005. Some of the biases and oversimplifications in the current use of 'neoliberal' will doubtless be laid to rest in David Harvey's forthcoming book (2005); this was not available to me when I completed work on this volume.

the inadequacy of such explanations in the case of the former MLM countries, where the incrementalist policies pursued in China have brought far more impressive results than the 'shock therapy' implemented elsewhere. The neoliberal argument that it is in the interests of world citizenry to erode the power of states to protect national markets deserves to be taken seriously (see chapter 5) but an anthropological response is likely to point in a different direction. Sixty years ago in *The Great Transformation* Karl Polanyi published an analysis-cum-indictment of the society which had emerged out of classical liberalism. Polanyi went on to become the major figure in the emergence of the subdiscipline of economic anthropology. In recent years, however, few anthropologists have engaged with historians and historical sociologists at this level. The insidious rise of neoliberalism and reductionist modelling of the person exclusively as an entrepreneur signal the need for a renewal of Polanyi's 'substantivist' critique of a social order based upon the economic logic of the free market.

At the end of his life Polanyi re-visited Hungary, the country in which he grew up. He endorsed the efforts of the Communist Party to build a socialist society in the difficult conditions which prevailed following the suppression of the 1956 revolution. I think he would have been an admirer of the reformist paths pursued from 1968 onwards, which, I argue in chapter 3, won for the regime of János Kádár a high degree of legitimacy.<sup>6</sup> Yet even the flexible Hungarian variant of socialism ran out of steam in the 1980s and is now widely perceived to have failed. Today there can be no question anywhere in Eurasia of a return to the MLM era. Even in Russia, where support for the Communist Party at first held up strongly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, its vote has fallen away in recent years. China remains a special case, though Vietnam is in some ways similar and equally interesting. In these countries, the introduction of sweeping economic reforms, opening up new market spaces and scope for private consumption, has led to changes in some respects even more dramatic than those which have taken place in the former Soviet bloc. Although the Communist Party

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<sup>6</sup> See also Hann 2005n. Kádár was placed in power by Soviet troops in November 1956. Within a few years, however, he began to implement policies of reconciliation with virtually all social groups. By the mid-1970s there was no doubting his immense personal popularity, achieved without any traces of a 'personality cult'. This depended in part on certain personal qualities, but primarily on the pragmatic policies he pursued, which brought rapid improvements in living standards. For Western political scientists this regime was illegitimate, since it lacked the mandate conferred by a competitive election. The anthropologist, paying more attention to local views, could reach different conclusions. Many anthropologists, though ready to admit that political order can be constructed in radically different ways in non-Western societies, have been reluctant to concede that socialist states should be allowed any measure of deviation from the standard Western criteria for legitimate (or 'democratic') government.

retains power in China, social inequality has increased dramatically. Has the socialist promise of a more just social order disappeared without a trace throughout Eurasia?<sup>7</sup>

I do not think so. When, not so long ago, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld criticised 'old Europe', notably Germany and France, for its reluctance to toe the American line in the invasion of Iraq, some ex-socialist countries in the 'new Europe', notably Poland, appeared strident in their support for the policies of the United States. Automatic opposition to the line taken by Moscow seems to be the main basis for formulating foreign policy in many of the countries which until recently were dominated by the Soviet Union. This reflex is easy to understand, but it should not blind us to the fact that the new Atlanticist elites of states such as Poland do not necessarily have the support of their populations when they implement such policies. These countries' relationships to the United States, often influenced by long histories of emigration, are ambiguous. In some cases close links persisted throughout the socialist period. For some young people in the former Soviet bloc, the US has sustained its image as a promised land, where people live in freedom and fortunes can be made. But among others it is possible to identify multiple layers of anti-American sentiment, and this is likely to grow with increased exposure to American popular culture and American-dominated consumption patterns. In this tangle of emotions, from respect and determined emulation to jealousy and resentful disparaging, one dimension of criticism seems to me especially significant. Many former socialist citizens reject the *moral* foundations of the Anglo-American style of capitalism (arguably the British variant of neoliberalism still differs significantly from the US prototype, though there has certainly been some convergence in recent decades). There is an increasing perception that untrammelled, so-called free markets and private property, while good things in themselves, need to be put in their proper place or, in the language of the Polanyi school, 're-embedded'.

Some of us at MPISA have attempted to address these issues in our rural case studies by applying the notion of the 'moral economy' in something close to its reformulation by E. P. Thompson (1991) in his analyses of urban riots in England in the eighteenth century (see Hann et al. 2003a). It remains a fertile notion which can also be deployed at higher levels of social groupings. While the residents of most small villages in our study sites seem to have been taken by surprise by the dissolution of their collective farms and have been struggling ever since to hold onto some vestiges of their communal institutions, urban dwellers were generally more enthusiastic

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<sup>7</sup> Socialism has of course also spread in very interesting ways outside Eurasia, and the same question arises; but these derivatives cannot be considered in this volume. See Hann 1993a.



about the privatisation programmes which made them the owners of their apartments and promised to open up new opportunities in consumption as well as in production. But now, well into the second decade of 'transition' in the former Soviet bloc and the third in China, the first flush of enthusiasm has waned almost everywhere. It is not that people wish to return to the old system as they remember it (even those who say they would like this for themselves tend to add that they would not wish it for their children; see Tishkov 2001), but they are now more aware of the dangers of its opposite, of weak states which have withdrawn too completely from the provision of social welfare, equal opportunities in education, and facilitating social mobility for the underprivileged.

Let me offer an illustration from Tázlár, the village in Hungary which I have studied since the 1970s and which I revisit in chapter 3. I recall a recent conversation with Ferenc, the grandson of my first landlady in the village. Like the vast majority of their middle peasant class, the so-called kulaks, who suffered in the 1950s, both were critical if not downright contemptuous of socialist principles and of the Communist Party. Ferenc always kept his contacts to the village cooperative farm to a minimum, preferring instead to pursue a private business career. He progressed from private tractors to combine harvesters and later to a road haulage fleet and a network of petrol stations. The end of socialism brought no major shift in this career: the new *demokrácia* simply enabled him to move a little faster along the path he had been following since the early 1970s. But when Ferenc looks around at his village these days, he comments on widening social inequalities and on the lack of opportunities open to today's youth. He now says that the regime of János Kádár was basically a good one, which did much to improve living conditions for the whole of society. This retrospective moral endorsement is all the more interesting because Kádár's 'market socialist' policies were often criticised for encouraging an amoral ethic of material accumulation or economism (see Lampland 1995); and this appreciation comes from someone with an impeccable kulak background, who has never in his life worked for a socialist institution.

For a second example let me turn to the postsocialist society in which I have been living for the last five years. There are constant reminders in everyday life in this part of Germany that until 15 years ago society was organised very differently. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) had a reputation as one of the most prosperous and economically advanced countries of the socialist world. It was the only part of that world to be absorbed into a Western state, thereby ceasing to exist as a separate entity. The situation is therefore atypical, but it sharpens the challenge to theorise the distinctiveness of the old system, about which many people still hold strong

opinions. West German analysts tend to emphasise the inefficiencies of central planning and the inhumanities of the secret police system. Today they point out that those living in the *neue Bundesländer* (new federal states) consume a far higher proportion of the national income than they produce; the difference is made up of transfer income—in effect subsidies from the West. East Germans are likely to offer different accounts: many argue that former socialist enterprises were sacrificed unnecessarily in order to increase the market share and profits of western firms. They point also to massive out-migration, which has deprived the east of the most active and creative members of its labour force. Media debates about the changes which have taken place in the political economy are strongly coloured by, and feed back into, the local moral economy. Many in the new states look back with a sense of loss on the strong identities formerly associated with the workplace. In spite of (or perhaps to some extent because of) the rigors of the economic plan, the dogmatic ideology, and the uniquely extensive secret police system in the GDR, this society developed strong networks of interpersonal trust and also a more diffuse, generalised solidarity. Mass unemployment has made millions conscious of what they have lost: I touch on some of these issues in chapter 4 in the context of work and the impact of neoliberal labour markets.

It is especially interesting that persons who have, in quantifiable ‘objective’ terms, benefited as a result of the end of the socialist system also feel this sense of loss (Wierling 2002: 555). The point is commonly made with reference to details from everyday life: nowadays more children are obese, because they consume more sweets and junk food instead of being fed in socialist canteens; nowadays fewer children learn to swim, because socialist provision for sport, heavily subsidised by the state, has been cut back. People also bemoan cutbacks in kindergarten provision and criticise the insidious spread of the market principle into all areas of culture and health. Their commentaries are frequently given a moral colouring, and the former Communist Party makes considerable use of the rhetoric of ‘social justice’ in its election campaigns.

Similar concerns can be readily identified in countries which never experienced socialism but have been caught up in its aftermath. The collapse of the centrally planned economies led to myriad forms of petty trading in many parts of Eurasia. Some of the most vivid examples were to be observed in ‘Western’ countries bordering on former Soviet space, such as Turkey. The eastern Black Sea coast was effectively closed to international trade and tourism until the collapse of the Soviet Union. It then became one of the prime channels for people and goods to flow into Turkey in the great efflorescence of trading which accompanied the new freedoms and which was

motivated largely by economic dislocation in the ex-socialist countries. The spontaneity of the new entrepreneurs—‘suitcase traders’ or ‘trader-tourists’, as they were variously known—soon aroused disapproval among some sections of the Turkish public. Local shopkeepers were understandably concerned for economic reasons, but almost everyone was alarmed by some of the side effects of the new market freedoms, notably the sudden appearance of foreign prostitutes on a large scale. Pressures built up to control the new forms of exchange. The *Avrasya Pazari* (Eurasia Market) in Trabzon is a good example of this movement towards the re-establishment of order: the city reserved a large central site for small traders and charged market fees, the revenues going to the local football team. By the end of the 1990s most of the sellers were local Turks, and the goods they sold were made in Turkey. During a recent visit, however, I found continued moral concern about the prostitution business; the Russian consulate was appealing to the local authorities to do more to suppress the brothels and send offenders back to Russia.

Turkey is an interesting case with which to explore these issues comparatively, because in some respects the ‘top-down’ modernisation policies Turkey pursued in the early republican period were as repressive as those of its Soviet neighbour. According to the Kemalist principle of *étatisme*, a strong state implementing economic protectionism was the only possible basis for development. In recent decades, however, the country has opened up massively to international market forces; social inequalities, already immense, have further widened. In this climate the influx of petty traders and prostitutes from the former Soviet Union has served as a reminder not only that markets need to be controlled but also that moral communities need to be defended (Bellér-Hann and Hann 2000). Millions of former socialist citizens are going through a comparable learning process.

It is in this moral dimension, I think, that the Eurasian experiences of socialism will leave their mark on world history. MLM socialism was in many respects a ‘modernist’ experiment, exemplifying the emancipatory ideals of the Enlightenment. It was an historical countercurrent to the rise of industrial capitalism and the divisive forces this unleashed, initially in north-western Europe and later affecting all parts of the world. But socialism can also be viewed in the context of several millennia of hierarchical social organisation in Eurasia. It was a countercurrent at the level of ideology but it turned out to mean a continuation of oppressive institutions at the level of practice. MLM socialism was undoubtedly less efficient as an economic alternative to Western models of capitalism, a weakness which was crucial to its collapse. But this countercurrent was always driven and legitimated by moral, normative elements which most people wish to retain. These elements



have by no means disappeared. They continue to underpin the political economy of contemporary Scandinavian social democracy. They are expressed in the rhetoric of the 'social market', an idea that is espoused by mainstream conservatives as well as social democrats in countries such as Germany. In other words, socialism is not to be confined to the revolutionary parties of Lenin and Mao. The decisive feature is the commitment to the moral economy, in the sense of an emphasis upon the solidarity of the collectivity, on the need to preserve decent communities which offer all their members security and dignity as well as opportunities for mobility and entrepreneurial innovation.

In this perspective, the United States, so heavily influenced by migrant victims of the dislocation caused by capitalism in Europe, is the modern exemplar of Polanyi's 'disembedded' economy—the embodiment of utilitarian liberalism, in which the community must give way to the sovereign individual. Thus stated, the dichotomy is evidently overdrawn, but worldwide reactions to US-led neoliberalism seem to be encouraging such simplified perceptions. For many Europeans (and perhaps also for many Chinese), America is no longer the promised land but the tragic repository of betrayed aspirations to freedom and equality. Perhaps these aspirations can now be more adequately addressed back on the landmass where most of the oppressive institutions of the modern world originated. Perhaps, even before the dust has settled on debates over European identity, the negative images of the US could become vehicles for forging a common sense of 'old Eurasian' identity among all the populations which experienced some form of socialism, including the milder variants of social democracy. The realisation would be something like this: We, the people who pioneered the expansion of agriculture and later industrial society, after a long struggle to tame the hierarchies and the individualism which came in the wake of these innovations, must build on the positive elements in the legacies of twentieth-century socialism in order to achieve, for Eurasia and for the whole world, the emancipation of which our best intellectuals have dreamed for centuries, socialists and liberals alike.

I shall provide a more sober outline of the case for a new Eurasianism and its pertinence to socialism, postsocialism, and anthropology in the final chapter of this book.



## PART ONE

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### PROPERTY, WORK, EXPLOITATION

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Private property was an important element in classical liberalism, and a reaffirmation of the principle of private ownership at the expense of state and other forms of collective ownership has been a major feature of the neoliberalism of recent decades. In the former socialist states, the insistence on privatisation has sometimes been as ideological as the earlier insistence on collectivisation. Property is better approached pragmatically in terms of an expanded definition which, alongside classical property objects such as land, includes a wide range of social entitlements. In chapter 2, on the basis of our rural case studies at MPISA, I argue for locally specific solutions in which the state, markets, and community resource management can all play a part. Changes in political economy must be linked to changes in the moral economy through careful attention to long-term historical processes. Considerations of economic efficiency, social equity, and historical justice are not easily reconciled; it was illusory to suppose that the dogmatic imposition of policies to create private property would be a general panacea.

Chapter 3 shows that few households in the village of Tázlár, Hungary, have approximated the ideal of successive postsocialist governments, namely, to establish full-time entrepreneurial families whose main sources of income derive from farming their own estates. The case materials suggest that, for the majority of villagers, decollectivisation has been associated with insecurity and a significant decline in material conditions and in the quality of village life. The recent history of this region exemplifies an underappreciated dimension of Eurasian collectivisation more generally: its success in incorporating previously marginalised regions into a national system, in the process dramatically raising the standard of living of local residents. The demise of this system has meant an intensification of marginality for many millions of people.

In chapter 4 I explore the meanings of work in a range of societies, including hunter-gatherers who are 'disengaged from property' and those who have apparently similar attitudes towards time in contemporary societies. For contrast, I consider the work ethic of 'traditional' peasants and industrial



workers in socialist Hungary. Adapting the concepts of identification and alienation from Erik Schwimmer, I suggest how they can be applied in contemporary conditions. Finally, I consider some of the problems posed by the spread of neoliberalism, which is undermining the security of wage-labour employment. Although criticised by Marx as exploitative, this form of regulating work has been the prime basis for social integration in modern Europe; it seems premature to abandon it before we have anything to put in its place.

In the Marxist tradition, income which is earned through work is sharply distinguished from income which accrues through the ownership of property. In chapter 5 I explore the theme of exploitation by revisiting the literature on peasant studies with reference to the four locations where I have conducted fieldwork. Neoclassical economic theory stands in apparent contrast to the labour theory of value, but I question whether the spread of neoliberal markets is necessarily incompatible with the Marxist moral insistence that prices should reflect 'socially necessary labour time'. A fuller appreciation of the changing political economy requires recognition of multiple levels: although some rural producers may be exploited at the point of production, their branch of the economy, and perhaps the rural sector as a whole, may be beneficiaries of subsidies paid by other taxpaying citizens and by consumers. Again, careful attention to the local moral economy is crucial: the 'rational' resistance strategies of villagers are shaped by their subjective perceptions of unfairness, which often diverge from analytical diagnoses of exploitation.

## *Chapter 2*

# **The Tragedy of the Privates: Efficiency, Equity, and Justice in the Postsocialist Eurasian Countryside**

Garret Hardin's analysis of the 'tragedy of the commons' (1968) drew attention to the problems likely to arise when a society has no effective rules to regulate access to a valuable resource.<sup>8</sup> His article served in succeeding decades as a useful target for many anthropologists, who pointed out that systems of communal ownership and management do not necessarily imply open access and can be more efficient than any alternative property system (Acheson and MacCay 1987; Ostrom 1990a, 1990b). But even while these debates were taking place in the academic literature, the orthodoxy which emerged among policymakers and international agencies continued to build on Hardin's basic assumptions. According to Hernando De Soto (2000) and many others, security of private ownership was the key to international development, just as it had always been the key to the success of capitalism in the West.

The simplified, not to say bowdlerised, models put forward by the proponents of neoliberalism proclaimed the virtues of 'strong' property rights. In practice, strength meant the predominance of private property. Margaret Thatcher held privatisation to be the way forward for old industrial economies such as Britain's, but neoliberals also believed it to be the answer to dealing with poverty and underdevelopment throughout the third world. The sudden collapse of the second world in 1989–1991 was widely attributed to the failure of the 'collectivist' property institutions which had always played a significant role in socialist ideology. It was therefore inevitable that

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<sup>8</sup> This chapter is based on an MPISA Working Paper (No. 2, 2000) and two recent reports prepared for the Max Planck Society (Hann 2004k, 2005c). I am grateful to all my colleagues in the 'Property Relations' Focus Group at MPISA and also to members of the 'Legal Pluralism' Project Group and to many external audiences over the last five years, who have all done much to enhance my understanding of property. I have been unable to incorporate all the advice and criticisms received—in particular, I apologise to Alan Macfarlane for retaining the title of the original Working Paper, in spite of its popular connotations for some native speakers.

the 1990s would see a massive wave of privatisation throughout Eurasia. This has offered social scientists an unprecedented opportunity to investigate the significance of property in the wider context of social, economic, and political transformation. Could the legislation of changes in property categories cause, or at least facilitate, other social changes, or were property reforms condemned to remain 'empty' unless backed up by a range of institutions to ensure their implementation? Might new institutions fail if deeply rooted norms and values proved to be incompatible with the proposed property revolution?

These were some of the problems which the 'Property Relations' Focus Group at MPISA addressed in 2000–2005. In this chapter I offer an overview of our activities, with reference to both theory and empirical content. In terms of theory, my colleagues and I have drawn heavily on an analytical model developed by legal anthropologists Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann and Melanie Wiber (forthcoming; see also F and K von Benda-Beckmann 1999). Concerning the empirical history of decollectivisation, I find it useful to follow the economists Scott Rozelle and Jo Swinnen (2004) in distinguishing three macro-regions within postsocialist Eurasia. As we shall see, property rights in these regions differ markedly. They differ again in a fourth region, which I shall not consider in any detail, namely, the countries which made up the European Union until its eastwards expansion in May 2004. I shall show that it is by no means obvious where property rights are 'strongest'. In the following chapter I develop this discussion in the context of my own case study as part of the Focus Group, a restudy of the village of Tázlár on the Great Hungarian Plain.

Although my chapter title is obviously inspired by Hardin, it is not my purpose to counter his polemic with a blanket condemnation of individual private property. On the contrary, I believe that, quite apart from the valuables which individuals in all societies aspire to hold as personal property, in the vast majority of contemporary societies a substantial reliance on private property and markets is indispensable for economic efficiency. The goal is to develop a more nuanced model, one which allows for the possibility that some property objects are better suited than others to certain forms of ownership and management. It must also be a realistic model in the sense that it takes problems of implementation and supporting institutions seriously. Finally, this model of property must be broad enough to enable a questioning of the dominance of the economic criterion. For example, a massive extension of individual private property might be conducive to increased efficiency and economic growth, but only at the cost of a decline in the provision of public goods and an increase in social inequality. The academic is not obliged (as an academic) to address society's normative dilemmas, but

questions of equality and justice cannot be bracketed outside the purview of the anthropologist—if only because local people themselves constantly voice such concerns.

### Property in Anthropology

Property was a major theme in anthropology from the discipline's beginnings in the nineteenth century. Victorian lawyers such as Sir Henry Maine emphasised the social aspects: property relations exist not between persons and things but between persons in respect of things. These relationships are 'multi-stranded' and involve membership in various overlapping groups, based on kinship, the local community, religion, and so forth. Property rights can be thought of as forming a bundle: rights to regulate and control are often distinguished from rights to use and exploit economically, and thus different persons or institutions may hold different kinds of rights over the same piece of land. Even in societies in which the system of private law allows a high degree of 'individual ownership', this right is never absolute but is always qualified by public law.<sup>9</sup>

Ethnocentric understandings of private ownership were characteristic of European colonial powers, not only with regard to the 'tribal' societies of Africa which they conquered but also on the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere. Sometimes they decided that a native chief or a *zamindar* was the private landlord of all the territory in his neighbourhood. In other cases they postulated that the tribe or village community was the collective owner of the territory. Neither model was adequate for grasping the hierarchy of rights and obligations which actually prevailed in these societies. This European dichotomy between individual and collective ownership continued to dominate popular and academic thinking about property in the age of the cold war, when it was central to the self-definitions of the rival superpowers.

It ought to be possible to do better now that this phase in world history is over. For example, it ought to be possible for anthropologists to promote alternatives by recovering some of the more differentiated approaches to property developed by pioneers such as Bronislaw Malinowski (1935) and Raymond Firth (1939). Above all the work of Max Gluckman (e.g. 1965) showed that, towards the end of the colonial period, anthropologists were capable of developing alternative theoretical frameworks to understand land tenure in tribal societies. Caroline Humphrey (1983) later applied Gluckman's approach to a Soviet collective farm, where complex unwritten status norms were, as in Africa, more important in determining practical outcomes

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<sup>9</sup> For further discussion of these points, see F. and K. von Benda-Beckmann and Wiber forthcoming.



than formal legal rules; but this was a unique study. With a few exceptions, notably the work of Jack Goody (1962, 1976), the subject of property became unfashionable. Of course it did not disappear altogether. In particular, hunter-gatherer specialists paid attention to the radically different, 'disengaged' character of property relations among the groups they studied (Woodburn 1982, 1998; cf. Myers 1986). But for the most part property was left untheorised even when it played a central role in the study, as in Edmund Leach's (1961) argument about the character of kinship in Sri Lanka, in Renée Hirschon's (1984) feminist perspective, and even in Maurice Bloch's neo-Marxist approach (1975).

The simultaneous publication of my edited volume *Property Relations* (Hann 1998a) and the wide-ranging collection *Property in Economic Context*, edited by Robert Hunt and Antonio Gilman (1998), is indicative of a significant revival of interest in the theme of property. The literature on the topic continues to expand rapidly (see F. and K. von Benda-Beckmann and Wiber forthcoming; Strathern 1999; Verdery and Humphrey 2004). Four interrelated areas of interest are prominent in recent years. First, there is continuing work in ecological and environmental anthropology, associated in large part with the critique of Hardin's thesis concerning common-pool resources (Acheson 2003; Ostrom et al. 2002). Second, the land claims of indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, but especially in Australia and North America, have caused anthropologists to engage both practically and politically in support of local groups and, in some cases at least, to rethink concepts of ownership and property. The *Mabo v. Commonwealth* case in Australia, which for the first time acknowledged prior Aboriginal rights in land at the federal level, was a watershed judgement for Australian Aboriginals. But anthropologists have not always managed to agree with each other about whether Aboriginal groups held title to territory in a sense consistent with that of English common law or whether a radically different basis for recognition should be promoted (Povinelli 2002; Rigsby 1998; Williams 1986). Third, conceptual work on property has been stimulated by a renewal of interest in intellectual property rights, ranging from the rights of native peoples to profit when their environmental knowledge is harnessed commercially to claims to hold exclusive rights to cultural or 'symbolic' property (Brown 2003). The rapidly developing field of reproductive technologies has raised a host of ownership issues in the realm of the family and kinship (Edwards 2000; Parry 2004; Strathern 1999).

The fourth field is the one on which we concentrated in our projects at MPISA. The demise of the socialist states has led to a number of studies of new property relations in Eurasia, exploring both material and symbolic dimensions (see especially Verdery 1999a, 1999b, 2003). This field of

enquiry brings us back to that European dichotomy between private and collective, since this was the basis on which socialist societies were constructed in the first place, as an alternative to the property relations of capitalism. The dichotomy certainly did not die with the collapse of the Soviet Union; neoliberalism and an emphasis on privatisation have been prominent in the recipes offered to the former socialist countries and in the policies they implemented in the 1990s. The old dichotomy is still very much present in 'folk models' of property, and not just for those old enough to remember socialism as it actually existed. Grasping these local models is one level of anthropological work, while the other is to question how far this dichotomy is analytically helpful in explaining the new social contours of postsocialism.

From the perspective of the anthropological tradition, both Western neoliberal approaches and the socialist approaches of Marxism-Leninism perpetrate an unhelpful 'disembedding' of property. The one camp usually claims to privilege economic performance, and the other claims to privilege politics and social justice, but in their contrasting ways both the liberals and the socialists attach excessive importance to a particular vision of property relations. Their simplifications, emphasising either private ownership or collective ownership, cannot do justice to the complex bundles which actually prevail in all human societies. Even the most collectivist socialist systems did not disturb individual rights over many items of personal property, and even the most extreme neoliberal regimes depend heavily on a set of conditions which can be maintained only by the state (arguably, a stronger reliance on market doctrines only becomes possible when certain state capacities have been strengthened). More realistic and less ideological approaches are needed. The investigation of property cannot be confined to the 'private law' notion of ownership but must be opened up to include 'public law' aspects of authority, citizenship, and social cohesion.

### **An Analytical Framework**

I have suggested elsewhere (Hann 1998g) that one reason for anthropologists' relative neglect of property has been increasing specialisation in their discipline. Property straddles at least three current sub-branches—economic, political, and legal anthropology—and cannot be snugly confined to any one of them. In that earlier work I followed Perry Anderson (1974), who argued that property relations hold a crucial position in all societies, located between the domains of production on the one side and politics and law on the other, or, in the Marxist vocabulary, between base and superstructure (Hann 1998g: 46–47). This argument provided a justification for approaching property issues as a key to understanding postsocialist transformation more



generally—quite apart from the fact that those issues were being heavily stressed ‘on the ground’, above all in privatisation programmes.

This approach depends on a broad definition of property. In the past I have tended to stretch the term to include forms of property which local actors would not necessarily recognise as such. For example, while villagers in postsocialist countries might deplore the fact that they are now exposed to a higher risk of unemployment and reduced social security entitlements, they probably would not classify those trends as a diminution of their property rights. Nonetheless, I have argued for a broader, inclusive notion of property relations which would encompass the full range of citizens’ entitlements, so that property could be seen as centrally ‘embedded’ in wider social and political frameworks. One obvious drawback of this approach is that it tends to merge property relations with social relations in general.<sup>10</sup>

In sorting out the definitional tangle, I prefer now to follow my legal anthropology colleagues Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann and Melanie Wiber. The fact that the word *property* has a particular Latin origin and particular intellectual legacies in European traditions does not prevent us from defining the concept analytically and using it in non-ethnocentric ways. As my colleagues put it, ‘property in the most general sense concerns the ways in which the relations between society’s members with respect to valuables are given meaning, form and significance. Property in this analytical sense is not one specific type of right or relation such as ownership but a cover term encompassing a wide variety of different arrangements, in different societies, and across different historical periods’ (F. and K. von Benda-Beckmann and Wiber forthcoming). The three go on to propose a ‘layered’ model of property. The cultural-ideological layer must be distinguished from the layer of legal regulation, and both of these from the third layer, which is that of concrete social relationships. The fourth layer of the model comprises ‘property practices’, which feed back into each of the preceding three layers. The legal anthropologists emphasise not only the multi-functionality of property systems but also their plural character. The principles enunciated at the second layer through specific laws may not correspond to the proclaimed ideals at layer one. Notions such as ‘communal property’ are meaningless, or at any rate ambiguous, until they are embedded in specific contexts with reference to all four layers. There may also be discrepancies internal to one and the same layer, as when the teachings of a recently adopted religion diverge from the justifications offered for a long-established customary practice. The von Benda-Beckmanns and Wiber are critical of Hardin because he made unwarranted inferences from consideration of the legal form alone. As they point out (forthcoming),

<sup>10</sup> For further stimulating criticism of the notion of ‘embeddedness’, see Peters forthcoming.

what seems to be an outcome of rules and normative constructions of rights may in effect be a result of the specific set of property relationships people are involved in. It is not the type of property right which is the crucial element, but rather factors such as land scarcity, population pressure, the absence of alternative income opportunities, long-term insecurity, greed, and disdain for any legally imposed restriction which contributes to over-exploitation. Unfortunately this may happen with private ownership, communal and open-access property.

Application of this model to the Eurasian countryside reveals the complexity of both the socialist property system and its replacement. The former was by no means a 'property vacuum', and socialist forms of public ownership did not generally approximate open access. Yet there is a kernel of truth in the many jokes told about socialist property being constantly susceptible to private appropriation: the system had built-in inefficiencies and was often perceived to be inefficient by local people themselves. This led to a variety of reforms in many countries, some of which anticipated postsocialist changes.

Current property regulation is also diverse and still far from stable. In general the passing of privatisation legislation and its formal implementation—for example, by splitting up collective and state farms to create new parcels of private property—could not create the conditions for viable family farms. Rural people themselves have generally paid a high price for the transition: subsidies have been withdrawn, jobs lost, coordinating institutions destroyed, and social security provisions weakened or withdrawn completely. In some settings, such as Siberian communities, researchers found that postsocialist reforms intended to encourage more individuation in property holding had in practice reinforced older social norms of sharing and cooperation as strategies to cope with dislocation (Ventsel 2005).

In retrospect, it should have been obvious that a change at the legal layer of the property system would bring about the desired changes in relationships and practices only if other conditions were fulfilled. In reality, the obstacles were formidable. They ranged from 'technical' glitches, such as protracted delays in the issuing of title documents to new landowners, to deeper-seated problems in the creation of markets, especially land markets, in an economic climate which was increasingly unfavourable to agriculture. The results have been predictably disappointing, both in terms of economic efficiency and in terms of satisfying social expectations, even in those countries where property reform has been most thoroughly implemented. Many property practices, social relationships, and moral ideals concerning the right

patterns of distribution and transmission of property objects therefore continue to fly in the face of the newly imposed legal codes.

The framework developed by the von Benda-Beckmanns and Wiber is useful analytically, but they themselves emphasise that it does not constitute a new predictive *theory* of property. Change can be induced at any of the layers, and the consequences for the other layers are unpredictable. It is not clear what causal weight the authors would attach to changes in the property system when explaining social change more generally. A framework which emphasises complexity, multifunctionality, and pluralism is unlikely to be popular with those who prefer simple predictive models, based usually on economic aspects alone. But if economic factors cannot be assessed in isolation from the wider social context in which they are embedded, then simple models are dangerous. As both socialist and postsocialist states have shown us, they lend themselves to ideological misuse. I shall return to this theme below.

## **Eurasian Macro-regions and the Ambiguity of ‘Strong’ Property Rights**

The MPISA case studies of decollectivisation ranged from central Europe (eastern Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia) to the Pacific (Fujian, Kamchatka, Chukotka). Comparative projects outside Eurasia played a significant role, but I do not discuss them here (for full project summaries see Hann 2005c). Most of the projects were concentrated upon the disintegration of the institutions of collectivised agriculture. Within this focus, the researchers paid particular attention to the land itself—that is, to ‘real property’—which has always enjoyed a privileged status in legal, economic, and political theories of property, as well as in the subdiscipline of economic anthropology. This status derives from the simple fact that land has been the principal factor of production and reproduction in most human societies. It is therefore a prime basis of wealth differentiation under pre-industrial conditions. The precise arrangements for its ownership, use, and transmission between generations have attracted sustained attention from historians looking at land at all levels, from aristocratic estates to the subsistence-oriented farms of smallholders (see Grandits and Heady 2003; Habakkuk 1994). Our case studies were concerned primarily with agricultural land, but they also included a study of forest land in Bulgaria (Cellarius 2003) and of other forms of land use (e.g. a golf course in the Fujian village studies conducted by Susanne Brandtstädter).<sup>11</sup> We emphasised that different types of land use

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<sup>11</sup> Details of all these projects can be found in Hann et al. 2003a and Hann 2005c.



might warrant different forms of property, but in the following discussion I concentrate on an ideal type, 'agricultural' property.

Between the early 1950s and the end of the 1970s most of rural socialist Eurasia continued to progress towards 'higher' forms of property such as the people's commune or the state farm, and farm management units increased in size. The first major interruption of this trend came with the gradual expansion of the 'household responsibility system' in China from 1978 onwards. The catastrophic famine caused by China's Great Leap Forward in 1958 and the country's continuing chronic shortages of food throughout the years of the Cultural Revolution showed that something was seriously wrong with a system that emphasised not only collective ownership but also collective working of the land. The responsibility system devolved management responsibility to the rural household. It did not make land alienable; most peasants received only 15-year leases (later extended to 30 years). Nevertheless, the re-establishment of a tight link between effort invested and output and revenue received was enough to lead to substantial increases in output and productivity. The rural population was the main beneficiary of the early years of Deng Xiaoping's 'socialist commodity economy'. Rozelle and Swinnen (2004) saw this as a success story and hailed China's switch to a policy of 'strong property rights'.

Other commentators have been less sanguine and have highlighted the ambiguity of ownership in China (Ho 2005; Oi and Walder 1999). Massive unauthorised out-migration from the countryside in recent decades speaks for itself; the ensuing 'floating population' has created intractable problems in China's cities (Zhang 2001). Critics argue that long-run improvements in the rural sphere can be attained only through the establishment of a genuine market in land and the conferral of full private property rights, which would defend owners against irregular, arbitrary appropriation by state and local authorities (see Pieke 2004). In recent years the gap between rural and urban incomes has continued to widen, to the benefit of the latter. The state has responded by reducing taxation of rural households; the system which required farmers to deliver specified quotas of their output to the state for a price lower than that of the market price has been abandoned in most regions. The level of rural incomes nowadays depends primarily on fluctuations in world market prices. In short, China has come a long way since the isolation it experienced under Maoist collectivism. It remains, however, a long way short of neoliberal ideals in terms of guaranteeing the security of property and allowing the emergence of a market in farmland to complement the booming market in urban real estate.

The rural sector in the former Soviet bloc presents a radically different picture. Whereas in China the reforms led rapidly to increased output, in

almost all parts of eastern Europe and the former USSR the end of socialism was associated with a sharp drop in output. An integrated production system collapsed almost overnight. One important cause was the inability of the successor farms to afford to apply fertilisers. Productivity per hectare naturally declined in consequence. In Russia and most other former USSR states there was much more continuity with socialist practices and few redundancies. Instead of a genuine privatisation by means of restituting or otherwise transferring the land into individual ownership, the typical pattern in Russia was to transfer only 'shares', which did not correspond to a specific tract of land. The exact principles for land distribution varied somewhat (e.g. in whether or not account was taken of one's workplace under socialism—see Kaneff and Yalçın-Heckmann 2003), but in any case the new shares were unrelated to previous ownership. In consequence, suggested Rozelle and Swinnen, property rights remained ineffective, and this impeded performance.

In central and eastern Europe (CEE), despite considerable variety (Swain 2000), the key criterion for distribution was previous ownership. Decollectivisation consisted either in restoring land in its old 'real' boundaries (as in Bulgaria; see Cellarius 2003) or in providing some form of 'compensation', which could allow for deviations from the old ownership structure in order to preserve a greater measure of economic efficiency (as in Hungary; see Hann and Sárkány 2003f). In this zone Rozelle and Swinnen noted a general improvement in productivity per person employed, such that by the end of the 1990s socialist output levels were either matched or exceeded. They attributed this primarily to the fact that the surplus labour resources of the old socialist farms had been shed, and they characterised the new system as one of 'strong' property rights.

Yet this is obviously a quite different 'strength' from that for which the economists praised post-Maoist China. The typical ownership pattern in eastern Europe is now highly fragmented, and the vast majority of small owners, many of whom do not even live in the countryside, are in no position to farm their land themselves. Rozelle and Swinnen praised the embryonic market mechanisms for making it possible to conclude efficient rental contracts. Yet our own studies have documented many inefficiencies arising out of this mismatch between the ownership pattern and the conditions for efficient production. Even where it is possible to claim rising 'total factual productivity', local people will point out that prices in the era of 'market economy' are far less stable than they were under 'socialist markets', and that many persons have lost the security of guaranteed employment.

For Rozelle and Swinnen, then, rural CEE is a success story for neo-liberal principles. They concede that there is room to debate whether a more



gradual strategy of reform, as pursued in China, might have reduced the costs of transition in the 1990s. But in comparison with Russia, it seems clear that the CEE pattern, based on more effective private property rights, performs better.

If one asks villagers themselves, however, one is likely to be given a larger view of the property changes, which takes us back to the broad definition offered by the von Benda-Beckmanns and Wiber. CEE villagers are more likely to compare themselves with farmers in western Europe than with Russian *ex-kolkhozniki*—and to point out that, in the agricultural markets of the European Union, the principle of private ownership has not exactly gone hand in hand with the free workings of the market in recent decades. Some villagers I know in Hungary and Poland, countries which joined the EU in 2004, comment ironically that the massive subsidies of the Common Agricultural Policy are only now being reduced, when CEE farmers might stand to benefit from them. More generally, they are increasingly aware that private property and the free market are constantly qualified in their workings by political regulations, designed partly to maintain food quality standards but also to sustain an aesthetically attractive rural environment for society as a whole. It turns out that the ‘strong’ property rights of landowners in the core capitalist countries are subject to innumerable constraints in practice, many of them in the name of the ‘public interest’.

### **The Tragedy of the Privates: Time, Justice and the Politics of the Moral Economy**

If private property and free markets have not been allowed to work their magic in the countryside of the old European Union, where they have been subordinated to successive formulations of ‘integrated rural development’ policies, then why should they be imposed upon postsocialist countries? Many postsocialist villagers in eastern Europe and Russia take the view that they were well served by the integrated system which they had evolved by the last decades of socialism. That system certainly had its inefficiencies, but it also had its benefits, above all in terms of job security and higher living standards than most rural people enjoy today. In East Asia, however, the comparison with the era of collectivisation is likely to come out more negatively. There, demand seems to be growing for more secure private ownership rights. No such demand is observable in Russia. The contrast has a long-term historical explanation and may derive ultimately from the very different labour intensity of wet rice production (Bray 1986).

At this point it is important to connect changes in the political economy to changes in the moral economy. It seems reasonable to assume that

the norms of the latter become objects of explicit reflection and discussion when threatening changes occur in the former. Although performance varied greatly, all socialist economies had transformed their agricultural sectors. Most had invested heavily in mechanisation and the material infrastructure of the countryside. Long after collectivisation they continued to transfer substantial subsidies, not only to increase the production of agricultural commodities but also to support rural transportation links and social services. These supports contracted rapidly with the switch to a 'market economy', which in many cases destroyed channels of marketing (both formal and informal) which had emerged under socialism, without providing any adequate substitute. These problems were aggravated by the depressed conditions of agricultural markets world-wide. The implementation of the new property system was a contested, time-consuming, and financially costly process. Legal institutions had played no role for most villagers under socialism, and it was impossible to put in place efficient mechanisms for documenting and adjudicating claims and then issuing title documents. In other words, few of the basic conditions for the neoliberal property paradigm could be fulfilled, so many villagers had no choice but to continue to recognise informal entitlements and 'custom' (see Cartwright 2001).

As a result of all these factors, there can be little doubt that the fragmentation of collectively owned land has led to gross economic inefficiencies in most countries of the former Soviet bloc. Although it is likely that many state and collective farms suffered from diseconomies of scale, with large bureaucracies remote from the majority of workers and members, the recent division of the land has created units of ownership that are typically far too small for efficient mechanised farming. Reconciling the new fragmented ownership pattern with the continued need for larger units of production has created a significant new layer of 'transaction costs'.

But the consequences of decollectivisation cannot be restricted to the economic sphere. The changes have affected the previous social hierarchy in the rural sector, often in unintended ways. For example, where economic shortages are severe, local political and administrative post-holders are likely to have increased opportunities to abuse their power. Reforms designed to promote autonomous entrepreneurs end up by intensifying dependencies on officials and perpetuating informal practices ('corruption'). Even where independent farmers have emerged, decollectivisation has given rise to new forms of social inequality at multiple levels. Tatjana Thelen (2003) has shown how, in the Hungarian village she studied, patriarchy was renewed as newly empowered landowners imposed their will over females and junior males in their households. In other communities in Hungary, divisions along ethnic lines have been accentuated (Schneider 2001). Contrary tendencies

can also be detected: in some circumstances, economic difficulties are met by increased solidarity and local dependencies in the form of reciprocity and sharing with kin and neighbours—a sort of postsocialist ‘shared poverty’ (see Ziker 2003). On the other hand, these old norms are unlikely to ensure the maintenance of collective investments after the organisations previously responsible for maintaining public infrastructure have been destroyed.

In general, postsocialist changes, besides leading to economic dislocation and inefficiency, at least in the short term, seem to have increased social inequalities, particularly inequalities between urban and rural sectors. Like all other property systems, this one too has moral implications (see Widlok 2004). Many rural dwellers associate it with a new, morally undesirable distribution of power and wealth. The full tragedy of the new system is that it is perceived to be *both* less efficient and less equitable. At the same time it is undeniable that, especially in CEE, many villagers supported decollectivisation on moral grounds. Certainly I know villagers in Hungary who were prepared to pay a high price in terms of economic efficiency in order to regain their private ownership rights.

To explore these dilemmas further, it is useful to widen the comparative framework. Although collectivisation and decollectivisation were in many respects twentieth-century experiments without precedent, land has been appropriated and reappropriated in previous revolutionary upheavals such as the English Civil War and the French Revolution. Here I follow Jon Elster (2004) by comparing recent postsocialist developments with earlier moments of disruption. Elster builds his theoretical frame around the idea of historical justice. This is the recurring cry of those whose property rights were violated during a revolutionary upheaval and who in a later period seek precise restitution of those rights or, if this is impossible, some form of reparation or compensation. The appeal to restore prior ownership is intuitively powerful, but Elster notes that compelling practical circumstances are always likely to mitigate such claims. He cites the reluctant recognition by a classical liberal philosopher, John Stuart Mill, that ‘it may seem hard, that a claim, originally just, should be defeated by the mere passage of time’. Justice in regard to an historical property claim is often, perhaps always, irreconcilable with justice in the present for the current owners and users of the property objects in question. In the French case, Elster notes a residual reluctance in the twentieth century to recognise the property rights of the holders of the so-called *biens nationaux*, appropriated from their previous aristocratic owners during the Revolution. In general, with the passing of several generations, the new pattern of ownership is unlikely to bear much resemblance to the original pattern following appropriation.



Whether or not the perpetrators of violent abuses of property rights can be brought to justice, society is faced with a basic dilemma. Following a radical change of political regime, some people are almost bound to take the view that unjust property appropriation under the previous regime should be remedied and that culprits should be brought to justice; a failure to do so is readily portrayed as a loss of moral nerve on the part of new powerholders (see Borneman 1997). Policies to restore rights or award compensation to large categories of citizens may enjoy widespread public support. Yet the implementation of such policies is certain to lead to new perceptions of injustice. It is also likely to be economically disruptive and to be costly in terms of the necessary legal implementation through courts and supplementary regulating agencies—such that in practice the rigors of ‘due process’ will be modified or abandoned, with the inevitable risk of accentuating injustice in particular cases.

Following Mill, Elster invoked time itself as the main factor in his comparative historical analysis. The more time that elapses between a property transformation and the overturning of the revolutionary regime responsible for it, the less likely it is that the original claim will be restored. The likelihood will diminish further as more time elapses between the political restoration and the legal resolution of specific property claims. These patterns will not surprise anthropologists, long familiar with the importance of claims to property for maintaining continuities in human communities (von Benda-Beckmann 1979). Time is a major element in accounting for the patterns of decollectivisation, despite all the self-evident differences between these processes and those of earlier eras of restoration.

The general dichotomy between the ex-Soviet case studies and the CEE case studies confirms Elster’s temporal hypothesis. In Russia, where most farms were collectivised in the early 1930s, there was no serious discussion of returning land to former owners after 1989. Instead it was privatised according to principles of equality, based on household numbers and perhaps some consideration of individuals’ places of employment under socialism. By contrast, in the CEE countries collectivisation took place a generation later. At the time of the regime change, many villagers still had vivid recollections of the traumas they experienced in the 1950s and early 1960s. Not surprisingly, in these countries postsocialist authorities generally pushed through land privatisation more promptly, and articulate sections of the public expressed widespread support for the principle that individuals—or their heirs—should as far as possible be given back exactly what had been taken from them.

It would, however, be inadequate to attribute the contrasting patterns of decollectivisation solely to the time that had elapsed since the ‘crime’; the



nature and history of ownership over the centuries preceding socialism must also be taken into account. The private ownership of land became widespread in Russia only in the early twentieth century. Feudal restrictions were abolished earlier in eastern Europe, and peasants there had made a faster transition to private ownership. Although many villagers in Hungary still managed their fields collectively until well into the twentieth century (Fél and Hofer 1969), by the time of state-compelled collectivisation a strong ethos of landownership had developed, such that the size of a peasant's holding was the prime indicator of his status or class.

Does the perceived strength of the property claim affect the issue of historical justice? Elster's discussion of the Bourbon restoration and the fate of aristocratic property in France is no longer helpful at this point. For Russia the more pertinent question might be, why did the postsocialist state not aim for a return to the form of ownership which characterised the village over centuries, namely, the *obshchina* (*mir*), rather than the short-lived phase between Stolypin and Stalin in which private ownership was emphasised? Apparently no one looked back to an historical baseline. Policies seem to have been shaped primarily by present-day considerations, and egalitarian principles were not contested. In the CEE countries, by contrast, there was often heated discussion over the baseline. Ownership had in many cases changed dramatically in the decades preceding collectivisation: why, some people asked, should the victims of socialism be awarded their land back, or at least compensation, when the victims of earlier 'democratic' land reforms and the casualties of ethnic deportations were awarded little or nothing of their (ancestors') property? In purely agro-economic terms it might well have been more rational to allocate land in large units to aristocratic families from whom it was taken in 1945 than to award it in small fragments to those from whom it was taken around 1960. Political considerations rather than any noble commitment to justice dictated that the latter claims were the ones recognised, despite the dislocation and long-term transaction costs created by the new pattern of ownership.

### **Complex Combinations: Lessons from the MPISA Case Studies**

I want now to discuss some of the results of the MPISA case studies carried out over the last five years. I emphasise that we do not wish to challenge every aspect of liberal and neoliberal approaches. The ultimate economic rationale for private ownership is that a high concentration of exclusive power over things gives persons the incentive to exercise greater care, invest as appropriate, and generally act such that the promotion of their selfish interests will be fully consistent with the collective welfare function of their society. (We call such exclusive power 'ownership', but that is simply the

standard term for a society's maximum range of rights. As noted above, these rights are never in fact 'absolute'—though they are often imagined to be so—because they are always constrained by authority.) Underlying this approach are assumptions more psychological in character, namely, that humans have a strong tendency to form attachments to specific things and that allowing at least some of these attachments to be held exclusively is legitimate because of the wider benefits of such ownership to the community (cf. Schlicht 1998).

Both of these predispositions have been confirmed in the course of our projects. They may be obvious, but they are far from trivial. For example, the Siberian hunters studied by John Ziker (2003: 380) formed definite links to particular territories, which often led people to name that land after an individual hunter. Following many earlier ethnographers of hunter-gatherers, Ziker documented the way others needed to request 'permission' from the 'owner' in order to extract any resources from the territory (cf. Ventsel 2005). This is a far cry from neoliberal models of private property. Although many persons and groups have now been assigned rights to specific tracts of land in this part of the Taimyr Autonomous Region, the community of hunters Ziker studied has, under postsocialist conditions, become more heavily reliant on interpersonal reciprocities and sharing. These 'informal entitlements' are expressions of a strong moral economy.

Another local endorsement of exclusive private ownership can be found in Carolin Leutloff-Grandits's study of post-war Croatia (2003, forthcoming). Because the Yugoslav state had abandoned its collectivisation drive in the 1950s, Leutloff-Grandits paid closer attention to non-agricultural factors. Houses were highly contested property objects in and around the town of Knin following the forced exodus of most local Serbs in the mid-1990s. The Knin district experienced a large influx of Croats from other regions, many of whom occupied houses recently abandoned by Serbs. In recent years some Serbs have returned, and international bodies have applied pressure on the Croat government to recognise their property rights. Nationalist governments in Zagreb received little support from local Croats when seeking to appropriate this property for the collectivity of the Croat nation. On the contrary, the local parties involved regarded the basic claim of a previous owner, regardless of whether he or she was the 'original' owner or builder, as having greater legitimacy.

This support for liberal ground rules is subject to qualification in the case of real property. Our researchers demonstrated that groups often assert a strong attachment to the land historically occupied and used by their people. This is often represented as a moral relationship, especially among indigenous peoples in Siberia, where the land itself, animals, and other elements in

the environment are vividly personified (see Anderson 2000; King 2003). On the other hand, neither in Croatia nor in the other agricultural cases did we find much evidence of strong attachment to particular parcels of land, an attachment which might have underpinned claims to exclusive ownership of this good. People generally endorsed the view that land should be returned to those from whom it was taken, but they also recognised that in many cases the consolidation of fields, road building, and so forth made a return to the exact boundaries of the past impossible.

There is nonetheless discontent in some circles when this is not adopted as the main political goal. In Hungary, for example, former owners have received compensation but no guarantee that they can regain ownership of plots held previously. I found that this mattered greatly to some villagers in Tázlár, sometimes for sentimental reasons but perhaps also due to the exceptionally high degree of variation in soil quality and the village's unusual settlement pattern. Mihály Sárkány found no such emotional bonds to particular fields in the village he studied in northern Hungary (Hann and Sárkány 2003f). Even in Tázlár, more than a decade after a complex redistribution was set in motion, it is clear that the great majority now approach landownership entirely in pragmatic terms. It is one resource among others: a few people have accumulated more of it through purchase, whereas others farm small parcels for subsistence or, if they lack the resources, lease it out or try to sell. A great deal of land, here as throughout the postsocialist world, has fallen out of production (see chapter 3, this volume).

In Slovakia, Davide Torsello (2003) found that, as in Tázlár, villagers were deeply alienated by the strong state interventions of the 1950s. In this case improvements came more rapidly than in Hungary. Villagers told Torsello that the 1960s were a good time in their history, in part because their agricultural cooperative was under community control. In 1974, however, it was merged into a larger entity with its centre in the neighbouring town. The villagers became alienated once more, and when Torsello asked them for their views about the successor organisation, a decade after the land had been returned to its original owners, most opinions were emphatically deprecatory. Yet villagers needed this organisation to gain an income from their land; they showed little interest in establishing private commercial farms.

Torsello also found that the same villagers who declared their 'mistrust' of the organisation, deriving from its socialist history, might nonetheless make use of its services, even when private sector alternatives were available. It is important to distinguish between 'uttered mistrust' and what people really think and act out in their daily practices. Torsello makes it clear that trust is primarily a quality built up in face-to-face relations with



kin and neighbours, but it can also be built up towards institutions such as cooperatives or village administrations. And trust, which is surely just another facet of the moral economy, can be forfeited or dissipated if community norms are disregarded.

The Russian villagers in the Volga region studied by Liesl Gambold Miller and Patrick Heady (2003) present a somewhat different picture. Russian villagers experienced collectivisation some 70 years ago. By the time land was privatised following presidential decrees in 1991, few rural households had members who could remember the days of independent farming, let alone members with the skills and capital needed to begin commercial operations on their own. Heady and Miller provided examples of some new entrepreneurs, as did Deema Kaneff and Lale Yalçın-Heckmann (2003) in their accounts from Ukraine and Azerbaijan. But in Russia, as in the rest of the former Soviet Union, land was distributed without regard to what had been owned before collectivisation, and for most Russian villagers, becoming a nominal landowner brought no change in attitude or in practice. Miller and Heady (2003: 287) highlighted the 'loneliness of *fermer-hood*' experienced by the exceptions, those who chose to take their land out of the pool used by the successor to the collective farm and who were known as *fermery*. Envy was also a part of the moral economy in this case. Most villagers continued to look to their local farm leaders to provide them with jobs and a minimal level of subsistence in return for using their land. They continued to farm their individual plots intensively, as they always had. But in the absence of a market for land and continuing legal uncertainty about whether or not land could, ultimately, be privately owned and sold as a commodity, it is hardly surprising that the 1991 decree which launched decollectivisation has not in practice brought about a new property mentality.

It seems, rather, that older traditions of community solidarity have been by and large enforced. Patty Gray (2003) reported similarly from the Republic of Marii El in central European Russia that local opinion disapproved of people who split away from the socialist successor organisation. Among Bulgarian speakers in south-western Ukraine, however, Kaneff found that honesty and hard work were enough to legitimate the higher income of an independent farmer. Elsewhere, as in the Azerbaijani settlements studied by Yalçın-Heckmann, the socialist institutions vanished and left no successors. With no obvious organisational vehicle, the moral economy had to find expression where it presumably originated, in informal comments, gossip, and similar unofficial sanctions. As in many other parts of the ex-socialist world, people had no objection in principle to land's moving into exclusive private ownership. They did express resentment,



however, when income and wealth inequalities could be clearly attributed to practices they deemed unfair. The line between strong interpersonal trust and high levels of corruption was often fuzzy under socialism, and in this respect the revolution in property relations has not changed much at all. Perhaps there is only a more widespread and deeper cynicism in the former socialist countries today, along the lines of 'they pretended to give us ownership rights, but it was just a cover; owning land brings only responsibilities, and wealth is now generated elsewhere, where we are excluded.' People may react by withdrawing from social networks, but they may also struggle to maintain or reinvent a 'traditional' sense of community. In Ziker's account of how Taimyr hunters acknowledge informal entitlements, the moral economy seems to hinge more on loose interpersonal networks and a cosmology emphasising close links to the natural world than on any formal organisation.

In Susanne Brandtstädter's case study (2003) of three villages in southern Fujian, China, by contrast, the cosmology emphasised lineage ancestors, and the moral economy found formal expression in the temple association, which deployed funds supplied by wealthy emigrants for purposes which amounted, ultimately, to a celebration of the community itself (see also Brandtstädter 2001). At the same time, people spent lavishly on life-cycle rituals, with levels of giving which might have appeared 'wasteful' to the outsider but which were in reality highly rational investments in personal relations which were likely to count for a lifetime. China is a case of particular interest, since it remains officially socialist. Property rights there remain indistinct in many fields, and yet, as in late socialist Hungary, the decentralisation of responsibility for and control over economic production, combined with provision of effective market incentives, seems to have been enough to generate rapid growth in both production and consumption. Brandtstädter's case study, admittedly exceptional in that the prosperity of southern Fujian is massively enhanced by overseas transfer income, shows the two sides of the coin of moral economy in a state of harmony and good order: the collective side is represented by the temple association, and the interpersonal side, by the efflorescence of gifts on ritual occasions.

It is tempting at first to label the two aspects of Brandtstädter's moral economy in Fujian province public and private, but this dichotomy is potentially misleading. Another agent in Brandtstädter's account stands outside the moral economy—that is the state itself and its local apparatus. Actually the state has a good legal claim to be considered the ultimate owner of the land in Brandtstädter's field sites, as in all other villages in China. But the villagers do not trust their state, which even in its post-Maoist, reformist phase has been unable to 'create new binding rules to re-embed social relations' (Brandtstädter 2003: 436). A similar mistrust of remote, macro-level

powerholders and complaints about ill-informed local interference recurred in several of our projects. In a graphic description, Tadesse (2003) showed how successive state formations in Ethiopia had ignored the property needs of local people in the southern highlands. According to his analysis, only greater respect for a complex indigenous land tenure system might bring an end to more than a century of exploitation. In a similar vein, Patty Gray (2003) argued that socialism and capitalism were fundamentally alike in their inability or refusal to answer to local needs.

Adapting this line of argument more specifically to the institution of property, the following picture emerges. Capitalism is evidently strongly associated with the principle of private ownership. But as we have seen, it is futile to legislate ownership of the land as such if this legislation is unaccompanied by changes in concrete institutions, such as creation of a system of functioning markets and legal mechanisms, which must ultimately be the responsibility of a state. At the other pole, socialism is strongly associated with a principle of state ownership. But those who lived under this system are fully aware of the coercion necessary to impose it and the heavy price paid in most socialist countries for repressing markets and individual initiative.

Is there an alternative to these poles? Corporate capitalism and market socialism have been widely touted, but neither has ever convinced. The alternative which has proven increasingly popular among anthropologists in recent years, notably among those working on problems regarding the natural environment, where sustainability concerns are the prime issue, has been to argue for forms of community control. Common property need not be open-access property, and far from leading to disaster, it can lead to solutions which are both efficient and equitable for the persons most directly involved.

Despite persuasive evidence in some cases, it is unrealistic to suggest that markets and the state can be entirely replaced by community management. Communities often hold mutually contradictory ideas, and they, too, can get things wrong or take short-sighted decisions—for example, from the point of view of environmental sustainability. In any case, a market mechanism of some sort is essential for the efficient linkage of communities, and state control of some sort is essential if market freedoms are not to be abused. In terms of property rules this adds up to an argument for combinations flexible enough to take account of particular property objects and local ecological conditions.

The best example among our projects came from Barbara Cellarius's study of a densely forested zone in the Rhodope Mountains of Bulgaria. She found that it took the postsocialist authorities almost a decade to get around

to forest privatisation, following the swift decision in 1991 to return agricultural land to private ownership within its old boundaries. It was difficult to create viable farm units, but individual management of forest holdings posed still more formidable problems. Bulgaria had a strong cooperative tradition in pre-socialist times, and in this case (unlike the case of agricultural land) the new powerholders eventually agreed to allow the way for the reconstitution of forest cooperatives, in which the owners would hold shares proportional to their original holdings. The democratic management of these cooperatives poses a challenge, but the early signs seem encouraging. In other words, unlike the socialist period cooperatives in Bulgaria, modelled on the Soviet collective farm, which in theory placed all property in the hands of a local collectivity but in reality left local people with little control of any kind, the new forest cooperatives seem to provide an efficient solution based on a high degree of self-management; the cooperative enjoys a high degree of legitimacy because it is perceived to be redressing an historical injustice.

Other projects have provided glimpses of what might be done if a judicious measure of decentralisation can be introduced to allow locally appropriate combinations of market and state regulation and of private and collective ownership. Unfortunately, the bad odour of the socialist cooperatives has made it even more difficult to promote such solutions in contemporary Eurasia than tends to be the case in other parts of the world. One hopeful initiative to be found in recent years is the emergence of new forms of *obshchiny* in thinly populated regions all over Siberian Russia. *Obshchina* is an old Russian word for community; it played a role in Russian politics in the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Slavophiles and Populists (*Narodniki*) applied it (along with *mir*) to denote the integrity and purity of the peasant commune. Although this was certainly an idealised vision, some form of concretisation of the moral economy exercised decisive influence over village affairs in this period. In particular, the *obshchina* ideally reallocated land periodically, to ensure its optimal distribution according to fluctuating household needs. The land was farmed on a household basis, but it was not in private ownership. Prime Minister Stolypin began to attack this system in the last decade of the tsarist regime, and his reforms seem to have made rapid headway—perhaps more rapid than the postsocialist reforms, which have had a similar thrust, namely, to facilitate the emergence of independent farmers. The point is that when Stalin collectivised the Russian countryside during the First Five Year Plan, few villagers could look back on more than a single generation of private landownership. Their history was a thoroughly collectivist one: they were ensnared before 1861 and incorporated into *obshchiny* thereafter.



The concept has not been revived in European ('peasant') Russia, and the postsocialist large-scale farms in the villages studied by Heady and Miller are known as *kolkhozy*, not *obshchiny*. But the term has been adapted to designate a new and loosely specified form of association for the 'small peoples' of Siberia, who in some regions have come forward with alacrity to register claims on the basis of an historic 'clan' tie to the land in question. The details vary considerably from region to region and depend heavily on whether or not this legal status brings advantages in terms of raising credit, obtaining supplies, or marketing produce. In some areas, such as Yamal, studied by Florian Stammler, economic prosperity seems to have rendered this option superfluous, whereas in Sakha, studied by Aimar Ventsel, and in Chukotka, studied by Patty Gray, the formation of *obshchiny* has been facilitated by the authorities and widely taken up (Gray 2001, 2003, 2005; Stammler and Ventsel 2003).

So far, the granting of this privileged form of ownership to those eligible on the basis of ethnicity seems not to have created friction with other residents, notably immigrant Russians who cannot claim this special historical relationship to the land. This is at least partly because the entire land tenure situation throughout Siberia remains confused and fluid. Land is still generally abundant and far from becoming just another commodity available through a market. It would be an error, however, to see in this measure of devolved control alone a solution to the current survival problems of Siberia's population. Alexander King's work in Kamchatka (2003) highlights the negative consequences of the withdrawal of state subsidies and loss of secure employment in the public sector. The new decentralised forms of land tenure can be part of a solution, but a comprehensive new property regime must also include the private and collective ownership forms necessary for functioning markets and an effective state.

If the latter elements can be put in place, there are compelling arguments for allowing and even insisting upon some form of local collective management responsibility for or even ownership of the land and possibly some other key resources as well. Private ownership is likely to be a dominant form across a wide range of objects, from houses to combine harvesters, toothbrushes to snowmobiles. The state needs to be present as the provider of key services, notably health and education. But there are good reasons for treating land, lakes, and marine resources as ultimately common goods, which may be allocated to households or individuals for use but whose ownership is vested in the local collectivity. In this way the moral economy of the community would expand beyond the two facets identified by Brandtstädter (2003). The era of the locally autonomous *obshchina* is forever past. The inhabitants of postsocialist rural communities need to be integrated



into a state as well as organised through some sort of local association or cooperative. They need to be integrated into market systems as well as to enjoy the freedom to cultivate close interpersonal relations.

To summarise: the diverse array of projects carried out at MPISA has not generated a new theory of property, but our case studies do have both theoretical and pragmatic empirical implications. In theoretical terms it is necessary to question engrained assumptions, strong among anthropologists as a consequence of their engagement with ordinary people through fieldwork, that the principles of state redistribution and market economy are inherently antagonistic to the working of local moral economies. The socialist and postsocialist materials suggest that the state can be much more than a remote power machine. It should not automatically be bracketed apart from the moral economy, since it can also function as the expression of a higher level of community. But state provision of property entitlements must always be supplemented by local forms of the kind explored by Brandtstädter, Torsello, Leutloff-Grandits, Cellarius, and others in our group.

As for markets, they are generally conceived as a realm of impersonal maximising activity and therefore by definition incompatible with the moral economy. Yet an expansion of the scope for instrumentalist, profit-oriented activity may also receive moral approval. This seems to have been the case in late socialist Hungary, where market incentives provided a successful mechanism for accumulation. Even in a more orthodox socialist rural economy such as that of the German Democratic Republic, John Eidson and Gordon Milligan (2003) documented the persistence of entrepreneurial activity within the collective farm, which took place with the general approval of the community that benefited from it.

Of course markets can also be spheres of division, in which benefits are seldom equally distributed. For this reason the market sphere remains partially distinct. It lies within the moral economy to the extent that market relations often depend heavily on relations of trust between persons; the moral economy keeps up a constant pressure which limits the proper possibilities for 'rational' impersonal maximisation. The conditions under which different kinds of property object can be used and alienated in markets are subject to informal moral regulations as well as formal legal codes. Just as contracts can never specify all the conditions of their fulfilment, so deeds of ownership can never exhaust the social complexity of property relations.

The main policy implication of this discussion of the moral economy is that the precise mixture of property forms should not be prescribed in state legislation. Rather, room should be left for adjustments to meet distinctive resource constraints and ecological conditions. As far as the most basic means of production are concerned, it would seem prudent to leave land and

water resources in common ownership unless the local community itself, through democratically organised institutions such as cooperatives, comes forward with strong arguments for an alternative solution.

## Conclusion

Property is a central institution in all human communities. For most of history, the evolution of property rules and practices has been a story of gradual, piecemeal change. But when one looks closely, one also finds moments of sharp discontinuity, and few have been sharper than decollectivisation in postsocialist Eurasia. The original act of collectivisation was, in most places, a catastrophic act of total social engineering. Yet it allowed many important social continuities, such as the continued cultivation of private plots for family subsistence. Decollectivisation, too, can be viewed as a natural experiment. In some respects the resulting rupture with the past seems to have been greater than that associated with the moment of collectivisation. One common dilemma was how far to tolerate continuities with the socialist era (e.g. through 'successor cooperatives') in the interests of efficiency, versus how far to prioritise a return to the property relations of the past, regardless of economic rationality. The precise paths followed have varied. But everywhere property relations are lived in the present, and for many rural people the postsocialist present has been a disenchanting struggle for survival. Many of those who aspired for moral and emotional reasons to regain their private property have come to see that the neoliberalism of the 1990s was as deleterious for them as the Stalinism of the 1930s and 1950s.

On the basis of our MPISA projects, I have suggested that alternatives can be sought in pragmatic combinations of property ground rules, with community control playing a central role alongside markets and the state. The backwards-looking call for 'historical justice' has no monopoly of virtue. There can also be good moral grounds for pragmatism, for paying attention to the present and the future as well as the property claims of the past. This pragmatism is consistent with 'strong' property rights, provided that the rules of ownership and access are clear to all parties. It therefore contrasts with ambiguity in property relations of the kind exemplified by post-Maoist China. Yet, as we noted, fuzziness in the ownership of land and other deviations from neoliberal precepts have not hindered the Chinese economy from recording three decades of remarkable growth.

This emphasis on complexity and the need for pragmatism in property policies builds on a large body of anthropological work on property systems in other parts of the world. Even if the criterion of economic efficiency is given absolute priority, flexibility with respect to region and to different kinds of property objects is likely to yield better results than a blanket insis-

tence on one form of private property. Property rules always have wider social implications, and their evolution can never be reduced to a narrow economic calculus. Although anthropological work critiquing the simplistic dichotomy of 'collective versus private' dates back to the later colonial period, the recent fad for neoliberal solutions gives it renewed urgency. There are, fortunately, signs that agencies such as the World Bank are backing away from 'fundamentalist' privatisation and paying more heed to practical problems of implementation, such as the issuing of titles. But the neoliberal assumptions themselves are not questioned. It is still assumed that, if only the institutional conditions can be fulfilled (including well-functioning markets in all sectors and the 'rule of law'), then creating private owners is the only rational way to stimulate investment and productivity and thereby promote development. Such arguments are irrefutable, because any deviant behaviour can be attributed to imperfections in the institutional environment. From this perspective, neoliberalism is a sealed ideological system and as such comparable to socialism, the ideology it has replaced.<sup>12</sup> The socialist dogmatists who proclaimed the superiority of state-owned property to individual or cooperative forms of ownership used to close their eyes and dismiss the imperfections observable in the real world in much the same way.

Apart from the level of institutional shortcomings, it is worth asking whether investigations of the shortcomings of postsocialist decollectivisation can illuminate more fundamental matters. Do they, for example, give us insights into a generic human disposition to possess and to own? Some of the Hungarian villagers who form the subject of the following chapter were determined to regain ownership of *their* family land, irrespective of the fact that, under the prevailing economic conditions, the land might be a liability rather than an asset. On the other hand, evidence from the case studies in Russia showed that villagers there felt no strong inclination to become owners. Indeed, there was evidence of envy and moral censure of those who struck out as *fermery* and were thereby considered to be turning their backs on the solidarity of the community.

These contrasting cases should caution us against deriving over-hasty universal conclusions about human psychology from our ethnographic case studies. I have argued that property relations everywhere play a fundamental role in the constitution of human communities, but the nature of these relations and the norms accompanying them is highly variable in history. In the 1990s a general distinction could be drawn between the former Soviet Union

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<sup>12</sup> This criticism can also be directed against the discipline on which neoliberalism relies most heavily, namely economics. I therefore see little difference between mainstream neoclassicists and representatives of the so-called 'new institutional economics'. For more enthusiastic appraisals of what the latter can contribute to anthropology see Acheson 1994.



and the CEE countries in the new systems of property which emerged in the countryside. In contrast to those parts of Russia where we know that land was systematically redistributed in the pre-socialist period, in the CEE countries notions of private ownership were well entrenched. This does not mean that the latter had lost their moral economy: many activities required close cooperation, and rural communities could maintain strong ethics of equality even in the absence of repartition. Nonetheless, respect for private property was well established. We need to investigate these historical roots and not demonise this property form. Otherwise we shall be unable to explain the continued appeal of neoliberal ideologies, which promote private property in an extreme, disembedded form rather than as one component of complex property systems.



### Chapter 3

## “Not the Horse We Wanted!” Procedure and Legitimacy in Postsocialist Privatisation in Tázlár

For my doctoral field research in Hungary (1976–1977) I chose to study a village with a statistically atypical experience of collectivisation. I tried to show (Hann 1980a) that the institution known as the specialist cooperative (*szakszövetkezet*) offered a window for understanding the general flexibility of Hungarian socialism after the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968, often referred to as a form of ‘market socialism’. Some 25 years later, I want to show that this same village makes a good vantage point for understanding the demise of cooperative property and the new problems of the postsocialist era.<sup>13</sup>

As a young ethnographer in the 1970s, I imagined that the distinctive characteristics of the *szakszövetkezet* would eventually recede, and the village of Tázlár would come to approximate a more complete form of collectivisation modelled on the Soviet kolkhoz. I could hardly have been more wrong. The last decade of socialism was characterised by a contrary process which saw much of the rest of Hungary’s economy, urban as well as rural, increasingly resemble the loose form of the *szakszövetkezet*. In 1990 the specialist cooperative in Tázlár abandoned agricultural production. It

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<sup>13</sup> This chapter is based primarily on two months of fieldwork in July–August 2001. Although I visited Tázlár regularly in the 1980s and 1990s, this was my first opportunity for more systematic enquiry since the 1970s. I am grateful to Mihály Sárkány, my research partner in Budapest, who has carried out a parallel restudy of a village with a more typical property history (see Hann and Sárkány 2003f). József Berta, Mrs János Dudás, Sándor Dúl, Ferenc Hadfi, Pál Hadfi, János Horváth, Mihály Jeney, Endre Kószó, Antal Lázár, Pál Szabadi and Béla Szénási have helped me to understand village life from radically different standpoints. This chapter began as an MPISA Working Paper (No. 26, 2001). Preliminary versions were read to seminar audiences at MPISA and at the University of Leipzig (*Ringvorlesung: Eigentum, Individuum und gesellschaftliche Integration*); thanks especially to Patrick Heady, Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, Bea Vidacs, and Lale Yalçın-Heckmann for helpful comments and suggestions. For this expanded version I have incorporated materials from more recent papers focused on the wine sector (Hann 2004i), on theoretical questions concerning procedure and legitimacy (Hann 2004j), and embourgeoisement (Hann 2005j).

finally disintegrated in 2003, though some villagers now argue that it needs to be reinvented.<sup>14</sup>

This chapter builds upon the general discussion of the preceding chapter. The argument is as follows. In the late socialist period, this distinctive form of cooperative undermined the ideological opposition between collective and private property at the level of practices. The old ideology of private property has triumphed in the course of decollectivisation, but few villagers feel empowered as a result. Their cooperative has been destroyed, and more inclusive, public property rights, significantly weakened. Hopes that a modernised wine sector would become a reliable bedrock of the rural economy have been dashed. Although the details of this case study are specific to one zone of rural Hungary, its broader contours are pertinent to other postsocialist countries. I demonstrate this by drawing on two bodies of theory: first, a long-running debate in the Hungarian literature over the concept of *polgárosodás*, usually translated as 'embourgeoisement' but connected also to the expansion of citizenship entitlements; and second, a (primarily German) sociological tradition which grounds modern political legitimacy in the dominance of formal ('rational-legal') procedures. The two strands are woven together in my account, which shows that extended recourse to rational-legal procedures under postsocialism does not blind villagers to the high costs they must pay for having to give up their distinctive variant of socialist modernisation.

### Location, Ecology, and Pre-socialist History

Tázlár lies some 80 miles south-east of Budapest on the Homokhátság, the sandy table which dominates much of the region between the Danube and Tisza Rivers, the western zone of the Great Hungarian Plain. This region resembles the archetypal *puszta*, or steppe, in being flat, unsuited to intensive farming and utilised primarily as grazing pasture. It has a long history of marginality. It was the territory the Romans failed to incorporate into their province of Pannonia (Transdanubia). Later it was the sparsely populated zone in which Hungarian kings settled nomadic groups, notably the Cumans (Kunok, from which comes the territorial designation Kiskunság, a term often used loosely as a synonym for the Homokhátság). Together with the rest of the Great Plain, many villages were abandoned during the Ottoman occupation, though the market towns were not evacuated. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the depopulated *puszták* were gradually resettled. This took place initially 'from above', as Habsburg rulers and feudal elites

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<sup>14</sup> At the time of writing in February 2005, the Peace Cooperative still exists on paper, pending liquidation of its last assets.

organised the immigration of Slovak and German-speaking peasants (the latter were generically known as *sváb*, i.e. Swabian, although many hailed from other regions). By the end of the nineteenth century, following the abolition of feudal controls, resettlement was driven 'from below' as peasants of differing ethnic backgrounds purchased land cheaply in order to escape poverty in neighbouring regions or just to try their luck in a region which, in this period, functioned as a kind of 'internal frontier' (Hann 1979; see also Juhász 1997, Szabadi 1997). Many of these newcomers did not settle in nucleated villages but preferred to build isolated farmsteads (*tanyák*) on the land they purchased.

The quality of the soils of the Homokhátság varies greatly, but even the best arable land here is significantly less fertile than most land to the west of the Danube and east of the Tisza. Some areas of Tázlár are so sandy as to make cereal cultivation impossible, but in the pre-socialist era almost all households practised mixed farming (raising animals as well as growing crops), and most were self-sufficient to a high degree.<sup>15</sup> Many settlers brought with them detailed knowledge of how to cultivate fruits and grapevines, for which the sandy soil was well suited, and how to manufacture wine. For some this became an important source of cash income, whereas for many others the vines served primarily for home consumption. Wine (usually diluted with soda water) was basic to the provision of hospitality among all strata of the population.

The late Habsburg period was also the time when the population of Budapest expanded dramatically. The city became a second imperial capital and an industrial metropolis. This new urban population needed provisioning, and communications with the Homokhátság improved greatly with the opening of the railway link between Budapest and Belgrade in 1882. At about this time the phylloxera lice destroyed vine stocks in most districts of Hungary's classical wine regions. Wine from the sandy Homokhátság, where the vines were largely immune to the lice, began to make inroads into the national market. The ready availability of cheap and largely undifferentiated wine enabled the new working classes of the capital to hold onto a key element of the culture of the peasantry, and wine consumption remained high.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Some settlers, and also some absentee owners of large holdings, also planted trees. At least since the beginnings of post-Ottoman resettlement, it has been recognised that forestation can reduce the unpredictable movement of sand dunes and thereby facilitate agricultural production.

<sup>16</sup> This continuity also had its less attractive side: wine is partly responsible for continuing high levels of alcoholism in Hungary. However, in both town and countryside high spirit consumption plays a more significant role.



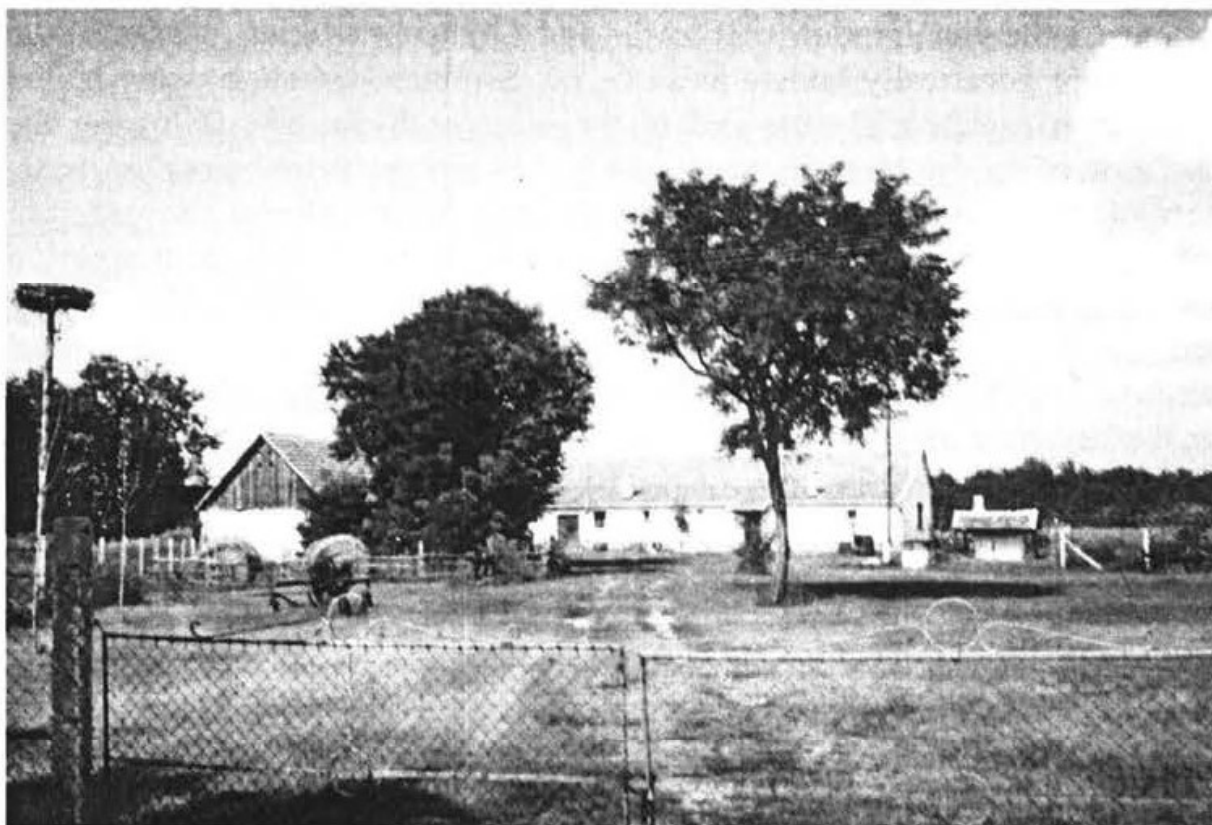


Plate 1. One of the oldest in Tázlár, dating from the 1870s, this *tanya* has recently been modernised and serves as a *vikendház* for its owner, a mechanic who lives in the village centre.



Plate 2. A new private shop in the centre of the village.





Plate 3. The Calvinist church; in the park in the foreground is a new monument, (unveiled in 2000) commemorating the revolution of 1956.



Plate 4. The village war memorial is decorated with wreaths on March 15<sup>th</sup>, a national holiday. The Catholic church, constructed in the 1950s, is visible in the background.

The end of the Dual Monarchy in 1918 was marked by a massive contraction in the territory of the Hungarian state. The inter-war decades were economically difficult and the population of the Homokhátság increased sharply. Ferenc Erdei, in his well-known sociographical study of 1937, *Futóhomok* (Shifting Sands), highlighted the poverty of many parts of the region, especially those where most of the population resided in scattered farmsteads rather than in nucleated centres. Erdei also documented the on-going disintegration of the traditional, subsistence-oriented peasant economy, which was being replaced by specialised production for the market. However, despite increasing commodity production, few rural households of the Homokhátság were well integrated into the national society either economically or socially. Many continued to prefer a mixed production profile, including a modest vineyard holding. Erdei theorised this configuration in terms of stymied *polgárosodás*. The word derives from *polgár*, which, like the German *Bürger* from which it comes, means both 'bourgeois' and 'citizen' (see Szelényi 1988). The Hungarian political system and social structure were still 'semi-feudal', and so, Erdei argued, the road to embourgeoisement and a general modernisation of rural society remained blocked (see also Erdei 1942).

In Tázlár two centres emerged in the course of the twentieth century. Religious and secular institutions were initially consolidated in the upper hamlet, but in the socialist period the lower hamlet became dominant and when people nowadays say 'centre', this is what they mean. There were no agricultural cooperatives in the pre-socialist period. The village acquired an area of several hundred hectares to serve as communally managed summer pasture, but the sense of community was probably weaker in Tázlár than in older nucleated settlements. The immigrant population of Tázlár was extremely diverse, a product of the era of expanding capitalist markets. Land, the main marker of social status, was bought and sold as a market commodity, and the ideology of private property was strong. Successful settlers marketed their produce both locally and as far afield as Budapest (accessible by direct train from neighbouring Soltvadkert).

On the other hand, much in the social organisation of the village resembled the semi-feudal conditions common elsewhere in pre-socialist Hungary. The more prosperous immigrants, soon to be denigrated as kulak, relied heavily on farm servants (*cselédek*) for the labour they needed. Some later settlers were never in a position to begin autonomous family farming; some were too poor to meet their subsistence needs and depended on payments received in kind by their *cseléd* children. In 2001 elderly villagers of poor peasant background could still recall how they were contracted to work as children for the large landowners. János Pozsár (b. 1923) began work as a 9-year-old: 'There were seven children and I was the oldest, so I was obliged

to... , or rather my parents were obliged to send me into service, in order to get what was needed for shoes and for clothing.’ He went on to recall how he and other youths in the same position attempted to take advantage of national-level political instability in 1938 to break away from their dependence and work instead as free day-labourers; but the village authorities reacted immediately and severely, passing a resolution requiring him and his mates to remain in service.



Plate 5. János Pozsár (2005).

Other villagers, however, such as my landlady in the 1970s (b. 1905, the daughter of one of the first groups of settlers and heiress to a farm of above-average size and soil quality), liked to recall the close and lasting relations between her family and those to whom she offered work as farm servants, ties mediated more by gifts in kind than by money. In short, my landlady’s memory emphasised harmony and reciprocity, whereas János Pozsár recalled being required to satisfy every whim of the master (*a gazdának a kényekedvét kiszolgálni*).



## Socialism and the specialist cooperative

The scattered settlement pattern was rapidly modified in the socialist decades as the new powerholders, guided by modernisers such as Erdei, directed resources into building up the infrastructure of village nuclei and '*tanya-centres*'. Some industrial investment was made to exploit significant quantities of oil and gas, and some forestation took place to control the problem of the 'shifting sands'. But the isolated farmstead did not disappear entirely; from the end of the 1960s it became possible to extend electricity to the *tanya*, and in recent decades many have been attractively modernised.

The glaring inequalities in the social structure were part of the justification for promoting new cooperative forms of farming from the late 1940s. As I have explained elsewhere (Hann 1983), these were not very successful. In the oppressive political climate of the 1950s, communist support of agricultural cooperatives, state farms, and machine tractor stations only served to intensify the attachment of the bulk of the peasantry to their private property. Many were subjected to arbitrary appropriation, not only of their land but also of their houses. Ferenc Gregus, for instance, born in 1925 and a descendant of one of the earliest immigrants in the nineteenth century, was thrown out of his family *tanya* just outside the upper hamlet to make room for two poor families who worked for one of the new cooperatives. He worked for several years as a labourer in Budapest before he and his wife were eventually able to return to their home and resume family farming, albeit on a smaller acreage. Many families have similarly painful memories of the dislocation and arbitrary political interference of the early 1950s, in which no property rights were secure.

It was not so much the *tanyák* as dwellings but rather the vineyards surrounding them which provided the grounds for pragmatic politicians under János Kádár to conclude that it would be a mistake to impose the conventional model of large-scale collectivised farming on the Homokhátság. Large-scale arable farming would never be very productive on these sandy soils, and in any case, the fruit and wine were needed for the national economy. Even in the difficult years of the 1950s many farmers were able to continue private production and marketing of wine, using the state postal service to send their flagons (*demizsonok*) to Budapest. In order to conserve these assets, at the time of mass collectivisation in 1960 the powerholders chose to implement a substantially diluted form of collectivisation in this region. Most farmers joined not a *termelőszövetkezet* (abbreviated as *t.sz.*—, roughly the equivalent of a Soviet *kolkhoz*) but a 'production cooperative group,' (abbreviated as *t.sz.cs.*) which in practice allowed its members to continue working their own small farms as in the past, as a family unit.



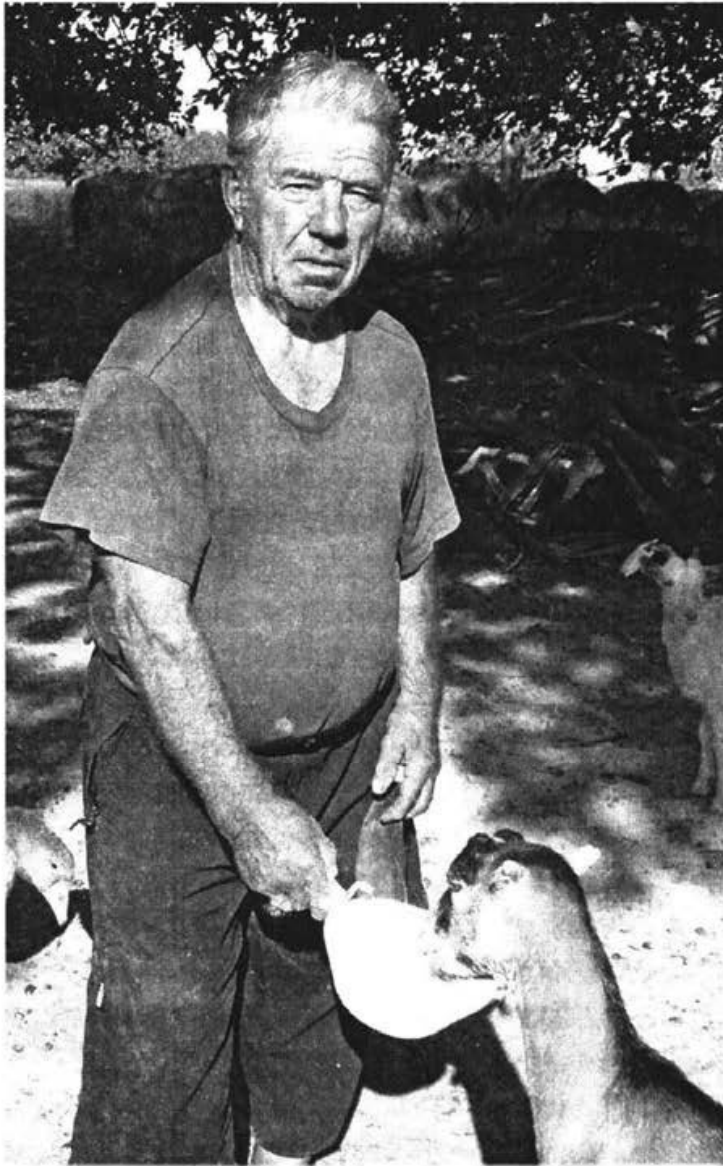


Plate 6. Ferenc Gregus (2005).

In late December 1960 almost all farmers in Tázlár signed up to join one of three new groups. They did so involuntarily, under considerable political pressure, which sometimes extended to physical intimidation, and were aware that their signatures marked a threshold of some sort. Most of them, however, were able to continue farming on their inherited plots. These now formed part of the collective property of the cooperative, but little attempt was made initially to bring them under collective cultivation. The scattered small vineyards were obstacles to the creation of large fields, and no one wanted to risk losing the fruit and vine produce. These high-value plots yielded 'right-wing crops' (Nove 1983), since economic rationality dictated that they remain in private ownership and use. Other plots passed into cooperative possession, but title remained with the former owner. If owners moved away, or if they grew old and had no heirs, their property rights were acknowledged through a special payment (*járadék*). Records were maintained and certain procedures were followed; the major change was that most

arable fields and pasture could no longer be alienated. Even though villagers retained their individual title documents, most land was henceforth collectively held by the members (*részarányosok*).

In 1968 these cooperative groups, in Tázlár and elsewhere on the Homokhátság, were re-labelled 'specialist cooperatives' (*szakszövetkezetek*).<sup>17</sup> Officially described as a 'simple' form of cooperative (Gyenis 1971) and expected in due course to evolve into a regular *termelőszövetkezet*, the specialist cooperative maintained its distinctive features until the end of the socialist period. In addition to consolidating a sector of collective production, this type of cooperative offered those of its members who preferred to continue farming independently (the vast majority) assistance with inputs such as fodder and fertiliser. At the instigation of the external authorities, in 1974 in Tázlár the original three groups united to form a single, community-wide specialist cooperative called Peace. This socialist institution held a virtual monopoly over marketing, deducting 10% of revenues for itself and passing the remainder on to the producer.

Also in 1968, reformers in the capital pushed through the general introduction of the New Economic Mechanism (Hare, Radice, and Swain 1981). Whether or not one views the resulting decentralised structures as a form of 'market socialism', they gave most economic actors in Hungary more scope for autonomous decision-taking than was possible in the centrally planned economies of most other socialist states. This applied not only to the emerging professional agrarian elites of the collective and state farm sectors but also to the millions who were encouraged to produce commodities for the market on their household plots (*háztáji*). The full-time farmers of a region dominated by specialist cooperatives formed a distinctive category, because the greater degree of independence they enjoyed rendered them particularly well placed to benefit from economic liberalisation. They made a significant contribution to the strong overall performance of Hungarian agriculture, which was arguably more successful than any other variant of collectivisation in both economic and social terms (Swain 1985). Certainly the agricultural sector contributed significantly to exports, while well-provisioned domestic markets, including the alcohol market, were important elements in the 'social compromise' through which the Kádár regime was able to defuse virtually all political opposition. I suggest that, despite the unpromising circumstances in which he was placed in office in 1956, Kádár

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<sup>17</sup> In popular parlance the institution was still commonly known as a *t.sz.*—in other words it was not distinguished rhetorically from the dominant *kolkhoz* form of cooperative, though Tázlár farmers were well aware that the *szakszövetkezet* was in reality quite unlike a *termelőszövetkezet*.

had, by the mid-1970s, consolidated a high degree of political legitimacy. I shall return to this theme below.

By the time I began fieldwork in Tázlár in 1976, the positive results of these flexible arrangements were already conspicuous—for example, in the building of new houses and purchasing of new private cars. The Homokhátság epitomised both the efflorescence of the 'second economy' nationwide and the synthesis which was achieved between socialist ideology, emphasising collective ownership and large-scale methods, and traditional smallholder ideology, emphasising private ownership and the family labour force. This was most evident in the way in which large numbers of households raised pigs in sties in their yards and contracted to sell them through the *szakszövetkezet*. The cooperative also assisted in the provision of fodder, so that this type of production was open to households which had no access to land at all or lacked the labour resources to engage in farming.

In the 1970s it was still officially proclaimed that sooner or later the principles of the standard collective farm would be extended to villages like Tázlár. In particular, the area of cooperative land under collective cultivation was supposed to increase every year. For many years, however, the cooperative's 'socialist sector' could barely find a use for the large areas of poor-quality land on the geographical perimeter of the territory. Many such plots passed into the ownership of the cooperative itself (a category distinct from the land owned collectively by the members, the *részarányosok*) as villagers freely abandoned land they could not use.

Gradually the cooperative also began to consolidate plots which were still in use by the owners. Whenever this happened, the family affected was offered use rights over alternative plots elsewhere which were impractical to farm as part of a large-scale field. According to the prescribed regulations, the acreage offered in compensation was meant to be smaller than that appropriated. In practice, through generous allocations of *háztáji* and additional renting, households could obtain as much land as they wanted, and the legal rules setting out ownership were largely supplanted by the pragmatics of access.<sup>18</sup> This was a period of rapid industrialisation in which many families were moving away from the village altogether, and there was no shortage of land for those who wished to continue family farming. It was in the political and economic interests of the *szakszövetkezet* to encourage this perpetuation of the traditional peasant economy. For most villagers, the

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<sup>18</sup> A further distinct legal category in the case of the Tázlár cooperative was land held in trust from the state (previously state farm land). In addition to the two forms of cooperative ownership (land acquired by the cooperative as a corporation in its own right and *részarányos* land, which was the collective property of the members), the category of private ownership continued to enjoy formal recognition (notably vineyards).



question of ownership became increasingly irrelevant. What mattered was the opportunity to make money and finance improvements in living standards (new houses, cars, luxury goods, second homes, etc.).

Nonetheless, serious tensions arose during the period of my main fieldwork in 1976–1977. During those years a new, externally recruited cooperative leadership with a ‘technocratic’ orientation came under political pressure to bring Church Hill, a fertile area located conveniently close to the lower village centre, into collective cultivation. This upset many farming families greatly, but they could mount no effective resistance. The move rankled for years, but from the cooperative’s point of view it was successful. At last the cooperative’s socialist sector could operate with modern technology on large fields of relatively good quality; with the additional help of state subsidies for areas of unfavourable natural endowment, impressive economic performances were recorded by the *szakszövetkezet* in the last decade of socialism. The grain and hay produced in Tázlár in the socialist sector were partly exported and partly recycled in the community through dairy and pork production in the household sector.

These years witnessed a series of further changes with close bearing on what was to follow socialism. A new leadership team took office in the early 1980s; its members did not belong to the Communist Party and they enjoyed increasing freedom to work out more flexible and efficient managerial policies. They reduced staff numbers by making both blue-collar and white-collar workers redundant. Another step they took was to privatise most of the collective machine park. The cooperative’s existing tractor drivers became the private owners of their machines. They were required through contracts to be available to the collective sector when called upon, but otherwise they were free to offer their services privately to those farming on a household basis. Some Communist Party veterans regretted this dilution of ownership ideology, but most recognised that the move put an end to an endemic source of abuse whereby tractor drivers had routinely diverted cooperative resources to private ends. This change showed how pragmatic cooperative leadership was able to modify ideology in the interests of efficiency; privatisation of this sort was quite different from the ideologically driven privatisation which was to come later. Another innovation of the 1980s was the establishment of subsidiary enterprises devoted to the production of plastic bags and the leather uppers of shoes. These investments paid for themselves quickly and provided a much appreciated major source of employment for villagers, especially women. This sort of small-scale industrial initiative was common for agricultural cooperatives in the years following the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism.



## The Wine Sector in Late Socialism

Whereas those smallholders active in pig fattening and dairy production continued to rely upon traditional labour-intensive techniques, the vineyard sector experienced a partial technological revolution in the later socialist years. Previously, virtually all tasks were carried out by hand on small plots of low-level vines which left just enough room for the cultivator to pass between the rows. Many such vineyards were abandoned in the first decades of socialism, when new private planting was all but impossible. Now the experts recommended large-scale investments, with vines trained along wires at approximately shoulder height and the rows far enough apart to allow a tractor to pass between them, enabling the mechanisation or partial mechanisation of key tasks. State farms pioneered such vineyards in the 1960s, and from the mid-1970s onwards even specialist cooperatives were able to draw on state subsidies to plant in this way. Initially these vineyards were managed collectively by the *szakszövetkezet* but in the 1980s a new form of partnership with the rural household emerged (Hann 1993b). Labour-intensive tasks, notably harvesting, remained the responsibility of the latter, while the *szakszövetkezet* took care of chemical spraying.

This system proved popular (though not with those whose traditional plots were appropriated for the new plantation-style vineyards). In the partnership system, vines were held by individuals on 25-year leases. Any villager (it was not necessary to be a cooperative member) could contract a lease with the cooperative and thereby qualify for generous subsidies to finance the purchase. Most committed themselves to an area of between one-half and two and a half hectares. These vines were transferable for cash, but only within the village. A further accommodation to socialist ideology lay in the fact that the land itself remained under cooperative ownership (though title documents were still generally held by individuals).

These new large-scale vineyards played their part in enabling Tázlár villagers to reach their desired consumer targets in the final years of the socialist era. The work was demanding (partly because it was undertaken on top of numerous other activities, both first economy and second economy), but markets were stable, and villagers who decided to invest in vine leases had no reason to doubt the security of their investment.

The late socialist state was relatively lax in controlling the production and circulation of wine. Significant quantities produced in this region found their way by informal channels to illicit retail outlets in the capital and indeed all over the country. A simple technological innovation facilitated this process. By the end of the socialist period the glass *demizson* had been largely replaced by plastic bottles and containers (*kannák*). More elements of choice entered the market—for example, even those buying in bulk from

outlets in Budapest could express a preference for a cabernet from Szekszárd or a pinot noir from Villány (both traditional wine-producing regions of Transdanubia). But whether or not the grape was identified, wine from the Homokhátság generally remained cheaper than wine from other regions, and it dominated the 'volume' segment of the market. The cost of wine not classified as 'quality' remained low, thanks not only to the entrepreneurship of producers, both individuals and collective institutions, but also to the efficiency of informal distribution networks and low levels of taxation and enforcement by the state.<sup>19</sup>

In some areas of the Homokhátság farmers were able during the 1980s to build up substantial private holdings and thereby, especially if they were in a position to undertake all stages of production and marketing themselves, to establish exceptionally profitable businesses. Most producers, however, continued to sell their produce in the form of grapes to large enterprises in the socialist sector. These enterprises exported some of their product to other, better-known wine regions, where it was blended and re-labelled. The bulk of the final output of the Homokhátság was exported to other Eastern bloc countries, notably the Soviet Union, in accordance with formal agreements at the level of COMECON. Liddell emphasises the poor quality of this product.<sup>20</sup>

Significant amounts of sugar were routinely added to much if not most of the wine produced by smallholders on the Homokhátság. To boost volume and alcohol content in this way was standard practice in the traditional peasant economy, but it seems to have experienced a quantum leap in the 1970s. This too went largely uncontrolled by the state or by the collective enterprises which bought up the wine produced in the small-scale sector. Thus the expansion of wine production in this region brought prosperity to a previously poor and underdeveloped region, but this expansion had its downside in the low quality of the final product, as well as in the loss of local traditions of wine-making and the disappearance of several traditional varieties of grape.

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<sup>19</sup> Despite the technological innovations and the laxity of the authorities, wine consumption in Hungary declined in the last decades of socialism, particularly in relation to beer. Alex Liddell (2003: 17) reports that wine consumption per capita fell from 40 litres per annum in the early 1960s to 24 litres by the late 1980s. In the same period average beer consumption rose from 14 litres to over 100 litres. Given the vast extent of the informal sector, all official statistics for wine are unreliable, but the trend of these decades is nonetheless clear.

<sup>20</sup> 'What the Soviet market required was fortified, sweetened wine. ... it was not wine to be proud of, but it satisfied a market demand. When people talk about how bad the wine was that went to the east, this is generally the product they have in mind. It was quite different from wines supplied to other markets, including the domestic one.' (Liddell 2003: 18)

## Property, *Polgárosodás*, and Legitimacy under Socialism

Both facets of the concept of *polgárosodás*, embourgeoisement and citizenship, can be approached in terms of property. Late socialist Tázlár was a radically different community from that visited by Ferenc Erdei in the 1930s. Almost all inhabitants had experienced a kind of embourgeoisement, understood in broad terms as a modernising or civilising process. In most domains goods were held privately, as in neighbouring western European countries. Not only houses, cars, and a wide range of consumer goods but also an expanding range of goods in the production sector, including tractors and even combine harvesters, were held and transacted privately. In short, Erdei's embourgeoisement trajectory was made a reality by socialist policies which, at least according to the property ideology, had quite different political objectives.

There was no market, however, for the land itself. Although most villagers took advantage of the accumulation possibilities offered through the *szakszövetkezet*, many still resented the fact that their property rights over land had been diminished. Even if, in practice, they were able to gain access to as much land as they wished, those no longer able to cultivate the land which they identified as patrimony were likely to feel especially alienated from the cooperative.

Embourgeoisement related primarily to the private, exclusive side of property—to the objects owned by individuals and households. But it also had its public, inclusive side in the form of improvements to the collective infrastructure and the rights extended to all socialist citizens. Many public goods became available as citizens' entitlements in this period. A population which had previously experienced a high degree of exclusion came to enjoy a wide range of off-farm employment opportunities, much improved educational and health services, and eventually the extension of an effective pension system to embrace even those farmers who preferred to continue working independently.

In this sense the *szakszövetkezet* can be seen as an indeterminate third sector, exemplifying the ambiguities of market socialism. For some, the cooperative was by definition an alien, socialist imposition. Perhaps only a handful of members identified it with the 'commonwealth', with the collective or public good of the community. The majority perceived it more as a necessary evil. Yet villagers generally approved of the cooperative's policies in the 1980s, such as the privatisation of the machine park and the establishment of new large vineyards in partnership with the household sector. Much the same argument can be applied to the government of this period. Improved incomes, consumption and social security were the solid basis on which Kádár's Communist Party could claim legitimacy among the entire



population. This acceptance was based on pragmatic policies to stimulate production rather than on respect for democracy and legal norms. The old norms pertaining to private property rights in land had been flouted with collectivisation, and many could not forget or forgive this intervention, even in the soft form which it had taken in Tázlár. On the other hand, for a whole new generation the traditions of full-time family farming and the high value placed on the ownership of land had largely lost their meaning.

### **Postsocialist Privatisation: The Demise of the Cooperative**

In the remainder of this chapter I consider postsocialist developments, beginning with the transformation of the cooperative, then proceeding to look more carefully at how land was redistributed and at the wine sector, where I compare Tázlár with the larger and much more successful community of Soltvadkert, its western neighbour. Finally, drawing on my recent fieldwork in Tázlár's upper hamlet, I consider how villagers themselves, more than a decade after the demise of socialism, reflect on changes in their 'property bundle' and on the mechanisms associated with these changes.

The end of one-party rule in Hungary in 1989–1990 initiated radical changes. Privatisation was the dominant trend: the new neoliberal economic ideology appeared compatible with the aspirations of those determined to reassert their ownership of land, even though their aspirations were based on populist traditions of identification with the soil rather than on a rational economic calculation of its value (Hann 1993a). The leaders of the *szak-szövetkezet* acknowledged the strength of these sentiments when they decided in 1990 to take no action to counter villagers' spontaneous occupation of the fertile land at Church Hill, on the edge of the village, which had been taken into collective cultivation in the 1970s.

Indeed, the cooperative leaders soon decided to withdraw entirely from agricultural production. This was a rational decision because, with the withdrawal of state subsidies for areas of poor soil endowment, it was obvious that even large-scale, mechanised agricultural production could hardly remain profitable on the Homokhátság. Several flocks of sheep were retained but contracted out to individuals, and the Peace cooperative continued to provide services for its members in the marketing of pigs, dairy products, grapes, and wine. However, by general agreement, the only profitable sectors in the 1990s were the ancillary units; the income they earned supported the central office staff (12 persons in 2001, out of 89 employees in total).

Many cooperative farming institutions in Hungary, including socialist cooperatives, were completely dissolved during or soon after the convulsions of 1989–1990. This option was not seriously debated in Tázlár, not only because the cooperative's supporting services to members were appre-

ciated but also because the two ancillary small enterprises were evidently profitable. The classification *szakszövetkezet* was abolished and, like other cooperatives, the Peace cooperative in Tázlár was obliged to devise and implement a formula to distribute collective assets to its membership. This process, known as *vagyon nevesítés*, was long drawn out. Shares (*vagyonjegyek*) were allocated according to a formula based on three principles: the value of resources (land, equipment, etc.) contributed to the cooperative at its foundation; the value of produce sold through the cooperative in succeeding years; and the total value of wages and salaries earned from the cooperative. All members, irrespective of these criteria, received a minimal allocation of shares. The distribution of cooperative assets (among some 800 members, plus an even larger number of non-resident asset holders, mostly the heirs of founding members) was, however, highly unequal. In the retrospective opinion of most villagers, the weighting given to salaries was excessive. The result was that the leaders became the major 'shareholders'.

Following the completion of this *nevesítés* in 1992, a first auction of cooperative property was held (not including land, which I discuss later). Some people used their new shares to acquire goods, which they either kept or sold on. If one disposed of all one's shares in this way, or if one sold or transferred them, then one ceased to be a member of the cooperative.

The succeeding years saw continuous speculation and controversy over the real value of these pieces of paper and the policies of the leadership. By 2001 the number of members had fallen by about half, and it was clear that the chairman wanted to see it decline even further. His argument was that only a smaller body, in which decision-taking power was tied to the value of assets held, would be capable of making strategic investments for the next generation. He therefore initiated a policy to buy up the shares of those wishing to sell; the going rate offered in 2001 was 50% of the shares' face value—much higher than they had been trading for in the recent past, but low in terms of their 1990 value, especially when a decade of high inflation was added to the reckoning. These shares were then written off in the cooperative's accounts. Given the low profitability of most cooperative activities in recent years, it was necessary to sell assets in order to finance this policy. The total value of cooperative assets declined from 117 million Forints in 1990 to 96 million Forints in 2001. At the same time, it was widely known that the chairman and other leaders were purchasing shares as individuals, to add to their own holdings. Rumours abounded as to who owned how many shares.

These policies were criticised by the village mayor, who pointed out that the two senior leaders of the cooperative both lived in neighbouring Soltvadkert, so that a lot of community wealth had left Tázlár since the pair

took over in the early 1980s. However, the mayor felt unable to intervene so long as the cooperative remained, with its two small factories, the largest employer in the community.<sup>21</sup> Among the majority of members, the very survival of the institution was somehow enough to earn the chairman at least grudging respect. Disaffection—for example, over cutbacks in the services provided to small-scale farmers, over the selling off of assets, and over the high salaries earned by the top officials—tended to be focused on his deputy, whose personal style was quite different.

It was generally acknowledged in the village that the survival of the cooperative throughout the 1990s, when it was no longer engaged in any collective agricultural activities and the income to be gained from providing services to private farmers was being continuously squeezed, was due almost entirely to the profits earned in the ancillary establishments, especially the plastics factory. This did not escape the notice of those who worked there, who felt that they were in effect paying for a large and unproductive cooperative staff. The three long-serving leaders of the factory coalesced to form a faction, allied with the mayor and opposed to the two senior leaders. After several years of declining income, in which the cooperative kept itself going by selling off real estate and other assets, the factory staff helped to bring about the downfall of the central leadership at the annual general meeting in 2003. The two senior leaders brought forward a plan to convert the cooperative into a private company, but the membership rejected it. The appointments of the two leaders were not renewed, and one of the managers of the plastics factory was appointed chairman, with a mandate to have all remaining assets valued and sold off most remaining assets were rapidly sold. For a payment of approximately 64,000 Euros the three factory managers became owners of their plant, the building, and the land on which it stood. This was the crucial step in a process of privatisation which had been concluded some years earlier as far as the land was concerned.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The mayor (Endre Kószó, b. 1962) has held office since 1994. He belongs to no political party but, as the scion of an established middle peasant family, is strongly supported by the Independent Smallholders. He has himself built up a profitable small farm based on vineyards.

<sup>22</sup> At the time of writing in early 2005, this ownership remained *de facto*. Although the trio of managers had paid over the money stipulated to the cooperative in its final phase of liquidation, formal registration of the change in ownership had been delayed due to legal action by one of the officials ousted at the general meeting in 2003. Numerous staff were made redundant (but given the compensation payments considered appropriate). Although the market was highly competitive, the obstruction caused by legal action did not hinder practical operations. Nor did the protracted legal shenanigans have any bearing on popular perceptions of the change of ownership. The change of ownership was rather more than *de facto* in the sense that it enjoyed moral recognition in the community: even if not yet fully sanctioned in law, it was legitimate in the eyes of local people.





Plate 7. The recently privatised plastics factory (formerly a schoolhouse).

## Land Distribution and Land Use

The cooperative's *vagyonjegyek*, those mysterious pieces of paper indicating a sum in Forints but of uncertain value, were not the only new property object to appear in Tázlár in the early 1990s. Distribution of the cooperative's assets was followed by distribution of land, again with the aid of a complex mechanism which created a novel currency. Unlike the authorities in neighbouring Romania, the Hungarian authorities decided against a simple restitution of the pre-socialist pattern of landownership. They recognised that to attempt to give back to original owners the precise plots they had held two generations earlier would lead to too many irrationalities. The right-wing government of the early 1990s did, however, attach great weight to the principle of compensating all victims of socialist oppression—not only those whose land had been confiscated but also those who had lost equipment or buildings or had suffered political repression after 1956 or at Soviet hands during and after the Second World War. Large numbers of people, including many villagers in Tázlár, received 'compensation vouchers' (*kárpótlási jegyek*), which they could use to acquire a wide range of assets, including land, and which could also be sold for cash.

More important as far as land was concerned was the allocation of 'gold crowns' to former owners. The gold crown (*arany korona*) was the

unit devised by the cadastral surveyors of the late Habsburg period to measure the quality of agricultural land. Most areas of Tázlár were well below the national average, but there were some patches of arable land of reasonable quality, notably Church Hill on the western edge of the lower hamlet. By painstaking reference back to the old records, it was possible to make an allocation of gold crowns to individuals, including a large number of persons who no longer lived in the village but were the heirs of previous owners. These, too, could be transacted, though (unlike the compensation vouchers) not to persons resident outside the village.

Implementation was devolved to local committees, whose decisions could theoretically be appealed through the courts. The most important committee was called the Land Reorganisation Committee (*Földrendező Bizottság*). In Tázlár it was chaired by Vince Kovács, a former cooperative tractor driver, a village councillor but not a member of the Communist Party. The committee had a membership in double figures, though after the initial meetings in 1992 it became increasingly difficult to convene a quorum. The chair, who worked with a full-time secretarial assistant at the local council offices, received only token material remuneration, and it was physically impossible for him to consult widely in every case. By 2001, when the reallocation was virtually complete (just a few cases were awaiting resolution in the courts), he was being singled out personally for blame by the many who felt disappointed or cheated.

The first step was to resolve which parts of the village would be allocated according to which principle. A separate committee was responsible for 'auctioning' land on the periphery which locals did not particularly want; the main committee did its best to ensure that the scarce land wanted by local people would fall within the sphere of the gold crown currency. Nonetheless, the village was required to make a certain proportion of its territory available through auction, and this was a major issue for people who wanted to obtain this land—for example, because it was adjacent to their *tanya*—but who held the wrong currency. They could in theory exchange their gold crowns for Forints or compensation vouchers and then take part in the auction, but in practice this was far from straightforward; at least one farmer was angry because he was out-bid for land which had historically belonged to his family—and by a sheep farmer who did not even live in the village.

Auctions did not play a big role in Tázlár overall. Instead, those wanting to become landowners were invited to submit their claims by March 1993 in the form of an interest in a particular section as delineated on a relatively crude (i.e. large-scale) land map. The committee then made allocations. In many cases it was possible to grant exactly what the applicant

requested.<sup>23</sup> In others the claims exceeded the land available in that section, and the committee had to take awkward decisions. Their guiding principle was to respect claims based on former ownership. In certain circumstances, however, this could be overridden. The national legislation, the purpose of which from the outset was to support a model of family farming, stipulated that priority be given to the claims of *tanya* residents, even if the land surrounding the *tanya* was also claimed by an original owner. Since many *tanyák* had changed owners over the decades, this was an important point. Less readily accepted by former owners was the principle that land might be permanently allocated to other villagers who happened to have been *using* it for some time, usually because it had been allocated to them by the cooperative.

Many problems arose in the years 1993–1996 as the committee went about its work (see also Hann 1996f). The most contentious area was Church Hill, where 72 claims were filed for an area of only 130 hectares. Despite the flat and mostly featureless character of the landscape, most villagers claimed to be able to specify precisely where their former boundaries lay. Yet in the course of the new allocation, measurements by Land Office officials often diverged from the villagers' expectations, and there was much confusion in the final phase of implementation. Thus, when the measurements were completed, István Gulyás, a resident of the village centre who had farmed in this section for decades before 1976, exploded with anger. He was not being offered *his* land back (the plot in question had in fact been inherited by his wife, but this was irrelevant; she played no part in the conflict which followed). A large chunk of *his* land, on which he had spread organic fertiliser every year since 1990 in order to make good the damage done by years of socialist use—when only chemical fertilisers were used—was now being transferred to Jenő Lázár, a farmer of the same age who lived in a farmstead abutting the plots in question. The two accosted each other: István accused Jenő of infringing the honour (*becsület*) of his family.

It is relevant to note that these two men had followed very different paths under socialism. Jenő had served for many years as a cooperative chairman, while István had preferred to avoid such positions. On the other hand, István had been a leading figure in the organisation of the local Roman Catholic parish, whereas Jenő was never seen in church. The antagonism

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<sup>23</sup> The case of Ferenc Gregus, mentioned earlier, is typical. In 2001 he and his wife were farming approximately 10 hectares of reprivatised land using traditional techniques (e.g. ploughing with a horse and not a tractor). When his strength failed him in harvesting his potatoes and grain, he called in other villagers to help, in return for a share of the crop. His eldest son, a lawyer in a nearby town, had arranged for ownership of the land to be transferred pre mortem to himself and two siblings. All these children had built successful careers outside the village, so there was no prospect of a successor to this 'family farm'.



between them culminated when István made a derogatory reference to Jenő's family background: he had inherited the farm in question only because he, of poor peasant origin, had been adopted by the original owning family, who had no sons. István insinuated that Jenő had no moral right to own land in that area: "You're not really a Lázár at all!" The land boundaries remained where the surveyors had demarcated them, and the two men never spoke to each other again.<sup>24</sup> Other cases were taken to court. The general effect of the redistribution was to set neighbour against neighbour and even kin against kin.<sup>25</sup>

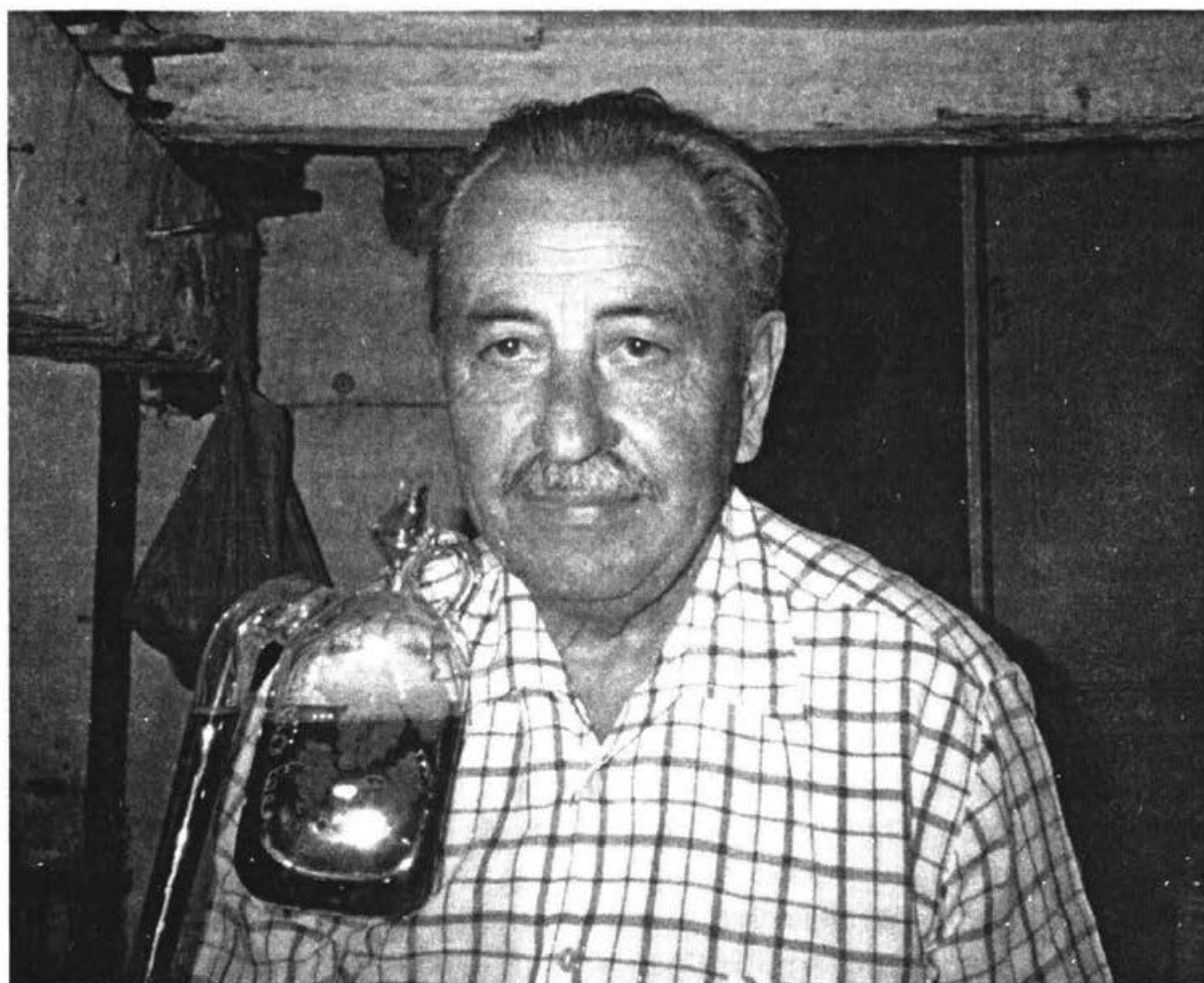


Plate 8. István Gulyás (2001).

<sup>24</sup> István remained resentful that Jenő did not even reimburse him for the outlay he had made since 1990 to improve the land by spreading dung.

<sup>25</sup> In addition to reviving old class and status differences, in some locations the process opened up ethnic tensions. In his examination of the former Swabian German (*sváb*) village of Hajós, located close to the Danube in the same country as Tázlár, Thomas Schneider (2001) referred to *Entsolidarisierung*, a dissolution of community solidarity. Elsewhere, however, informal deals were done and land seems to have been distributed through a high degree of local consensus (Thelen 2003). We do not yet have an overall view.



Plate 9. Vince Kovács (2001).

Many villagers felt strong resentment towards the members of the Reorganisation Committee, whom they accused of taking advantage of the complexity of the procedures to benefit themselves and their kin. Vince Kovács, the committee chair, was able to obtain the land he wanted, close to the family *tanya* and to build up a dairy farm of above average size. It was also suggested that he had favoured his former mates in the cooperative and those who offered him gifts (or bribes), allegations that he strenuously denied.

A major source of discontent for many was the fact that cooperative officials who had no 'historic' claim to Tázlár land, because they originated outside the community, nonetheless became landowners following this postsocialist redistribution.<sup>26</sup> This was possible because, despite exhaustive attempts to trace the heirs of former owners, the value of the gold crowns to be distributed exceeded that of the historic entitlements. In these circum-

<sup>26</sup> As with members of the Reorganisation Committee, this was often explained with the idiom that the officials were 'close to the fire' (*aki a tűzhöz közel van*). Ordinary villagers complained repeatedly in these years about inadequate information—for example, concerning the holding of land auctions and about the exact parcels of land for which they might 'stake their gold crowns'.

stances the legislation provided for a supplementary allocation of gold crowns (*juttatott arany korona*) determined by the value of one's share in the assets of the cooperative following the *nevesítés* process. Thus the cooperative chairman and other leading officials obtained gold crowns, which they were free to deploy in the same way as everyone else in the land claims process. Even if these persons were cautious enough not to enter claims for zones where it was known that former owners—or others with a better moral claim, such as nearby residence—wished to (re)establish property rights, the fact that several emerged as major landowners gave rise to much critical comment and accusations of 'insider' arrangements with the committee.

The radical changes which have taken place in landownership in Tázlár have been accompanied by radical changes in land use. The dramatic deterioration in market conditions which set in after 1990 has continued to affect most branches of agriculture to the present day. Many villagers recall bitterly that they were unable to sell their pigs in the early 1990s; the new market mechanisms failed to provide the secure outlet which, under socialism, the cooperative had been able to guarantee to all villagers (including non-members). No precise statistics are available, but there can be no doubt that the production of pork and milk, the main commodities of this village apart from grapes and wine, has fallen significantly, probably by more than the 40% overall decline in Hungary's agricultural output in the first post-socialist decade. The change has been most dramatic in the zone of Church Hill, which was brought into collective, large-scale cultivation in the 1970s. The rationality of what the socialists did there can be questioned, because even on this land, the best to be found in Tázlár, yields were low compared with those in more fertile regions elsewhere, while fertiliser investments subsidised were heavy and possibly unsustainable. Comparing those results with the situation today, however, when this land is once again being farmed as a patchwork and many plots are neglected altogether, even people most loyal to the ideology of the smallholders concede that the larger fields made more sense; they were rational and 'progressive'.

No grain is exported from Tázlár nowadays, and the few villagers who raise pigs on a significant scale rely on cheap supplies imported from Transdanubia. Most of what is grown in Tázlár goes into animal products which are either consumed by their producers or sold in small quantities to supplement other, more significant sources of household income. Although the village machine park has continued to grow in the era of private ownership, the number of households approximating the government's preferred type of modern 'family farmer' remains tiny.<sup>27</sup> Only 24 persons out of 578 regis-

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<sup>27</sup> After a decade of 'transition', in 2001 the government of Viktor Orbán drew up proposals to create a new class of viable capitalist family farmers, capable of competing in the European



tered producers farm a surface greater than 20 hectares. Given the poor soil quality, most of these are dependent on additional, non-farm sources of income. The correspondence between the new patterns of ownership and land use is very imperfect. Many owners rent their land to others, often for small sums or nothing at all, because they are too old to work it themselves or are otherwise hindered.

As in the socialist period, under prevailing conditions in Tázlár it remains relatively easy to gain *access* to land. But this access is less valued now, because the cost of inputs has soared and the resulting income streams have declined. The kudos of being a landowner is still a significant factor for some (e.g. in the forestry sector, where new planting has been generously subsidised); but postsocialism has on the whole brought disenchantment. Most people have some awareness of the deterioration in the agricultural sector as a whole. They do not see the change in property relations as *the* cause of falling production and, in turn, of a further range of negative social consequences. However, at least some villagers who had previously argued for the economic virtues of a return to private landownership came, within a few years of its implementation, to associate it strongly with productive inefficiency (they might still, however, cite moral grounds for supporting the change).

I tried to consider the 'kulak continuity' thesis during my visits to Tázlár in postsocialist years (see Szelényi 1988; Thelen 2003). To what extent are the successful farmers and non-farming entrepreneurs of today the descendants of those whose 'embourgeoisement trajectory' was interrupted by the brutality of the 1950s? The evidence I gathered in 2001 did not permit a clear answer, because there were too few success stories in my survey. It is also probably the case that disproportionate numbers of both ex-kulaks and the former poor and landless have left the village for urban destinations. A few local people have had remarkable business careers, but it is clear that some of them owe nothing to the persistence of 'kulak values'. Two of the wealthiest individuals are the sons of market traders and of poor sheep farmers, respectively. Perhaps because of these conspicuous cases, most people, when I raised the issue, indignantly denied any link between descent and business success in contemporary postsocialist society.

It is no less difficult in Tázlár, given small numbers, to verify a competing sociological hypothesis, namely that the former socialist elites have succeeded in 'converting' their power. Certainly the cooperative leaders discussed above have successfully consolidated their private enterprises, based in the neighbouring community; but, as noted above, they failed in

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market. Reports of such proposals in the press were criticised by villagers on the grounds that they would discriminate against 90% or more of the current farming population.

their attempt in 2003 to convert the cooperative into a limited company. No members of the former Communist Party (rechristened the Socialist Party in 1990) have attempted a career in business: most left the Party by the end of 1989, and were relieved that they could hold on to their jobs, e.g. at the local council offices or the village school. However, what Hungarians call the 'system change' had one prominent victim in Tázlár: Sándor Dúl (b. 1944), the local secretary of the Communist Party, was a qualified agronomist, who before assuming his political post on a full-time basis had worked for the cooperative as its chief household liaison *agronomist* (*háztáji agrónómus*). Despite demonstrating his organisational skills in the management of one of the cooperative's ancillary factories, he was deemed surplus to requirements in the cooperative's restructuring in the early 1990s. Sándor was successful in claiming land, but, without any regular source of income apart from the family allowances payable to his five children, he and his family have struggled under postsocialism. Similar fates have befallen numerous other households due to the contraction of the cooperative and the closure of local factories. What made Sándor's case special, as everyone recognised, was the fact that he moved almost overnight from being one of the most influential voices in the community to being one of the poorest. He has remained an active member of the Socialist Party; though wielding no political influence in recent years and criticised by some, he is not short of friends and admirers (especially in the upper hamlet—see below, n. 36).



Plate 10. Sándor Dúl and members of his family, sharecropping potatoes on the land of Ferenc Gregus (2001).



Plate 11. Ferenc Hadfi (right) and his employee, László Csapi (2004).

The only male descendant of my kulak landlady is one of Tázlár's most successful businessmen (see chapter 1). The origins of Ferenc Hadfi's dynamic career lay far back in the early 1970s, when he acquired his first private tractor. A few years later he purchased a combine-harvester and was competing successfully with the socialist cooperative in providing mechanised services to the majority of farmers who lacked any heavy equipment of their own. In the early postsocialist years he opened the first private petrol station in the village. In 1995 he bought up a road haulage firm, and this has taken up most of his energies in recent years. A daughter helps him out with the paperwork, and he has several drivers in his team. Ferenc also has a long-term relationship with a slightly younger, unmarried man who lives in the same street and is the descendant of a poor peasant family. In pre-socialist days László Csapi would perhaps have worked as a *cseléd*. In postsocialist conditions he helps out by doing odd jobs and looking after the boss' estate whenever Ferenc needs to make a trip. László is officially employed by Ferenc's company, which must make substantial payments for insurance and the state pension fund.



Not all workers in László's position have such formal recognition: the black market thrives in the new small-scale businesses as it does in agriculture. It is not restricted to migrant labour from Transylvania: numerous local people also work without papers, even though the lack of insurance can make medical needs highly problematic. These who employ labour in this way may still use the traditional paternalist language of care and reciprocity, and excuse their breach of the law by saying that if they had to pay the additional costs of their labour force, they would quickly go out of business. Unfortunately, the local job market is not so buoyant that workers can afford to question this.

### The Postsocialist Wine Crisis

As I noted, vineyards and the wine business played an important role in the rural economy in the pre-socialist period. Given the ecological conditions of the Homokhátság, which are unfavourable to arable farming, some observers expected the wine sector to become pre-eminent when subsidies were withdrawn from other branches of production. In fact the developments in this sector have been similarly problematic. In Tázlár as elsewhere, the large-scale vineyards established in the late socialist era generated major complications during privatisation. The vines already had private owners, but what was to happen to the land? Like all other cooperative land, whether *részarányos* or the property of the corporation itself, vineyard land was slated for reallocation to private owners. The Reorganisation Committee in Tázlár decided that the claims of former owners should have precedence. The consequence was that the new private landowners could demand rent from the vine owners, usually a stipulated quantity of grapes. By no means all vine owners in the large plantations, however, had to pay such rents. Some were able to become owners of the soil as well as the vines. Others decided they did not want to own the soil but still managed to avoid rental liability. This was possible because much vineyard territory, like other land, was not claimed at all. Years into the process of reallocation, many 'owners' of gold crowns had taken no steps to map their allocation onto the physical resource.<sup>28</sup>

To deal with this situation, in a final bureaucratic flourish, under the instructions of the Land Office, the chairman of the Reorganisation Committee (in practice, his secretarial assistant) allocated the unclaimed parcels of land to the outstanding holders of gold crowns. These 'owners' did not,

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<sup>28</sup> These were mostly the children and grandchildren of former owners; they included emigrants to North America and many other people who had never set foot in Tázlár in their lives.

except in unusual cases, obtain exclusive ownership to a defined plot, but a *share* in a numbered zone. They were given no detailed information about where their land was situated or even the names of their co-owners, let alone information about how to contact them. But without the written agreement of all such co-owners, it was impossible to create any rental contract with an owner of vines located on this land. This was a source of amused satisfaction for some vine owners but of bewildered resentment for others, who had made precisely the same investment in their vines and now found themselves having to hand over a proportion of their harvest to the new owners of the soil.

The 'socialist wine bubble', which brought previously unknown wealth to much of the population of the Homokhátság in the 1970s and 1980s, burst quickly in the early 1990s. The loss of eastern markets and the rapid privatisation of almost all socialist institutions led to dramatic dislocation. Many producers could no longer dispose of their product, and many vineyards consequently went out of production. These included not only the smallholdings of individuals but also relatively young large-scale vineyards of collective and state farms, many of which collapsed into bankruptcy before they could metamorphose into some new private form, or soon after this change. The formidable problems of organisational structure and of product quality have been comprehensively discussed by Liddell (2003), who nonetheless remains optimistic that the country's classical wine regions can recover from the damage done to them under socialism. He describes the dedication of many new entrepreneurs in the sector, well-targeted investments from abroad, and widespread interest in reviving tradition and promoting quality through wine competitions. On the negative side, he notes the 'baleful influence ... of the Hungarian palate. Wine tastes are generally not at all sophisticated, and much wine is simply a vehicle for the alcohol it contains, as the small, rather dumpy glass usually used for drinking and tasting (filled to the brim) rather suggests' (2003: 48).

Another major problem to affect the Homokhátság in these years was the use of chemicals to produce 'false wine', or, as it is commonly described in the region, 'wine which has never seen a grape' (see also chapter 5). Faced with such problems, most observers have recognised the necessity for more effective state controls over both the production and circulation of wine. This was eventually accomplished with a law passed in 2000. Although implemented by a right-wing government heavily dependent on rural voters, this law was very unpopular. The goal was to penetrate further than any previous regime into the internal economy of the rural household, in order to be able to increase fiscal revenue and reduce the scale of activity in the informal sector. Many farmers, however, declared that they would aban-

don production rather than attempt to implement regulations requiring them to account for every litre of their output. Although depressed market conditions and a shortage of family labour were doubtless the prime factors, the requirements of the new law probably hastened the decision of many small-scale producers to cut back their winemaking or even abandon their vineyards altogether.

On top of all these difficulties, it was generally anticipated that Hungary's admission to the European Union in 2004 would increase the competitive threat posed by cheap producers elsewhere. New planting has already been prohibited for several years, but it is too early to assess the long-run consequences of accession. Some of the new entrepreneurs in the sector take the view that banding together to produce a more standardised product is the only way to survive in the new international arena. But many older producers still have such negative recollections of the collective institutions imposed upon them under socialism (even in the Homokhátság, where the looser variant of the specialist cooperative was dominant) that they want nothing to do with any new form of cooperative.<sup>29</sup>

The Hungarian wine industry is trying to respond to the new challenges by promoting its famous brand names from the past and issuing blanket condemnations of everything which was done during four decades of socialism. Producers are now once again organised in local-level associations (known by the traditional name of *hegyközség*, literally 'hill community'). Even the small-scale producers of the Homokhátság are actively encouraged to develop a range of more refined products, in order to be able to market wine to a more discriminating middle-class public (Benyák and Dékány 2003). In fact relatively few villagers of this region today depend primarily on viticulture, and even among those who do, few are in a position to adopt innovative entrepreneurial strategies. For the majority, the money received from selling grapes (seldom wine) remains only a supplement, albeit an important one, to other, more stable sources of income.

On the consumption side, sceptics may question the existence of this new middle-class public in Hungary. Even if such a class exists and continues to grow, it is unlikely to be interested in the wines of a region which, most experts agree, can never realistically expect to compete in terms of quality with the traditional Hungarian wine regions.<sup>30</sup> The probable outcome

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<sup>29</sup> During a brief visit to Tázlár in summer 2005 I heard several villagers express the expectation that the EU would shortly address the problems of the wine sector by offering financial incentives to abandon older vineyards.

<sup>30</sup> The experts also argue that the wines of the Homokhátság can be improved significantly through better processing technologies. However, these are expensive. Even if the resulting wine is 'objectively' of equivalent or better quality than much of what is produced in the hill



is a continuation of the dualist structure which took shape under socialism. A few successful entrepreneurs will come to substitute for the former state monopoly in low-quality, bulk-produced wine for both domestic and foreign markets. They will organise all aspects of their own production on a large scale, utilising machines whenever possible but inevitably depending also on large amounts of casual labour, much of which has been provided in recent years by illegal temporary immigrants. These producers will also acquire grapes and wine from small-scale growers, who will continue to rely on more labour-intensive methods; much of this labour will continue to be recruited through the family and through mutual aid, as in the traditional peasant economy. Meanwhile, many thousands of small-scale producers for whom this source of income was a key element in their embourgeoisement under socialism will gradually abandon their vineyards; some villagers, but also urbanites, are returning to the peasant tradition of producing wine in very small quantities, primarily for their own consumption.

This analysis is widely echoed by elites and those inside Hungary concerned with wine promotion. Zoltán Benyák and Tibor Dékány bemoan the way socialists 'equalised' the conditions for wine production throughout the country, thereby destroying traditions and promoting 'the soulless production of cheap mass wines' (2003: 50). They allege further that the destruction of the traditional local producers' associations and the attempt to replace them with central controls had the effect of stimulating the manufacture of fake wine. The implication is that the re-establishment of the local 'hill communities' and the effects of a new 'wine revolution', based on quality rather than quantity, will solve the problem; but the authors present no evidence to support this expectation and fail to explain why the problems appear to have continued to increase in recent years.

Such prognoses overlook the possibility that embourgeoisement may not be as advanced as supposed, at least not when it comes to 'baleful' Hungarian palates. In Budapest today the range of bottled 'quality wines' available at retail outlets has increased in comparison with socialist times, but it is unremarkable. One reason is that so many consumers in the capital have informal links to producers, however distant and indirect. For those who do not, there remain plenty of wine bars, which are not wine bars at all in the contemporary Western sense but rather 'drinking dens of a rather basic kind' (Liddell 2003: 48). The plastic *kanna*, which enables one to purchase 5 or 10 litres at a time for home consumption, remains ubiquitous. Indeed, there must be plenty of people who have responded to the general economic pressures of postsocialism by buying more wine in this form than they used

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regions, wine markets are nowhere shaped by objective factors alone. It is hard to see how the image of Homokhátság wines can be repaired after the damage done by the recent scandals.

to—in other words, this product fits well with many people's survival strategies, and so the short-term trend, for many, is the opposite of discriminating embourgeoisement.

If the authorities were to recognise the factors which shaped the market for wine historically, they would have to acknowledge the continuing demand for the most basic, 'volume' product and try to resist EU pressures to eliminate its production through quality controls and taxation measures. Many producers in Tázlár and Soltvadkert are convinced that, with just a little more state support, their low labour costs should make them competitive at all levels of international wine markets. In any case, at least on the domestic market the postsocialist authorities have not yet succeeded in completely eliminating one of the country's traditional products—the cheap mass wine (*tömegbor*) which originated in the peasant economy and which was successfully developed on the Homokhátság thanks to flexible collectivisation.

### **Tázlár and Soltvadkert Compared**

To document these trends at the village level it is insufficient to consider Tázlár alone, where only one wine entrepreneur has expanded his acreage and invested significantly in modern processing facilities. It is no accident that László Szilberhorn is a recent arrival from Soltvadkert, 10 kilometres to the west. He bought a *tanya* close to the lower village centre and built a modern cellar, complete with bottling facilities. Within a few years, through purchasing former state farm vineyards and significant new planting, he established a productive holding of 13 hectares. The quality of his wines has been recognised through numerous prizes in regional competitions. This has not helped him much, however, in disposing of his output; like most other producers in the village, he is critical of the lack of government support and apprehensive about the consequences of EU accession.

László is the exception. In Tázlár the production of grapes and wine was consolidated in the socialist period as an important auxiliary source of family income, but it was seldom dominant. The loose structures of the *szakszövetkezet* and the relative abundance of land allowed for a lot of continuity with traditional patterns of mixed farming, and no one invested in modern cellars and bottling technologies in order to specialise in wine in an entrepreneurial way. Small-scale vineyards could be bought and sold as well as inherited, since they constituted private property which did not pass to the cooperative; but the death of an owner often signified the end of a vineyard's production, especially when the heirs did not reside locally. Producers continued to use simple, old processing facilities if any were available, and if they were not, then they sold their produce in the form of grapes. Sales were

overwhelmingly channeled through the cooperative. The producers dealt with the distinctive labour demands of the vineyards in traditional ways—that is, through mutual aid based upon networks of kinship, neighbourhood, and friendship.

In the postsocialist years new problems have arisen as a result of the withdrawal of the cooperative from its coordinating role in the large-scale vineyards. Villagers commonly pointed out that failure to spray one's vines at the right moment could easily increase the infection threat to one's neighbour's crop, but no one had a solution to ensure effective collective action.<sup>31</sup> In addition, there have been grave problems in disposing of the harvest, and prices have fallen to derisory levels. The complicated accounting regulations introduced by the new law of 2000 were for some individuals the final straw, leading them to sell or (more commonly) to abandon their vineyards.

The case of neighbouring Soltvadkert is very different. Officially a 'large community' (*nagyközség*) at the time of my first fieldwork, it was reclassified in 1993 as a town. Tázlár has experienced continuous population decline since the beginning of the socialist period, and the figure has recently dipped below 2,000. Soltvadkert, too, experienced decline in the first decades of socialism, but during the 1970s the figure stabilised at around 7,500, and by the turn of the century it had risen to almost 8,000 inhabitants. The number is significantly higher in the summer months, not only due to the influx of migrant labourers for work in the vineyards but also due to tourism. Foreigners form a high proportion of those who visit the Büdös Tó (a nearby lake with a large camp site as well as a colony of privately owned holiday homes) and who patronise the town's ice-cream parlour, which enjoys a national reputation.

No figures are available for grape and wine production at the community level, but there can be little doubt that vineyard acreage and output have declined in both communities in recent years.<sup>32</sup> In Soltvadkert, however, wine continues to dominate the agricultural economy. It provides the main source of income for numerous family businesses, and the prosperity built up in earlier decades through specialisation in this branch has helped others to diversify successfully (Schwarcz 2002, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Unlike others, László Szilberhorn favours the establishment of new, voluntary cooperatives in this sector, in order to maintain quality and thereby attract buyers.

<sup>32</sup> In Soltvadkert in 2000, vineyards constituted 2,598 hectares of a total agricultural area of 5,886 hectares (Schwarcz 2003: 125 n. 16). The corresponding figures for Tázlár in 2001 were 351 and 3,740. Liddell gives a higher figure of 3,164 hectares for Soltvadkert and notes that its wine community and that of its larger neighbour Kiskőrös were the two largest in the country, Soltvadkert alone producing more than 20% of the country's entire wine output; yet only eight Soltvadkert producers bottled their own wine (Liddell 2003: 173–174).





Plate 12. A *tanya* cellar of the most rudimentary type.



Plate 13. Inside a more typical traditional *tanya* cellar (Imre Modok Jr., 2001).



Plate 14. László Szilberhorn (2001).



Plate 15. The modern cellars of the Szilberhorn enterprise.

Whereas I remain the only social scientist who has worked intensively in Tázlár, the path followed by Soltvadkert in recent decades has been so striking that it has attracted the attention of numerous Hungarian scholars (Fertő et al. 1990; Módra and Simó 1988; Schwarcz 2002, 2003). I remember that the contrast with Tázlár was becoming visible and the subject of local comment when I began my fieldwork. In 1976 Tázlár could boast just one two-storey house, while in Soltvadkert a whole street of such private homes was under construction—including villas which would have been reckoned luxurious almost anywhere in the world. When a private house of three storeys was erected on the main street, some locals speculated that this was surely too great a provocation to the socialist authorities, who would insist on modifications to the design. But they did not.

The prime source of Soltvadkert's wealth lay in its vineyards. Because the climate, soils, and basic product quality were hardly any different from those of neighbouring communities, the explanation has to be sought elsewhere. One common theory 'on the ground' is that Soltvadkert owes its success to the German (*sváb*) values of the dominant population group. Soltvadkert was resettled a century earlier than Tázlár, and the *svábok* formed the core of a community which was more coherent than the more mixed and scattered populations of most neighbouring settlements. The *svábok* are reckoned traditionally to have had a strong Protestant ethic emphasising frugality and saving (*spórolás*), though many people both inside and outside the community point out that this has faded in recent decades. Numerous academic commentators have outlined similar views (see Schwarcz 2003: 120). But such explanations, whether they appeal to specific group values or rest merely on a relatively high degree of ethnic homogeneity, are insufficient and potentially misleading. If the *sváb* heritage of Soltvadkert played a role (and I think it did), this needs to be understood not in terms of the 'essentialist' traits of a unique culture but in the context of flexible institution-building within the Kádárist model of socialism.<sup>33</sup>

As in Tázlár, the key institution in Soltvadkert was the specialist co-operative. Unlike the Tázlár cooperatives, however, those of Soltvadkert moved promptly to establish collective vineyards (in the early 1960s) and to construct their own bottling plant (in 1978). At the same time, many Soltvadkert villagers improved their private vineyards and invested in improved processing facilities. They took ever more expansive initiatives in the last years of socialism, when they began to find new ways to plant or acquire

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<sup>33</sup> I have addressed these issues in more detail in a recent paper: „Die Sváben und die Tóten sind ausgestorben!“ Über Stereotypen und „Kulturen“ im ländlichen Ungarn. In Josef Wolf (ed.), *Materialien* 16, Tübingen: Institut für Donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde (forthcoming, 2006).



vineyards and to dispose of their product outside the officially sanctioned channels. As Fertő et al. (1990) stressed, the 'secret' of this private accumulation lay in the flexible character of the specialist cooperative, which left substantially more space for individual economic management than was possible in settlements dominated by more conventional cooperative farms.

The result for Soltvadkert was dynamic expansion for the settlement as a whole, but also a degree of polarisation which was increasingly hard to reconcile with socialist principles. The large private holdings could not be maintained by family labour and assistance on a voluntary basis from within the neighbourhood. I found in the mid-1970s that poorer sections of the population in Tázlár were obtaining much of their income by working as day labourers in Soltvadkert. This pattern of informal (or 'black') labour market activity has continued to the present day, much of the supply in recent years stemming from abroad.<sup>34</sup>

Even Soltvadkert did not emerge unscathed when the Hungarian wine markets collapsed in the early 1990s. One of the specialist cooperatives was rapidly privatised, and the other has survived only in a stagnant, attenuated form. Various activities which individuals had previously carried out in semi-clandestine ways could now be conducted openly. The leading entrepreneurs were able to consolidate their distribution networks and thereby compensate to some extent for depressed prices. However, the image of Soltvadkert wine was badly dented by the numerous 'false wine' scandals, and many producers, both large and small, have become as disillusioned as their counterparts in Tázlár. According to a recent investigation carried out by Gyöngyi Schwarcz (2003), a new elite group has emerged. It consists of entrepreneurs who engage in small-scale manufacturing activities, notably the production of plastic bags. Wine production has faded into the background for these families, though it has by no means ceased entirely.

In summary, a comparison of these two communities enables us to appreciate the full extent of the social consequences of the flexible variant of collectivisation for the wine-producing communities of the Homokhátság. In the older, *sváb* community of Soltvadkert, in the enabling environment provided by specialist cooperatives—which themselves quickly became dynamic economic actors—specialisation was encouraged and high levels of private investment and accumulation ensued. This settlement exemplifies Ivan Szelényi's arguments (1988), according to which the Hungarian scheme of collectivised farming allowed ample room for entrepreneurialism at the

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<sup>34</sup> Casual labour in recent years has been abundantly available thanks to porous borders with neighbouring Serbia and Romania. Migrant labourers from Transylvania, Romanian as well as Magyar by ethnicity, have become a key element in the labour force; the range of jobs they undertake is by no means restricted to the vineyards or even to agriculture.

household level as well as at the level of larger organisations. Of course not everyone benefited, and certainly not to the same extent, from this embourgeoisement. For example, the Roma groups in Soltvadkert were not able to construct luxury villas. In Tázlár, too, there is some internal differentiation, but the overall pattern is significantly different from that of the neighbouring town. The specialist cooperatives were much less successful in Tázlár; there was little reinvestment in production and little specialisation, either by the cooperatives or by small-scale producers. No native producers in Tázlár have been able to develop the vertical integration or the range of distribution networks to provide the foundation for a viable enterprise in postsocialist conditions. In comparison with Soltvadkert, the socialist wine bubble in Tázlár was an important contributory factor to a more modest and more egalitarian variant of embourgeoisement.

The bursting of the bubble has already led some people in both settlements to abandon this sector. Others cannot afford to, though they might like to quit; the additional income earned in the vineyard, coming as it usually does in a single payment, is often a crucial element in household financial strategies, perhaps providing funds for a major consumer purchase or a wedding. Yet the risks are greater than ever: in addition to the repeated natural hazards of frosts and hail, the prices of inputs continuously rise, while the price paid for wine in this region is nowadays approximately the same as that paid for the same quantity of mineral water. And throughout the production process one has the constant worry (almost unknown under socialism) that one might be unable to dispose of one's product at all. These uncertainties are experienced more intensely in Tázlár than in Soltvadkert because of the absence of alternative income sources in the smaller settlement.

### **The Upper Hamlet in Summer 2001**

In summer 2001 Tázlár contained approximately 1,950 persons, 1,350 of whom resided in the main (lower) centre. Just over 400 continued to reside year-round on *tanyák* (many of which, though by no means all, had been upgraded in recent years with the installation of electricity, pumped water, and even telephones and gas), while the remainder inhabited the upper hamlet (*felső telep*). For practical reasons I decided to conduct my detailed survey in the upper hamlet; apart from size it was conveniently close to the *tanya* where I was living. In the late nineteenth century this was the primary centre of the *tanya*-dominated community. The lower hamlet expanded steadily in the course of the twentieth century and in the early socialist decades all new developments were concentrated here. However, the economic relaxation of the 1970s also brought political relaxation: *tanya* inhabi-

tants who preferred to relocate to the upper hamlet were allowed to do so and granted the same credits to assist their house-building. About half of the houses I found in this hamlet in 1991 were constructed in the last decades of socialism.



Plate 16. Originally built in 1830 as a private manor, the Catholic church of the upper hamlet is now slated for privatisation (2001).

The 179 inhabitants of the upper hamlet were probably slightly older and poorer in 2001 than the average in the community. Their sources of income were diverse (see figure 1). Only one household could be considered to qualify as an entrepreneurial family farm: its members farmed about 30 hectares, including land rented from neighbours, and made regular use of non-family labour. Only 8 further households had arable holdings, while 16 reported vineyards. None of these made significant use of external labour. Two households had invested in greenhouses and made heavy use of non-familial labour. Two further families in this sector made do with family labour. Thirty-five persons from 21 households had formal waged jobs. Twenty-one out of 59 households depended entirely on pensions for their monetary income. The average level of a pension was well below the official minimum wage of 40,000 Forints per month (approximately 160€ in 2001), but most of these households contained more than one pensioner. Virtually all households supplemented their cash income with subsistence production. Figure 1 takes no account of those who worked seasonally in the vineyards or those with regular employment in the 'black' sector. Although several men and women had lost their jobs in recent years, no one here was drawing



unemployment benefit.<sup>35</sup> In one case, that of an elderly widow with no pension entitlements, the village council provided the safety net. Subsidised meals were provided for those unable to care for themselves. Other significant sources of income included the production of mud bricks (with the assistance of cheap immigrant labour), temporary work in Germany, and state payments to support fostering.

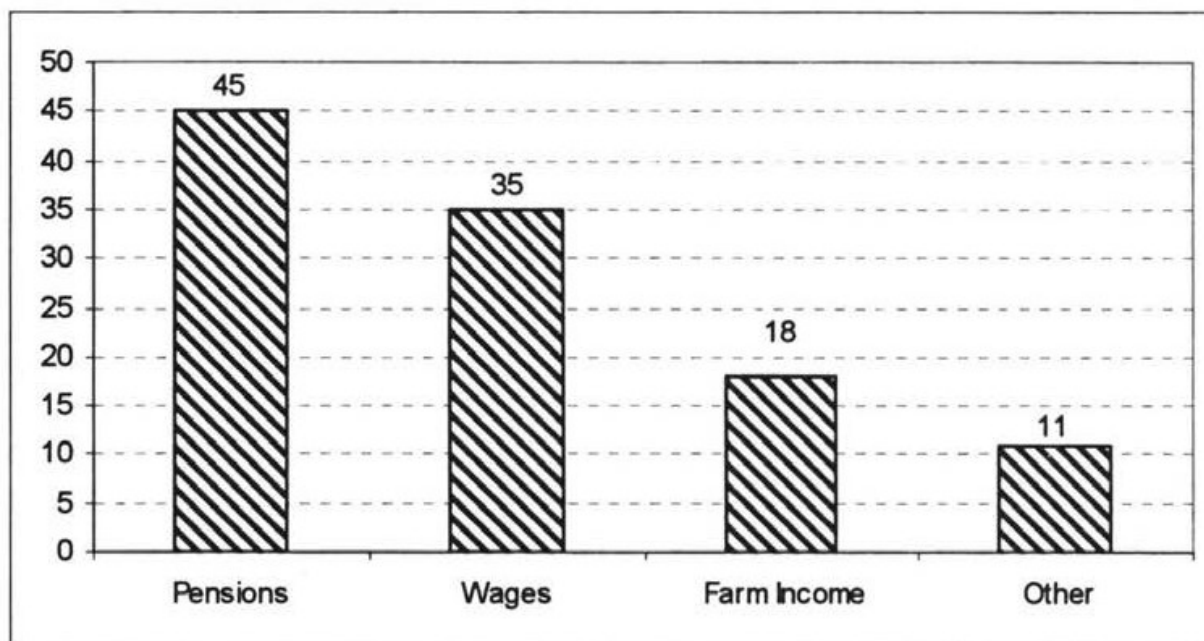


Figure 1. Sources of income in Tázlár's upper hamlet, August 2001.

In addition to the social services it provided for the elderly, the village council was praised for the help it gave in purchasing schoolbooks and for having recently extended piped water and gas to all the households of the hamlet. Of course people wanted more: they wanted to have local roads paved (in summer the sand often makes cycling impossible), and those with children said that they would like to see a playground in the hamlet. Above all, however, they wanted to have regular wage-labour jobs with fixed working hours and no work was too menial for them. In the socialist period many inhabitants had worked either for the cooperative or for a state farm based outside the community. In recent years they had been compelled to seek new jobs in smaller private workshops with uncertain futures, where the hours required were often unpredictable and the working conditions harsh.

<sup>35</sup> Benefit at this time was payable for 12 months. It was public knowledge in this region that some persons working for small-scale entrepreneurs oscillated between the status of employed and unemployed; drawing unemployment benefit did not necessarily mean that one ceased to work, only that the costs to the employer were significantly reduced; when the benefit could no longer be drawn, the individual resumed work officially.

In talking to hamlet residents I tried to probe their cohesion and community spirit. The answers to questions in this field were uniformly gloomy. This hamlet became in the later socialist decades a vibrant centre for the surrounding *tanya* population. The main vehicle was the Women's Club, run by a dedicated teacher; its most popular activity was amateur dramatics, which club members performed so successfully that the club organised coach trips abroad from the proceeds. Unfortunately little of this survived after the *animatrice* of the club retired and moved to Budapest at the end of the 1970s.<sup>36</sup> The school was closed, and the children of the hamlet must now attend the main village school, over three kilometres away.

Numerous families moved into the hamlet during the later socialist years. In 2001 they recalled how people helped each other in house-building. Cheap credits were available from the state-owned bank (OTP) to purchase materials, but a great deal of expenditure was economised through the mutual aid system. House-building under postsocialism, by contrast, became much more expensive, and people could no longer automatically assume that even close family members would help them, let alone more distant kin and unrelated neighbours. Older people frequently bemoaned the problems faced by today's youths in contrast to the situation a generation ago, when work was available to all and house-building was routinely commenced by couples in their twenties as soon as they married.

Conversations about the village's new property system, which I usually opened with questions about landownership and the changing character of the cooperative, were often brought around to these themes by my interlocutors. I suggest therefore that these aspects of citizenship—the previously taken-for-granted entitlements to wage-labour jobs, to free or almost free medicine, to subsidised new housing, and even to a vibrant community spirit—also be considered aspects of property changes.<sup>37</sup> Most villagers were sharply aware that their collective, *public* rights, as residents of a community and citizens of a republic, had been significantly diminished.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The club still exists. It is run by Sándor Dúl, the (male) former Communist Party secretary of the village. Events are organised regularly in the old schoolhouse and there are occasional excursions, including theatre trips: but the club no longer brings the community together as it did in the 1960s and 1970s. For further detail see Hann 2004c.

<sup>37</sup> Tatjana Thelen (2003) favoured a narrower definition of property and pointed out, correctly, that villagers do not see these entitlements in terms of property (Hungarian, *tulajdon*). Nonetheless they do make a link, and that is my justification for doing the same.

<sup>38</sup> Many singled out health care, which had become expensive. In 2001 the village doctor reckoned that health levels had fallen since the socialist period, primarily because many families could not afford to pay for the medicines they needed. She believed that alcohol abuse had increased among men, while among women the tensions of postsocialism were evident in the increased numbers for whom she prescribed anti-depressants.

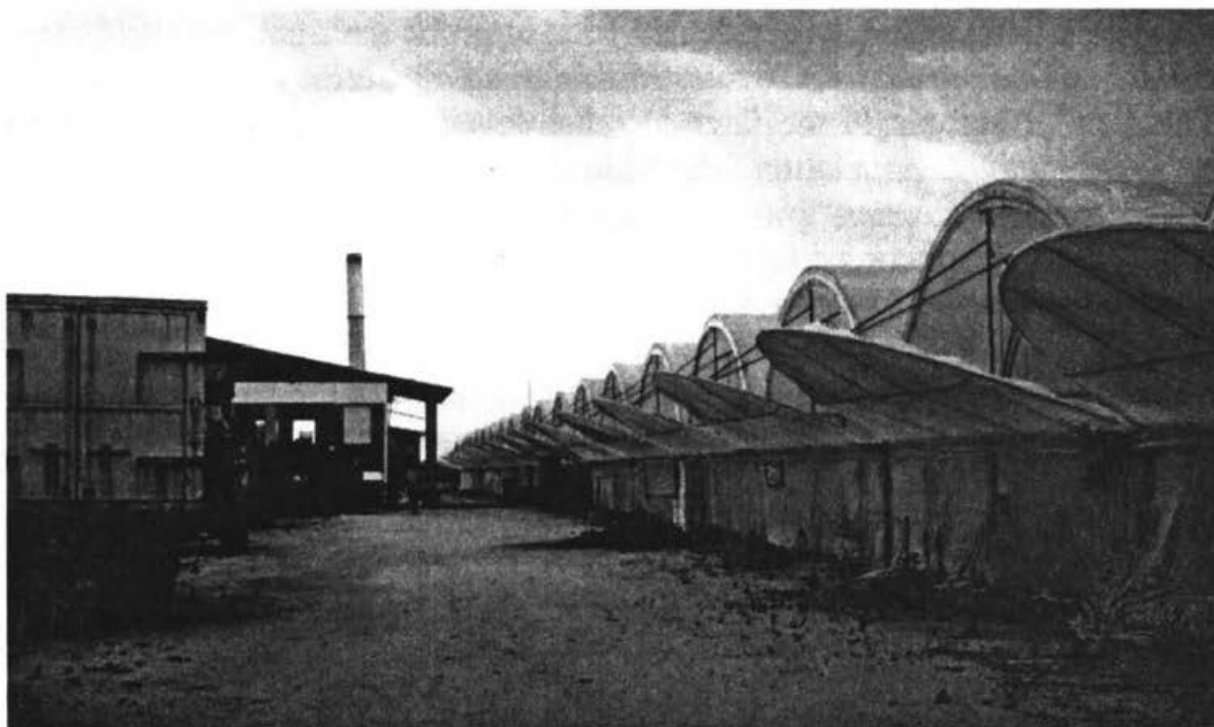


Plate 17. The greenhouses of a new entrepreneur in 2001—when his vegetable business collapsed a few years later, he adapted the premises to poultry production.



Plate 18. A family of seasonal workers from Transylvania producing mud bricks.





Plate 19. A typical dwelling from the pre-socialist period.



Plate 20. The luxury new dwelling of a postsocialist entrepreneur.

The picture was not black and white. A few families (with only one exception they were recent immigrants to the hamlet) were attempting to expand businesses on the basis of new private investments. Many longstanding residents were doing their best to maintain the networks and solidarity built up in the socialist past, and both the state and the village council continue to play important roles. But the majority insisted that they had benefited little, if at all, from the strengthening of *private* property rights. They might, on paper, be wealthier than they were at the end of socialism, because they owned more land and had a nondescript piece of paper to prove its alienability. Yet the exchange value of this land was generally low, reflecting its low use value. Even families whose wealth had expanded in this way had been forced to understand that their ownership was a dubious asset—that they were substantively, existentially better off in the later decades of socialism, when the cooperative, as the main channel for state subsidies, helped them attain income levels which were higher and above all more secure than the incomes they commanded in 2001.

By 2001 the cooperative was already effectively dead, fatally wounded by the abuses with which it had been associated in earlier decades. This outcome can be attributed at least partially to the persistence of a strong ideology of individual, private property since the resettlement of these lands in the nineteenth century. This long-term continuity at the first of the layers identified by the von Benda-Beckmanns and Wiber (forthcoming) helped to ensure that the Land Reorganisation Committee in Tázlár would follow the course of privatisation. This ideology did not blind people to the costs of the new policies, but it made them difficult to oppose. For most people the entire process was puzzling, but the complex procedures adopted at all levels, including the local, did not increase the legitimacy of the outcomes. People had difficulty familiarising themselves with various new currencies: cooperative shares, gold crowns, and compensation coupons. The effective demise of the cooperative in 2003, which brought to an end the last semblances of socialist collectivism, also marked the end of the era of these special currencies, hallmarks of the community's protracted transition.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

The upper hamlet of Tázlár is not representative of the village as a whole, and neither Tázlár nor Soltvadkert can be viewed as a statistically representative rural settlement. The conspicuous embourgeoisement of the latter presents a particularly stark contrast to stereotypical images of socialist

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<sup>39</sup> In recent years the Euro has succeeded the Deutschmark as a new alternative currency; but owing to the relative stability of the Hungarian Forint, its role remains minor.

agriculture. Yet even Soltvadkert has had its less successful groups. In Tázlár we have seen that the less successful elements are today proportionately more numerous, few genuine entrepreneurs have emerged, and continuities with the traditional peasant economy have remained stronger.<sup>40</sup>

Patterns of polarisation similar to those identified by Hungarian researchers in Soltvadkert since the 1960s are now being documented in many parts of the postsocialist countryside (cf. Hann et al. 2003a). It is important to understand how their forms on the Homokhátság depend on opportunities grasped in the 1960s and 1970s. Many details of this story are of course unique to this region and to Hungary. The Homokhátság was not subjected to the typical model of collectivisation. Had the decisions taken around 1960 been taken solely according to the criterion of where it was rational to invest in large-scale arable farming, then much of this territory would probably have been placed in the hands of Forest Farms and the oil and gas exploration companies. The ensuing population decline in places such as Tázlár and Soltvadkert would then probably have been much greater.

Instead, building on the foundations of smallholder vineyards from the pre-socialist years, state officials decided not merely to maintain that production but to increase the supply of cheap wine by planting new, large-scale vineyards. A great deal of scope was left to households to resume their own paths of embourgeoisement or to embark on such paths for the first time. This flexible model of collectivisation enabled Soltvadkert to reverse its population decline and become the wealthiest small town in the country. In Tázlár, too, the rate of population decrease slowed in the later socialist period. There too one can see—for example, in the number of houses built since collectivisation—the extent to which this historic moment, far from heralding the end of the peasantry, a transfer of resources to the industrial sector, and an accelerated exodus to the cities, in fact concealed crucial continuities and policies which worked to the benefit of the rural population, at least in the short term.

Without wishing to downplay the distinctive features of the Hungarian model, with its exceptional flexibility and decentralisation, I suggest that such features remain under-appreciated aspects of collectivisation in other countries as well. The establishment of the socialist institutions left larger populations resident in the countryside than was usual in the industrialisation paths followed by most 'Western' countries; many socialist villagers experi-

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<sup>40</sup> Although the picture in agriculture and viticulture is generally gloomy, modest successes in other branches of the economy ought to be noted. Apart from the continued buoyancy of small-scale plastics manufacture, a business park has been established on the outskirts of the centre of the village. A Dutch-owned enterprise employing some 30 staff to build yachts for the market in Western Europe was the only significant investment there as of 2005.



enced modernisation, distinctive socialist variants of embourgeoisement, without being uprooted from their homes in the countryside. These accomplishments have been rendered fragile under postsocialist conditions, and nowhere more so than in regions whose prosperity had been built on the basis of a product with poor prospects in the new neoliberal market conditions.

There is an irony in the fact that the socialist embourgeoisement which benefited many wine producers in the settlements discussed here was not achieved by producing quality wines for an increasingly refined bourgeois public—quite the opposite, their success depended on unrefined socialist publics, both at home and abroad. Alex Liddell's upbeat assessment of Hungary's wine market is based on a scenario in which the new private owners of vineyards would build upon the traditions of the country's classical wine regions in order to produce highly variegated wines of quality for discriminating consumers. Unfortunately, as he frankly acknowledges, 'sophisticated' wines cannot be produced on the sandy soils of the Homokhátság. Some producers will be able to sell their product as a base wine for the brands of other regions, and significant quantities are once again being exported in bulk to the east; but for the majority of small-scale producers in both Tázlár and Soltvadkert, the prospects are bleak. These are people who might, if a different collectivisation model had been imposed, have swollen the ranks of the proletariat in Budapest in the 1960s and 1970s, but who instead remained in their villages and contributed to the production of the 'mass wine' which was so important in lubricating János Kádár's social compromise. Now it turns out that the benefits which accrued under this flexible model can no longer be sustained. The former beneficiaries have become losers, victims, and they see themselves as such. As Liddell notes prosaically (2003: 172), in the Homokhátság as a whole, '5,000 to 6,000 people ... make between ten and twenty hectolitres for selling. The sad truth is that there is no future for most of these growers, and a painful rationalisation is in store for them.'

Let us return finally to the question of legitimacy. In recent years, producers in the vineyard and wine sector in Hungary have been subjected to more government interference than ever before. They feel strongly that the authorities have done too little to protect their interests. More generally, the rural population is suspicious of the economic consequences of 'joining Europe'. Few stand to gain from EU subsidies. Even though very few foreigners have so far invested in property in Tázlár, many local residents are convinced that agribusiness interests in western countries (especially Austria) have already managed to acquire the most valuable assets in Hungary's agrarian sector, including land itself. These negative feelings are not com-

compensated by greater competition in the political system and greater transparency in the rule of law in the postsocialist years. Rather, the highly complex procedures of privatisation, including the workings of the local committees and the possibility of pursuing claims through the courts, have fed cynicism at all levels. It is widely believed that even higher-level officials are open to bribery, just as local committee members were bound to pursue individual and familial interests in the 1990s. In a few cases the reactions extend to a more general disaffection from the current arrangements for multi-party democracy and an explicit nostalgia for the one-party regime in power until 1990. Many villagers are critical of the postsocialist discourses of democracy and freedom—because these are a poor substitute for the social and economic security and higher living standards which most of them enjoyed under socialism. This suggests a modification of the model of Niklas Luhmann (1969), who in this respect stands in the tradition of Max Weber (1978). In Hungary, a government which emphasised production rather than property, and pragmatic compromises rather than formal-legal procedures and the rule of law (Ger: *Rechtsstaatlichkeit*; Hung: *jogállamiság*), enjoyed substantively higher esteem and greater legitimacy than its successors—because that socialist regime did more, in both senses of *polgárosodás*, to improve the life-worlds of the majority of its citizens.

### Epilogue: Saying It with Horses

Although the number of horses in Tázlár has fallen steeply since I first went there in 1976, villagers still often express themselves with equine metaphors. For example, when an individual who is already doing more than his or her share is called upon to work even harder, they might comment that 'you beat the horse that pulls' (*azt a lovat ütök, amelyik húz*). The present mayor and others who support the principle of private ownership argue that 'the back of a horse that's jointly owned will soon be injured' (*közös lónak tőrös a háta*). The implication is that only through exclusive individual ownership can one be sure that one's assets will be safeguarded. On the other hand, some people see the gains which would follow from new forms of cooperation, in order to resolve collective action problems. They might express their current dissatisfaction by suggesting that, under the new system, they have 'fallen over the other side of the horse!' (*átestünk a ló túlsó oldalára!*). The message here is that the country has swung over to another ideological extreme under post-socialism.

A third expression, politically more neutral, was a resigned, even melancholic, 'This is not the horse we wanted!' (*Nem ezt a lovat akartuk!*). The implication is that people have been somehow deceived, or that they themselves were unable to control the processes of change which unfolded in the

aftermath of socialism. This expression was used in conversation by Vince Kovács, the chairman of the local Land Reorganisation Committee. Many considered that he had played the decisive role in the redistribution of the community's most important resource. Yet he himself, looking back in 2001 over the previous decade, expressed a curious lack of agency; he preferred to disclaim all responsibility for the results of the work of his committee.



## ***Chapter 4***

### **Proper Peasants, Stakhanovites, and the Lilies of the Field: Work and Time in Anthropological Perspective**

The organisers of this conference have asked me to provide an anthropological perspective on the topic of work.<sup>41</sup> Even if I felt competent to attempt a world-wide survey of work in all human societies, from the prehistoric to the postmodern, it would necessarily be superficial, lacking the sense of close-up experience and understanding which are the most important hallmarks of modern anthropology. Of course the alternative strategy also has its dangers. A talk focusing narrowly on the labour market or on non-market forms of work in one Hungarian village where I have done fieldwork, which is the sort of presentation I would be more likely to make to an audience of economic anthropologists, would be inappropriate for an interdisciplinary conference. Besides, as Edmund Leach once remarked, even anthropologists tend to find the details of their colleagues' fieldwork rather boring.

My compromise solution is to combine a general discussion with a focus on work in one particular country. I begin by exploring some of the variety in human experiences of work and the ways anthropologists have studied work in pre-industrial societies. Then I draw on a number of more specialist studies to outline recent transformations of work in Hungary. Finally I return to the more general level and consider how anthropological approaches may be used and abused in understanding problems pertaining to work in contemporary, mature industrial societies. Here I pay brief attention to the effects of contemporary neoliberal labour-market trends on postsocialist eastern Germany.

A major strand in my discussion is the linkage between work and conceptions and perceptions of time. The linkage is self-evident in the case of wage labour, which remains the dominant form of work in modern industrial

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<sup>41</sup> This chapter is based on a lecture given at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin on 4 March 1998 as the opening of an interdisciplinary conference, 'Geschichte und Zukunft der Arbeit' (History and Future of Work), convened by Jürgen Kocka and Claus Offe. A German translation was published in the conference volume (Hann 2000e).

societies. Most contemporary adult Europeans obtain their income by agreeing to work for precisely calibrated periods of time. But other societies have operated with quite different models of work and time. Even in the present world, even within contemporary Europe, even within particular countries, one can observe considerable variety. The view is widespread in Europe that familiar models of work are breaking down and new ones need to be discovered. The most obvious role for anthropologists in current debates is to draw attention to both local diversity in the present and contrasting examples of the human condition in the past. I shall argue, however, that to suppose that problems such as post-industrial unemployment can be resolved by a return to pre-industrial models of socially embedded work is a romantic delusion.

### **Alienation and Identification in Pre-industrial Work**

Work can be loosely defined as social activity necessary to the reproduction of human life. In one sense, work must therefore be a central feature of all societies, regardless of how their members conceptualise such activities. Anthropologists are always interested in how work connects with other aspects of social life, in both objective and subjective senses. Adapting the metaphor which Karl Polanyi took over from Richard Thurnwald, which later came to feature prominently in the substantivist school in economic anthropology and has also been influential in other disciplines, we can say that work is always *embedded* in other social practices.<sup>42</sup> Polanyi and his substantivist followers argued that in laissez-faire capitalist societies the economy had, for the first time in human history, become 'disembedded', that it had somehow escaped from social and political constraints (though Polanyi made it plain that a particular political context was the precondition for this momentous development). Applying this line of reasoning, it is easy to see how work underwent a 'great transformation' (Polanyi 1944) with the onset of industrial capitalism. This is in essence the argumentation of Karl Marx as well as Karl Polanyi, and it has been enormously influential in modern scholarship. But how far are the implicit assumptions about the character of pre-industrial work supported by ethnographic evidence? How can we even begin to address such questions in the case of people who do not recognise work as a distinct form of activity, either conceptually or concretely in time allocation patterns?

Let us begin by considering some examples. Before humans began to till the soil they survived for millennia by hunting and gathering the food

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<sup>42</sup> Raymond Firth traced the metaphor of embedding to Thurnwald 1932; see Firth 1972 n. 1. For more on the substantivist school and its 'formalist' rival in the subdiscipline of economic anthropology, see Firth 1967.

they needed. Some people continued to make a living this way in the twentieth century, when they could be studied by anthropologists. There is of course a danger in assuming that what one can observe today in isolated and marginal groups is in any way representative of the way everyone lived in the Palaeolithic. Nonetheless, with the help of archaeologists and others, the analysis of ethnographic evidence can lead to more plausible guesses. One important result has been the realisation that, contrary to earlier European assumptions that people subsisting through the most primitive technologies had to work hard in a constant struggle to survive, most hunters and gatherers had no concept of work and spent relatively little of their time on subsistence-related activities. Marshall Sahlins (1974), surveying this evidence, was prompted to speak of the 'original affluent society' (this was not long after John Kenneth Galbraith's celebrated analysis [1958] of a contemporary 'affluent society' in the United States). Of course, by the measures of the modern economist, such as per capita income in dollars, these people were extremely poor; some might even be tempted to allege a high rate of unemployment. Yet in terms of being able to meet their subsistence goals and all their culturally defined needs, they were very well off, with a lot of 'free' time for leisure activities such as sitting around the campfire and talking.

Anthropological research on hunting-gathering peoples has taken many forms. We can make a general distinction between studies of an objectivist character and those with a more subjectivist orientation (most researchers pay some attention to both aspects). An outstanding example of primarily objectivist research is the work of Richard Lee among the !Kung San Bushmen of Botswana (Lee 1979). Paying meticulous attention to the time spent on different types of work, as well as to the ecological context and the nutritional levels obtained as a result of work, Lee was able to reach many interesting conclusions—for example, that the total workload was differently but nonetheless equally divided between males and females in this society. He did not have much to say, however, about how the !Kung San themselves understood various work activities. For example, he excluded the consultation of oracles from his definition of work, because this took place in a 'socially pleasurable context'; yet for the people themselves, this was an integral part of the work of hunting. Other scholars, such as Nurit Bird-David, have prioritised the subjective. They have shown that the 'local models' of hunters and gatherers often emphasise the security they feel in their environment: nature is 'abundant', and the forest is a 'parent' who can be relied upon to provide all that is necessary (Bird-David 1990).

Anthropologists sometimes imply that, along with their lack of anything resembling the modern Western notion of *Erwerbsarbeit* ('gainful employment'), people such as the Bushmen in Africa or Australian Aborigi-



nes also lack the modern Western sense of progressive, linear time. In the dichotomy of Lévi-Strauss, such societies are 'cold'—they lack history (Lévi-Strauss 1962). In 'hot' societies like our own, time is alleged to be cumulative and 'statistical', in contrast to the 'mechanical', cyclical and repetitive time of the 'cold' societies. This dichotomy, which corresponds closely to the long-standing dichotomy in German scholarship between *Naturvölker* and *Kulturvölker*, makes most anthropologists uncomfortable nowadays. Certainly we too, in our 'hot', 'historical' societies often strive for repetition, in the sense of reaffirming and replicating traditions, without imagining that we can escape the 'linearity' of time.

But if there seems no reason to suppose among pre-literate, pre-technological societies the sharp divergence from our own perceptions that some theoreticians imply, some interesting differences may nonetheless be apparent. The most striking seems to be the extent to which at least some food collectors live for the moment. In their refusal to invest, the societies which James Woodburn termed 'immediate return' societies are fully 'dis-engaged from property' (Woodburn 1982). Their decision-taking—such as when they trade objects with members of other groups or with a visiting anthropologist—is guided not by past experience but by the principle of 'demand sharing'.<sup>43</sup> This, together with the absence of any conception of shortage, makes it difficult to apply to such societies the techniques of modern economics, which presuppose that individuals make rational choices on the basis of scarcity assumptions.

Food collectors have constituted only a tiny proportion of the world's population in recent centuries. The ethnographic record documenting other forms of pre-industrial economy, forms which we can feel intuitively to be nearer to our own, is much richer. Among horticulturalists such as the Trobriand Islanders, people take pride in the cultivation of gardens. In comparison with hunter-gatherers, Trobrianders spend much more time at work producing sago, yams, and other products, some of which are exchanged to meet social obligations or to serve political purposes and are never in fact consumed. Technical and magical activities are inextricably combined in these gardening activities. Bronislaw Malinowski (1935) argued that the Trobriander's pleasure in his garden was ultimately an aesthetic one.

When swidden gives way to more permanent forms of cultivation and eventually to the forms of multicropping exemplified by rice-producing societies in East Asia, yields per unit of land rise dramatically. But this progress means more hours of work, and the yield per unit of human work expended declines in the course of this intensification (Boserup 1965). It is therefore no surprise that most agricultural societies have some term for toil

<sup>43</sup> This term, first advanced by Nicolas Petersen, underpins the analysis of Woodburn 1998.

and drudgery. However, a sharp opposition between work and leisure in our modern sense remains exceptional. Value is attached to the social aspects of work, rather than to utilitarian aspects. For example, large cooperating groups are typically preferred, even when smaller work groups might strike an observer as more efficient (Firth 1939). This sort of embeddedness encourages individuals to be generalists rather than specialists occupying a particular niche in the division of labour.

There was no doubt a large element of utopianism in the Marxist critique of capitalist wage labour.<sup>44</sup> Yet, as Maurice Bloch explained (1983: 91), Marx's basic insight does receive support from modern ethnographic accounts:

He imagined labour as it would be, had it not been formulated by capitalism, and saw that it would then be merely an aspect of the total business of living, unseparated from such activities as recreation, consumption, family life: that it would be just part of existence. This in fact seems to be very much the situation which anthropologists have reported in pre-capitalist systems, and this was the case with the Malagasy people I studied. In such societies labour is so little thought of as a special separate type of activity that there is no word which in any way corresponds to what we, with our language, moulded by the history of capitalism, mean by labour. The life of a subsistence farmer simply does not accord with our notion of labour. For example, we cannot answer such questions as at what time does a rural Malagasy begin work and at what time does he or she end it? There is no break between getting up, washing, husking rice for breakfast, making basket work, stopping to chat, going out to cultivate the kitchen garden, mending household objects and tools, going to the field, fishing for crayfish in a nearby stream, swimming there, herding the cattle, playing a musical instrument etc. All these are part of living, all these activities are totally intertwined, and there is no possibility of separating them into work and leisure. ... In this respect, Marx's anthropology seems amazingly ahead of his time.

On the other hand, few anthropologists have succeeded in operationalising the key idea which Marx adapted from an old European tradition, namely, the labour theory of value. This theory asserts what many find morally

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<sup>44</sup> Marx and Engels wrote in the first part of *The German Ideology* that 'in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic' (1973: 38).

attractive: that when products are exchanged, the rates should be determined by the labour which has gone into making them. But quite apart from problems of measuring the time spent at work, there are, even in technologically unsophisticated societies, problems related to skill differences. As Firth demonstrated for the building of canoes on the Pacific island of Tikopia, Marx's notion of 'socially necessary labour time' is of little practical use. The labour theory is untestable, even though it turns up again and again as a folk assertion all over the world (Firth 1979; cf. Ortiz 1979).

Marxian notions such as alienation and exploitation have nevertheless been influential in a good deal of anthropological research on work. Let me conclude this general section with a summary of Erik Schwimmer's attempt to get around the problems of inter-cultural translation by means of a semi-otic model. Drawing closely on Marx and on the Marxist classical scholar Jean-Pierre Vernant, Schwimmer (1979) built his framework around the concepts of alienation and identification, on one dimension, and the production of use values and exchange values, on another dimension. His goal was to question common assumptions that alienation naturally accompanies the production of exchange values, whereas identification accompanies the production of use values. The ancient Greek craftsman, Schwimmer argued, was alienated from the product of his labour in a society which was still based on the production of use values. Contrarily, artists in modern societies produce exchange values but may retain strong ties of identification through the assertion of property rights.

This argumentation led Schwimmer to a matrix with four positions, as shown in figure 2. Positions 1 and 2 demonstrate what Schwimmer termed congruence: identification where use values are dominant, and alienation where exchange values are dominant. Positions 3 and 4 exhibit incongruence: alienation in the context of use values, and identification in the context of exchange values.

	Identification		Alienation
Use Values	1		4
Exchange Values	3		2

Figure 2. Erik Schwimmer's matrix (1979: 297).



Finally, Schwimmer added a notion of ideology in his commentary on this matrix (1979: 297–298):

Possibilities 1 (the 'traditional' system) and 2 (the 'cash income' sector) are congruent in the sense that the concepts of work they present fit ideologies well adapted to reproduce the respective modes of production. Possibilities 3 and 4 are incongruent in the sense that the concepts of work they present do not fit the ideologies serving to reproduce the respective modes of production, but appear to be part of variant or deviant ideologies. ...

It will be possible to define, for each of the four possibilities, distinctive work concepts, forms of management, fields of specialization in skills and crafts, forms of toil, notions of virtue, a principle of strife. Furthermore, for each possibility there is a separate corpus of knowledge, different operating models, techniques, supra-human powers.

Schwimmer proceeded to illustrate all four positions from his own fieldwork among the Orokaiva, horticulturalists in Papua New Guinea. Their traditional system was built on the production of use values and identification: these people resembled the gardeners described by Malinowski, people for whom work was as much about magic and religion as it was about the production of economic utilities. The tasks were pleasurable, and only exceptionally did people have to hurry in their work. At those times a concept of 'toil' was invoked, but Schwimmer found that time was 'a highly inappropriate measure of useful activity in Orokaiva gardens' (1979: 302). Indeed, the Orokaiva used only four time markers: 'early morning, midday, afternoon (meaning: time to go home) and evening-night (meaning: after supper)' (1979: 299).

The arrival of wage labour opportunities, which the Orokaiva attributed to Jesus Christ, led to alienation and production of exchange values. However, the production of exchange values did not have to be alienating: it could also be linked in native Orokaiva 'business' initiatives to continued strong identification, though the cooperatives in which these values were asserted invariably collapsed. This combination (position 3 in the matrix) was not 'viable' in modern economic terms, because payments to members were made on the basis of position in a kinship system rather than on the basis of any rational calculation of the value of the labour which individuals performed.

The second 'incongruent' combination (position 4 in the matrix) involved the production of use values under deeply alienating conditions. The proportion of suicides in traditional Melanesia was not negligible, nor was the number of people unable to assert their rights following military defeat.

Schwimmer suggested that the models of Hobbes and Nietzsche might be as relevant to these situations as the models of Marx and Polanyi. At any rate, this example cautions against the simplistic view that embedded pre-capitalist forms of work were always benevolent for all concerned.

### Proper Peasants

Next I want to look more carefully at changes in work and time in a European society. *Proper Peasants* is the title of a classic ethnographic study from central Europe—a study of the villagers of Átány, Hungary, barely a couple of hours from the capital city of Budapest, carried out by Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer (1969, 1972). The fieldwork was done mostly in the 1950s, a time of great turbulence which culminated in the imposition of collectivisation. However, the researchers, Hungarians based at the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest, were concerned not with these changes but with a salvage enterprise. Their primary aim was to provide a detailed account of the traditional peasantry, its values and social structure, before these were irrevocably lost. Above all they emphasised the villagers' attachments to their land and to the proper peasant's way of life.

Work was absolutely central to that way of life. It was thoroughly embedded and not the focus of any separate theorising by the villagers themselves. As Fél and Hofer explained: 'It is hard to separate work from the natural flow of family life; work in Átány is an organic, self-evident component of being. A child will be drawn into the work of the family from the age of three or four. Each person works from then on until the end of his or her life' (Fél and Hofer 1972: 146). The villagers approached their hard physical work as an art and achieved a profound identification.<sup>45</sup> They were Calvinist and had what might be termed a strong 'work ethic', but they were far from being capitalist profit maximisers. On the contrary, they emphasised moderation (*mértékletesség, mértéktartás*) and explicitly rejected a value system based on quantitative outputs:

József Kakas described the right standard and the way to be followed with the words: People are different. There are those who are sick if they cannot work, while others suffer if they do have to work. Here too, the middle way is the best. It is repulsive to live without work,

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<sup>45</sup> According to Fél and Hofer (1969: 380), 'for the proper peasants, agriculture and work were an art, beyond the practical utility and profit involved. Following the rules of this "art" gave one security and pride and gained him the esteem of the community. A proper peasant could only be a man who was "born into it". ... The land he cultivated was inherited from his ancestors; to keep and work it with care and responsibility was his moral duty to his precursors and successors, and also to the fatherland and God, since the end product of his labors was bread, the basic subsistence food and the material of the Lord's supper.'

like a drone; but it is also unreasonable to be on your feet day and night, especially when you reach the age when it really is not necessary. One should work properly. To hurry is like working on a Sunday: if you work for six days and it's not enough to get by, then you'll work in vain on the seventh day as well—that won't make you rich. (Fél and Hofer 1972: 171).

Fél and Hofer also paid some attention to time reckoning. Watches were common in Átány from the beginning of the twentieth century, and the church clock had shown the time for a lot longer. But this tower was not visible from the more distant fields, and it seems that the position of the sun, coupled with seasonal changes, was the main factor shaping the villagers' perceptions of time. These cyclical, repetitive elements were countered or complemented by a strong sense of tradition—'I heard the old people say'—and of national history. Many villagers had experienced migrant labour, and all men had been called to the army. Yet the modern forms of timekeeping found in these institutions had not disturbed the peasants' attitudes. Half a century ago, when this fieldwork was carried out, it seems that work and time in the village of Átány had more in common with the embeddedness of Trobriand yam gardeners than with the business mentality now expected of Hungarian farmers by officials in Brussels after Hungary's entry into the European Union.

Martha Lampland's study of Sárosd (Lampland 1995), although set in a region of Hungary where manorial estates were historically more significant than independent peasant farming, can be read as an updating of Fél and Hofer's classic study. Her main theme was the way the integrated activity of work became commodified as labour under socialism. In the decades of mature socialism, every other family in the entire country had access to a small plot of farmland. Most were engaged in producing exchange values as well as use values. This was part of a far-reaching modernisation process, which can be viewed as a peculiar form of 'great transformation'. It was the belated eastern European equivalent of the rupture which Polanyi identified in early-nineteenth-century England, the same rupture which was beginning to affect Germany in the very years when Marx developed his models.

Of course the transformation of Hungarian peasant society had long roots in the past, and Lampland was critical of earlier researchers for failing to notice that new concepts of labour and of the person had already become partially instituted in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>46</sup> But, draw-

<sup>46</sup> Lampland (1995: 3) suggested that Fél and Hofer (1969) failed to recognise 'the reconceptualisation of labor as a tangible quality of personhood'. However, *Proper Peasants* is explicitly cast as a study of the peasantry as it was prior to collectivisation, when this reconceptualisation, on Lampland's own argument, was still incomplete. There is abundant discus-



ing her theoretical inspiration from Marx's classic analysis of commodity fetishism, she argued that the modern concept of work, now fully objectified as labour, became dominant only under socialism. This provided an explanation for the extreme instrumentalist, utilitarian attitudes which villagers in late socialist Hungary displayed towards both public and private sectors. As Lampland put it (1995: 21): 'Although social actors regularly distinguished these two forms in everyday practice and common sense, the economism of socialism became the common idiom of both public and private worlds'. This economism has since influenced Hungary's efforts to construct a new capitalist society after the demise of communist rule.<sup>47</sup> I can confirm many aspects of Lampland's account from my own village work in Tázlár, Hungary, in the mid-1970s (Hann 1980a, 1996f, this volume, chapter 3). Like her, I noted generational differences. The new instrumental attitudes towards work and property predominated among younger people, while the elderly tended to resist 'the collapse of time and money characteristic of wage-labor contracts' (Lampland 1995: 323). Like Lampland, I found a few people beginning to cultivate the modern capitalist concept of leisure time, but these were a minority. The more significant distinction for most people was that between work performed in the socialist sector and work performed for one's own family. Another important category of work was the reciprocal exchange of labour between households, especially in housebuilding. From my observations I would suggest that Lampland may underestimate the degree to which rural commodification was modified, even in the later decades of socialism, by the production of use values. Her main arguments, however, apply as well to Tázlár as to Sárosd. The villagers thought of work primarily in terms of hard, physical labour. Such work, often referred to as *meló*, was seldom conflated with moneymaking activities in trade or with 'white-collar' work as performed by cooperative farm administrators (or by anthropologists, for that matter). My elderly landlady, who belonged to a family stigmatised as kulak in the 1950s, when it was deprived of most of its accumulated property, could never accept that any worthwhile work was carried out at the cooperative offices. She was a devout Catholic and not a Marxist; yet from her point of view, the leaders who spent their days there, the many accountants who went home punctually at four o'clock at the end of their working day, were obviously living off the surplus produced by the working members. They had lost the peasant work ethic and were to be despised or pitied.

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sion in the works of Fél and Hofer (1969 and 1972) of the importance of control over labour power for these proper peasants.

<sup>47</sup> For more background on the Hungarian transition see Swain 1992, Tőkés 1996 and Róna-Tas 1997.

## Stakhanovites

Let me now turn to consider work and time in the industrial, mechanical, commodified conditions of the modern factory. Stakhanovism was an exemplary case in the socialist countries. This movement originated in Stalin's mobilisation of industrial labour in the Soviet Union in the most heavily futurist period of the Soviet Union's great transformation, the Second Five Year Plan, 1933–1937. It differed from 'shock work' in that it depended theoretically on rationalised production techniques, not simply on the application of more labour using existing techniques. As Robert Conquest explained (1967: 77):

In Aleksey Stakhanov's record-breaking shift at a Donbass coal mine in August 1935, the rationalisation consisted in assuring his pneumatic pick a constant supply of compressed air throughout the shift, attaching two timberers exclusively to him to do the pit-propping as soon as he had finished cutting, and lengthening the ledges so that one miner did not get in the way of another. By this method, which amounted essentially to specialising the functions of timberer and cutter, Stakhanov cut 102 tons of coal in the shift; by disregarding his assistants' contribution and ascribing the output entirely to him, the record was allowed to seem even more impressive than in fact it was, but even allowing for this, the output per man was well above the average of about seven tons.

Officially this radical break with the past was an initiative 'from below', from Stakhanov himself. The movement named after him generated many further records, but it also provoked opposition. Other workers naturally resented the higher incomes and privileges granted to the élite Stakhanovites. The vast majority stood to lose as a consequence of the general increase in output norms to which the movement led. In some cases, sabotage and violence were directed against the Stakhanovites. Before long Stakhanov's own mine failed to fulfil its plan, because of 'wreckers'. Gradually the movement was scaled down and routinised, but other forms of 'socialist competition' persisted, and the title 'Hero of Socialist Labour' continued for many more decades to divide the Soviet working class internally and to distinguish socialist industrial culture from capitalist factory norms in Western countries.

Unfortunately, we have no satisfactory ethnographic studies of the Stakhanovites. We do not know whether Stakhanov was alienated or whether his medals and other material perquisites, such as holidays, theatre tickets, and special tables in the canteen—'sometimes with flowers on the table, electro-plated spoons and forks' (Conquest 1967: 77)—helped him to identify with the products of his labour. The best study of a socialist factory

known to me is Miklós Haraszti's investigation of a Hungarian tractor factory a good generation later (Haraszti 1977). Heinrich Böll contributed a charming but sharp introduction in which he pinpointed the main themes:

Miklós Haraszti's *A Worker in a Worker's State* is about the efficiency of factory work and its consequences for the workers. In this factory, 'nobody gets anything for nothing', either. On the contrary, here too there are incentive payments, the absurd trinity of piece-rates, time-rates and supplementary payments. The piece-rate per job is being constantly diminished, which means that anticipated output constantly increases. And 'The time we lose in asking for compensation—often without success—must itself be counted as uncompensated loss.' There is no escape from the cruel race between the hare and the hedgehog. The hedgehog is always there first, smirking or fulminating. He has only one face but many names: boss, foreman, rate-fixer, inspector. The workers speak of 'Them' and 'They' ... And when the bosses start saying 'We', things are becoming dangerous. It's bound to be 'We must make sacrifices', that is, 'You must make sacrifices'. (Böll 1977: 7–8)

How might the notion of alienation be applied in the Hungarian case? In theory, not at all: this was a centrally planned economy; the whole country was but one factory producing the socially required use values. A system based on the principle of piece rates, although it might be more exploitative than a system based solely on payment for labour time, in the sense that more surplus value is extracted, may be less alienating if it succeeds in giving the worker the feeling that he or she has more control over the labour process. That was not the case in this tractor factory, where the workers' alienation seemed to be total. Haraszti showed how strict adherence to time allocations and technical regulations would make it impossible to earn a living wage. Workers saw through the mystification and pursued the only strategies which would raise their incomes. They knew that the clock time calculated for each piece of metal they produced was mere artifice, and instead they focused rationally on the money they took home.

There was one glimmer of hope in this bleak factory landscape. The workers sometimes allocated some of their scarce time to producing things which had no utilitarian value. The Hungarian word for these items, *fuszizni*, is translated as *Schwarzarbeit* in the German edition and as the rather quaint 'Homers' in the English version. Neither of these translations is very satisfactory. The Hungarian word has implications of 'cheating', but for Haraszti the key point was that, during this clandestine activity, the workers asserted their control over the labour process, showed solidarity with each other, and did not calculate their time. The author allowed himself a vision of entering



the age of the 'Great Homer', where alienation and production controls would disappear, to be replaced by 'the ecstasy of true needs'. This was of course utopian fantasy, but in the meantime homers were tangible hints of creative autonomy, of freedom. In a typical passage, cited by Böll, Haraszti wrote:

By making homers we win back power over the machine and our freedom from the machine; skill is subordinated to as sense of beauty. However insignificant the object, its form of creation is artistic. This is all the more so because (mainly to avoid the reproach of theft) homers are rarely made with expensive, showy or semi-finished materials. They are created out of junk, from useless scraps of iron, from left-overs, and this ensures that their beauty comes first and foremost from the labour itself. (Haraszti 1977: 143)

### **The Lilies of the Field**

I have considered the work of peasants and the work of the factory. In Hungary many households, indeed many individuals, the so-called worker-peasants, continue to combine elements of both. For my third Hungarian example, however, I want to consider a large section of the population for whom these forms of work are foreign, either because they reject them in principle or because they have no access to them in practice.

Unemployment and casual employment have always been greater threats to workers than the immiserisation which Marx theorised. People who lack stable wage-labour jobs are often classified as 'marginal' to the societies in which they live. A recent anthropological collection, however, suggested that they be viewed more positively, as 'lilies of the field' (Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart 1999).<sup>48</sup> The examples studied by this group of researchers included Greek peasants who survived (despite heavy debts) thanks to their European Union subsidies. They also included London prostitutes and Hungarian Rom. The last were discussed by Michael Stewart on the basis of his 15 years of fieldwork in a small town not far from the village of the proper peasants (see Stewart 1997 for his fullest account).<sup>49</sup> He argued

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<sup>48</sup> The title comes from Matthew 6: 26–29, 34: 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ... Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'.

<sup>49</sup> The Rom have become a much more numerous presence in the village of Átány itself, a fact which has contributed to the irrevocable loss of its traditional 'proper peasant' character (Tamás Hofer, personal communication, 2001).

that the lives of these Rom were equally antithetical to the model of disciplined factory labour which socialist governments tried to force them into and to the seasonal rhythms of the peasants. The Rom emphatically denied the value of labour, the principle which the proper peasants in some respects shared with the socialists. Stewart developed the radical argument that the Rom lived without a future or a past, but only with a perpetual present through which to stumble and negotiate the best deals they could. Quite literally, the Rom achieved their moments of 'liberation' at horse markets, where the supreme accomplishment was successfully to cheat a *gazso*, a Hungarian peasant. Any financial profits were consumed more or less at once in spectacular bouts of drinking and singing, which celebrated the solidarity and equality of all (male) group members.

It seems there can be no question here of prudent calculations of future income streams from investments. There is no collective memory of past events, of traditions. These people do not merely resist the state and the obviously powerful classes in their environment; in a sense they reject even the household, because that too is an institution for the establishment of hierarchy and permanence. Stewart contrasted Rom ideology with Walter Benjamin's vision, rooted in a Judeo-Christian-Marxian tradition, of the 'angel of history':

... the Gypsies offer an alternative image of liberation. For the Gypsies there is no angel of history, nor is there a past to be redeemed. They live with their gaze fixed on a permanent present that is always becoming, a timeless now in which their continued existence as Rom is all that counts. ... Ultimately, neither angel nor Gypsy can effect his will, but the Gypsies are at least fortunate that the pile of debris that history throws up around them is constantly consigned to the homogenous, obliterating "sometime ago" (*varekana*) in which they talk of their past. (Stewart 1997: 245–246)

The frameworks and concepts of our major scholarly traditions offer little purchase on these people. Saint Matthew's account of Jesus's eloquent call to value the present and the ephemeral seems exceptional in the Christian tradition, and perhaps it is not intended to devalue future-oriented work.<sup>50</sup> My impression is that few taxpaying citizens in contemporary Europe favour calls for a radical separation of the right to work from the right to subsist and share in the accumulated wealth of humanity. The patterns of behaviour exemplified by many Rom in Hungary are seen by the vast majority of their co-citizens as a problem. Stewart and his colleagues recognised this. A high price was paid for the 'liberation' momentarily achieved by some Rom. The

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Paul: 'for even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat' (2 Thessalonians 3: 10).

wives of the men who achieved their cultural transcendence through drunken singing would have preferred that the money be spent differently, perhaps on better long-term accommodation for the family, perhaps in educational investment for their children. But these men had resisted socialist proletarianisation, and under capitalist conditions even fewer jobs were available to them. Prejudice and discrimination against Rom are widely thought to have increased in the postsocialist period. The obligatory wage-labour model of socialism has gone, but Hungarian society remains unsympathetic towards people whose values and identities are built on the rejection of mainstream models. The Rom may be an extreme case, but poverty and marginality have been increasing in most postsocialist societies; many of these people appear to display attitudes towards work and time which resemble those of the hunter-gatherers I mentioned earlier; the disapproving majority typically holds these attitudes responsible for the social problems experienced by the minority.<sup>51</sup>

## A General Framework

Let me now set Hungary aside and try to sketch a more general framework for the analysis of work in contemporary societies. Heinrich Böll insisted that Haraszti's insights into Hungary were as applicable in the capitalist west as in the socialist east: 'Non-alienated work, humour, beauty, pleasure are only for holidays. When they threaten efficiency, it's "anarchy"', he wrote (1977: 9). The parallel is confirmed by sociologist Huw Beynon's study of car workers in the Ford plant at Halewood, near Liverpool, conducted at approximately the same time as Haraszti's study (Beynon 1973; cf. Chinoy 1992 (1955)). Beynon found a strong spirit of solidarity among these workers. In the 1970s it was still premature to speak of the 'end of the working class' (Gorz 1980). Large parts of Beynon's work confirmed Marx's analysis of commodity production, as well as of the fatal limitations of trade unionism. The workers were crushingly alienated during the hours they spent in the factory. The techniques of the line were quite different from earlier forms of industrial work, but at Halewood there seemed to be no room for anything resembling *fuszizni*. One worker complained to Beynon: 'The company thinks it's so powerful it can change the clock. On a bank holiday the lads have to come in for the night shift. ... the Ford Motor Company says that the bank holiday starts at seven o'clock in the fucking morning. It's OK for them. We spend half the weekend in bed' (Beynon 1973: 101). Beynon concluded that

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<sup>51</sup> See Emigh and Szelényi 2001, and in particular the contribution of János Ladányi. See also Ladányi and Szelényi 2004; Stewart 2002; this volume, chapter 9.



the car workers 'hate the car plant in a way that the miners never hated the pit' (1973: 318–319).<sup>52</sup>

This was not, however, the end of the story. The Halewood men valued their jobs, for they were paid well for their monotonous work and had their reward in their leisure time. Many anthropologists have identified similar patterns and have contributed to a general shift of attention in economic anthropology away from work and towards consumption. Crushing alienation during one's working hours is bearable if one has the possibility of a satisfying identification through mass consumption.<sup>53</sup> This suggests a need to amend Erik Schwimmer's semiotic model. The new model (figure 3) must be built around the modern dichotomisation of working time and leisure time. To simplify the discussion, let us first focus only on the dimension of alienation and identification in the production of commodities and ignore the fact that some people continue to produce use values. Socialist industrial workers, with restricted consumption possibilities, would be candidates for category 1, except when they are making their homers. Plausible candidates for category 2 might be the prosperous self-employed, or those pursuing the profession of their choice and being well paid for doing so. Category 3 will contain people like the Halewood car workers, alienated in their working time but using their good wages to achieve transcendence in their leisure time. Category 4 contains persons who are fulfilled in their work but unable to express themselves outside it: perhaps some workaholic academics or the proverbial poet starving in his garret might serve as examples.

Category 1: Alienation in work and outside it

Category 2: Identification in work and outside it

Category 3: Alienation in work, identification outside it

Category 4: Identification in work, alienation outside it

Figure 3. Alienation and identification in modern conditions.

This schema has obvious limitations, for both subjectivist and objectivist applications. Many persons do not make the distinction between work and leisure time on which this grid depends. Others may make the distinction but be quite unable to implement it in their lives. Some young professionals may achieve identification in their job when they work for 40 hours a week, but

<sup>52</sup> One suspects that techniques have since changed for most miners as well, so that earlier forms of identity with the labour process have weakened. For a magnificent study of alienation and identification among miners in Bolivia, see Nash 1979.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel Miller (1994) analyses consumption in terms of Hegelian transcendence. Shopping is held to be the key liberating activity in some of the recent literature (see Jervis 1999).

when senior managers require them to increase the load to 50 or 60 hours, they may improve their bank balances but lose both their satisfaction at work and their ability to enjoy their leisure time. An even more serious limitation of this model is the failure to distinguish formal employment from secondary forms of work, familial and extra-familial, legal and illegal. The variety in this latter category is enormous, but some sort of formal-informal dichotomy does seem to be widespread in the contemporary world. Adapting this leads us to figure 4, in which the presence or absence of alienation in three types of activity generates eight possible positions for the subject.

	Formal Employment	Other Work	Leisure/Consumption
1	+	+	+
2	+	–	+
3	–	+	+
4	+	+	–
5	+	–	–
6	–	+	–
7	–	–	+
8	–	–	–

Figure 4. The possibilities for alienation with two types of work.

Of course some of these combinations are intuitively unlikely. Such crude schemas are rare in anthropology, but they may have their uses in structuring public debates about the workings of neoliberal labour markets and policy priorities. It would be utopian to imagine that all subjects can achieve position 8, full identification in all domains. Maximising the numbers of those who achieve this position is likely to mean increasing inequality and more alienation for others. Government action to create more low-skilled jobs in the public sector would be warranted if it could be shown that this would reduce the overall alienation of the persons who got those jobs; they might not gain much satisfaction or identification through the labour process itself, but even low wages might lead to greater self-esteem and empowerment as consumers. To be avoided is position 1, where alienation is the main characteristic of all domains: all the jobs are dirty and the incomes are so low that they cannot be redeemed by the consoling magic of consumption.

### Recent Work on Work

All this may strike you as rather too general and abstract. Before I move to a conclusion, let me therefore give some further concrete examples of changing patterns of work in our own age and how these have been analysed in the

literature. One of the most interesting developments over the last generation has been the rise and fall of the concept of the 'informal economy'. Its origins lay in the fieldwork of the Cambridge anthropologist Keith Hart in the West African city of Accra in the late 1960s (Hart 1973). Hart spoke of 'informal income opportunities' to explain how FraFra migrants were surviving in the slums where they lived, despite the fact that in the eyes of the state and its statisticians they were simply unemployed and contributing nothing to the country's national income. Hart showed that these newcomers to the city were not to be dismissed as unemployed or seen as a Marxist 'reserve army of labour' and he saw a potential for development in their evident entrepreneurial energies. This message was well received at the time by agencies such as the International Labour Organization, already disillusioned by the results of large-scale, top-down development schemes in the postcolonial countries. The argument that poor people should be helped to help themselves as part of a general strategy of 'development from below' was later much romanticised. It has been repudiated by Hart himself (1992). What were the problems?

First, encouraging informal work—by definition work outside the control and monitoring of the state—ran the risk of encouraging a range of criminal activities, such as drug dealing and prostitution. In addition to enabling 'bootstrap' development and self-help by the poor, policies which encouraged the informal sector also bred illegality and gave additional wealth-creating opportunities to those who were already prosperous in the formal sector. New businesses in the informal sector had new security needs, which were met by 'mafia'-type organisations which further undermined the power of the state and its legal and judicial machinery. It became increasingly difficult in such conditions to maintain a clear demarcation between formal and informal sector activities. Many people worked in both sectors. Many 'family' businesses employed apprentices in much the same way as a formal-sector factory: indeed, working hours were often longer and conditions more alienating in the sweatshops of the informal sector.

These and other criticisms were developed by Mark Holmstrom in his work on labour markets in India. In his first monograph, Holmstrom (1976) painted a polarised picture of a labour aristocracy in the factory jobs, enjoying many subsidies and security, in contrast with the teeming masses who had no such security but only more or less casual access to work. His second monograph, published only a few years later (1984), offered a more nuanced model: the formal sector was still everyone's preferred choice, but it was not an isolated 'citadel'; there were many links to other sections of the labour market, and many people and goods crossed the boundaries every day.



Similar conclusions about the interdependence of formal and informal work emerged from research in eastern Europe in the last decades of socialism (Hann 1990b; see also Róna-Tas 1997). Far from being subversive of the formal, socialist sector, informal activities were often the indispensable lubricant of the whole system. At the same time, the prioritising of the private and the theft of goods from the state fostered serious inefficiencies, and these too left a damaging legacy. Here again it may be oversimplistic to assume that work in the socialist sector was more alienating than additional personal work undertaken in the 'second economy'. The latter was likely to be better remunerated, but it might have to be undertaken at a Stakhanovite pace, whereas the routines of socialist offices and factories—where in my experience few tasks were ever urgent enough to interfere with the celebration of a colleague's name-day—could be a valued source of companionship and gratification.

The weakening of the wage-labour model has also helped to direct attention to expanding informal activities (often known as 'black' or 'underground') in contemporary capitalist economies. In some respects, today's neoliberal policies are taking us back to the conditions of urban life in the nineteenth century, before the full institutionalisation of wage labour. In his pioneering study in Kent, the British sociologist Ray Pahl confirmed some of the elements found by researchers in both the third and second worlds (Pahl 1984). Having previously suggested that people who were disadvantaged in the formal sector could take advantage of the opportunities of the informal sector, Pahl (like Keith Hart) later modified his position concerning the virtues of the latter. He found that the really poor tended to be excluded from the informal opportunities, partly because they lacked the resources to maintain the contacts through which those activities were organised (in pubs, clubs, etc.). Some of them did not even own the tools needed for self-provisioning activities in the garden.

Much recent research has focused on the household and the 'hidden' work which takes place there, notably that of the housewife (see Moore 1988). From this basic feminist insight, anthropologists and sociologists have called for much broader definitions of work and for more attention to be paid to subjective evaluations of the activities in which people engage. For example, intensive gardening may be entirely recreational and a source of use values for a moderately fit academic, but it may be a significant source of both exchange values and of the household food supply for an unemployed car worker. Pahl gives the example of a woman who is busy with a pile of ironing: the activity might be thoroughly alienating if it is carried out for monetary payment because the household needs the additional income to survive, but it might be a source of pleasure and identifica-

tion if she is doing it for the next performance of the local amateur dramatic society, of which she is an enthusiastic member.<sup>54</sup> Knowing that the pile is solely for her family does not tell us whether the work is likely to be experienced subjectively in terms of identification; it all depends on the particular circumstances which currently prevail in her household.

There seems to be general agreement on the desirability of broadening the definition of work away from wage labour and focusing on how the various different forms of work interact. This cannot mean a return to pre-industrial forms of embedded work. Rather, it means paying attention to new forms of embeddedness. The very definition of work remains a Pandora's box. It is possible to argue, for example, that one's investment in familial relationships should count as work, since these too depend on 'purposeful activity'. The economist Gary Becker (1998) has in effect collapsed the notion of labour back into the flow of all human social activities. Becker has challenged standard consumption theory based on individual preferences by modelling the household as a *production* unit, using time and other resources to maximise utility, given certain environmental constraints. He is surely right to assume that all of us, all the time, make decisions based on our perceptions of the opportunity cost of our time. But while the common-sense rationality of this approach is attractive and the elegance of his models amply justifies his Nobel prize, many anthropologists will question whether such models bring enlightenment. Economists neglect intra-household relationships that cannot be reduced to individual calculation, and they can tell us nothing about the value of the extra-household social identities which people obtain through work.

There is a large anthropological literature on the importance of identities obtained through working together, from those of proper peasants in Europe whose time is not yet commodified to those of railwaymen in Africa working in modern conditions (Grillo 1973). There is also a literature on what happens when these identities are undermined or destroyed. In their 'sociographic' study of the Austrian industrial village of Marienthal in the early 1930s, Marie Jahoda and her colleagues found that leisure (*Freizeit*) was a 'tragic gift' for these villagers. They wanted nothing more than to be back at work—not just for the money but also for the social contacts, for the additional *Lebensraum* which employment gave them. In comparison with the unemployed of Vienna, these village men were better off, in that they had some possibilities to retreat into natural economy (*Naturalwirtschaft*), that is, the production of use values. Nonetheless, their days were dominated

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<sup>54</sup> See Pahl 1988: 744–747 for other possible interpretations of the way this activity might be embedded in social relations. See also pp. 749–752 for a polemic against what Pahl terms 'the future-of-work industry'.

by 'doing nothing' (*Nichtstun*). Women, who had also lost their factory jobs, adapted better: they were busier than ever before running their households. But for the men, getting up, eating lunch, and going to bed were the only 'points of orientation' they had left; and they were not even punctual for their pathetic lunches. The researchers' valiant statistical efforts to measure time allocation were therefore rather unsuccessful. They concluded that

... both the general pattern of life and that of the individual show that the people of Marienthal have gone back to a more primitive, less differentiated experience of time. The new circumstances do not fit any longer an established time schedule. A life that is poorer in demands and activities has gradually begun to develop on a timetable that is correspondingly poor (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Zeisel 2002: 77).

Recent anthropological studies of how people cope with unemployment continue to bear out many conclusions of this classic study from the 1930s. It is all very well to recommend that male 'breadwinners' made redundant should learn to undertake more tasks in the household, or sign up for a free course at an evening school. Utility production by the household firm (in Becker's sense) could theoretically increase when the breadwinner becomes unemployed—for example, if he were to invest more time in rewarding relationships with his children. But what if such new domestic relationships are not socially valued, as was the case in Leo Howe's study of the 'ideology of employment' in Belfast (1990; see especially pp. 220–223)? Sometimes individuals and communities are able to develop new forms of social identity, but it is seldom easy for those who have once enjoyed and internalised the conditions of wage labour to match the capacity of the Rom for transcendence through the celebration of transience. The on-going transformation of the former German Democratic Republic is an interesting case in point. According to Wolfgang Engler (1999: 173–208), this was a socialist society which defined itself in terms of work, an *arbeiterliche Gesellschaft* par excellence, which deviated from the familiar capitalist norms of possessive individualism. While hardly 'disengaged from property' in the sense identified by Woodburn (1982) for egalitarian hunter-gatherers, GDR citizens seem to have been less acquisitive, less individualistically possessive, than their counterparts in West Germany or Hungary. In the socialist system of the GDR, owners were accustomed to circulating and giving their goods away when this served the ultimate good of establishing closer informal links to their neighbours, friends, and fellow citizens. Engler's account evokes conditions redolent of ancient Germanic law, in which persons and things were not sharply separated before the emergence of contract, property, and alienation. It is doubtless in some ways exaggerated. Yet we know



from many other studies of the GDR that, beyond the rituals and the ideology, highly valued qualities of sociability developed above all in the workplace. The jobs may have been poorly paid, but they provided a secure identity for virtually everyone.<sup>55</sup>

Against this background, German reunification proved catastrophic for very large sections of the population. West German labour costs were and remain among the highest in Europe. Some politicians still celebrate this fact as a sign of the country's prosperity, but high unemployment rates, even in the west, have caused many to perceive labour costs and inflexibility (e.g. in regulations constraining the employer's power to make workers redundant) to be the country's major problem. Even though few workers in the former GDR were brought up to western levels, labour costs rose sharply in relation to other postsocialist countries, and foreign investments have been predictably low. Meanwhile, huge sectors of industry have been acquired by western companies and then more or less rapidly liquidated, rendering millions of workers unemployed. The young and mobile have migrated westwards in vast numbers, leaving behind an ageing population which is massively dependent on state transfer income. One can speculate that many of those who participated in the demonstrations before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall would not have voted for 'reunification' if they had known the fate which lay in store for them: either adjust to the rigors of neoliberal labour markets or be unemployed. Now, according to some commentators, their only hope lies in an expansion of the voluntary sector, *Bürgerarbeit* (Beck 1999).<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

In this lecture I have touched on various general issues to do with work, sketched some simple typologies, and given examples of work in specific contexts. I have relied heavily on the terms *alienation* and *identification*, aware that these are rooted in our own Western traditions. In addressing central issues of contemporary European societies I have more or less explicitly advanced an argument that many might consider to be reactionary. Regardless of whether our focus is on the individual, the household, the community, the state, or the entire world, it seems to me that the secure wage

<sup>55</sup> For some individual examples, see Clemens 1998. Hübner and Tenfelde (1999) provide a wide range of studies of changing labour markets in the former GDR. See also Birgit Müller's (2002) discussion of 'socialism as performance'.

<sup>56</sup> A few years later a government led by the Social Democrats tried to improve the efficiency of labour exchanges by requiring government officials to treat the unemployed as 'customers' (*Kunden*), who should be encouraged to find solutions to their problems by thinking and acting in the manner of entrepreneurs (*'Ich AG'*, literally 'I plc').

labour jobs are still, despite all the criticisms which have been made of this form, conducive to the shaping of more positive social identities than we know how to shape in its absence. It remains preferable to be an alienated worker than to be alienated and unemployed. I therefore reject facile invocations of anthropological evidence to argue that the modern concept of work in the form of wage labour is antithetical to 'human nature'. The romantic strand in our discipline does occasionally emit such messages. I have paid more attention to pragmatic, empirical studies. Anthropological work such as Leo Howe's in Belfast uncovers what actually happens in an industrial society when existential security and personal and collective identities are stripped away.

Modern wage labour can be viewed as a product of Polanyi's 'great transformation'. There was nothing like it among the food collectors and peasants of the past, and yet preindustrial urban societies are nonetheless full of precedents. A sharp distinction between labour and work is therefore problematic: both are always embedded in other social activities, though the forms of this embeddedness are always changing. Marx and Engels turned to ethnographic evidence to support their arguments that the Communist societies of the future should be able to escape capitalist labour and return to earlier forms of work. It is tempting to repeat this tack in an age when our model of wage labour is demonstrably weakening. But such arguments depend on an indefensible notion of time. Meanwhile the Marxian goal of transcending proletarianisation is arguably being approached not through a transition to communism but surreptitiously, through an accentuation of features which Marx himself deplored, above all the fetishism which characterises contemporary consumption practices.

Academics are privileged commentators on these developments, but our taste for new ideas and theories can lead us to overlook important continuities in the world around us. I am unsympathetic towards some recent trends.<sup>57</sup> The massive wave of interest in the informal economy and in 'post-Fordist' methods of production has produced many interesting studies. Yet Fords are still around, in demand all over the world, and most other cars, from Korea to Brazil, are still produced with basic techniques similar to those Beynon found in the factory he studied on Merseyside. As for alleged successes in creating more 'flexible labour markets' in Britain and the United States, I find it hard to raise much enthusiasm, especially since so

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<sup>57</sup> At the University of Kent, where Ray Pahl pioneered research into the informal economy in the 1980s, the topic of work drifted out of fashion in the 1990s. A strong programme in the 'sociology of economic life' was replaced by courses devoted to consumption and 'postmodern' identities. Canterbury is not exceptional in this respect; the situation seems no more promising in anthropology than it is in sociology.

many of the new jobs are neither full-time nor secure. The old social democratic goals may appear unrealistic, even antediluvian, in an increasingly globalised world economy. But what is the alternative moral basis for future social divisions of work?



## ***Chapter 5***

### **Transforming Peasants: Exploitation and Neoliberal Markets in Four Societies**

Between 1976, when I began fieldwork in Tázlár, and 1986, when I spent five months in Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, I also spent the best part of three years in Poland and Turkey. I have continued all the projects I launched during this intensive decade. Fieldwork fatigue has not yet set in and I have not ‘cleared the files’ on any one of these projects, though the degree to which I have written them up varies greatly. This essay is a first effort to draw the four together into a single analytical framework.

I selected the four countries and my field sites within them largely by accident, not according to a master plan thought out when I was still a graduate student. All four projects, however, had common orientations and, if not careful designs, then at least a purposeful sequence of questions in the background. Poland was a good follow-up to Hungary: in the late 1970s it was relatively easy for a Westerner to work there and it gave me the opportunity to investigate rural transformation in a socialist country which had failed to implement collectivisation. Turkey enabled me to extend the comparisons to a non-socialist state which was similarly concerned to modernise its rural sector through concerted development policies. Finally, my first visit to Xinjiang in 1986 allowed me to begin to explore China’s new ‘socialist commodity economy’ in a region where the bulk of the population used a Turkic language in everyday life. It was to be another 10 years before I obtained significant acquaintance with rural conditions in Xinjiang, and I hope to continue fieldwork there in 2006–2007.

Each of these projects has, by the contemporary standards of ‘multi-sited ethnography’ (Marcus 1995) been a rather old-fashioned effort based on fieldwork largely restricted to one location. I have always been aware of the absurdity of pretending that one village can serve as a microcosm of a country. I have not disguised local specificities, but tried always to analyse them with reference to wider systems of political economy. This has primar-

ily meant the framework of the state. When I began these projects each of these states exercised substantially greater economic autonomy than it does today. China still has by far the largest population of any state in the world, but in recent years it has allowed grain prices to be determined by world markets. Turkey began to open up its highly statist economy shortly after my first fieldwork there in 1982–1983, and this opening continues to gather pace. As for Poland and Hungary, both are now members of the European Union, and some of their farmers enjoy the benefits of the Common Agricultural Policy. Though subsidies at the European level have declined from previous levels, and the small-scale, undercapitalised units of the kind over-represented in most of the new member states do not fare well, my point here is simply that the ability of individual states to shape economic policy has everywhere been curtailed.

Despite the changes which have taken place in recent years and the great differences between the four cases, I locate all four in the framework of 'peasant studies'. The very term *peasant* has provoked definitional debates. Many anthropologists are uncomfortable with a term which implies qualities of rusticality and primitiveness, in contrast to the 'modern' term *farmer*. In some countries (for example, Poland) the distinction between peasant and farmer can be drawn in more or less the same way it can be drawn in English, where the term *smallholder* offers a further option. In Xinjiang the term *dikhan* seems best translated as peasant. There, as in Turkey, it is difficult to render the distinction between peasant and farmer. The late Paul Stirling used to insist that 'villager' was the only adequate translation of the Turkish *köylü*. These are concerns to which I shall return at the end of the chapter.

When I began fieldwork in the eastern European countryside in the 1970s, peasants were the subject of a lively literature, to which Eric Wolf (1966) and Teodor Shanin (1971) were major contributors. The key texts of Alexander Chayanov had been translated into English (1966) and his ideas were already familiar to economic anthropologists, thanks mainly to Marshall Sahlins (1974). If the models of this Russian agrarian economist could be adapted for application to 'tribal' cultivators, then it seemed obvious that what Sahlins termed the 'domestic mode of production' might have some relevance for eastern European villagers. However, some anthropologists were already beginning to point to weaknesses in the Chayanovian approach. For example, by emphasising the demographic composition of the household, Chayanov tended to neglect the significance of social groups and networks and the role of the local community (Donham 1981). Moreover, he treated the household as a 'black box', neglecting its internal divisions and, in particular, the extent to which the labour burden fell disproportionately upon women (Cook 1984; Sirman 1990).

Chayanov emphasised the 'self-exploitation' of the rural household. The 'family-labour farm' did not have to pay wages to its members and this enabled it to carry on producing commodities in conditions in which no capitalist enterprise, obliged to pay wages for labour, could possibly survive. Other investigators of the 'agrarian question' paid more attention to changing 'macro' structures, notably the spread of capitalist class relations throughout society (Kautsky 1899, Lenin 1977[1899]). In anthropology, Wolf (1966) led the way in classifying peasantries in terms of different modes of surplus extraction. The sociologist Shanin opted for a vaguer formulation: peasants generally occupied an 'underdog position'. Additional characteristics of peasant society (some of them the subject of heated debates) were the sharpness of the divide between countryside and town; the predominance of simple, labour-intensive technologies; and a high degree of self-sufficiency, with concomitant low levels of marketing and low responsiveness to market prices.

Some of these debates continue (e.g. in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*), yet the field seems to have fragmented and lost momentum in recent years. Certainly the term *peasant* seems to have become less central to the social sciences. It seems unlikely that this corresponds to a general upturn in the fortunes of the rural population world-wide. Yet it is undoubtedly the case that, at least in many parts of Eurasia, the second half of the twentieth century brought a substantial transformation of the conditions of rural existence. Although Wolf's classification of a socialist mode of surplus extraction may be accurate for the years in which collectivisation was harshly implemented, many parts of the socialist world began later (arguably out of necessity and despite their ideological preferences) to invest resources disproportionately back into their rural sectors (Hann et al. 2003a; this volume, chapter 2). Turkey's rural society has undergone similar processes of modernisation (Stirling 1993).

My comparative framework in this chapter is informed by two contrasting analytical systems, those of neoclassical economics and of Marxism. I take these to be the two most powerful intellectual currents in modern social theory. There is no space here to explore the complexities and subtleties of each of these bodies of theory, nor is there space for much ethnographic detail. Instead I specify ideal types—that is, I focus on a few key ideas for each analytical approach. In the model of neoclassical economics, value is determined by the choices made by rational consumers, who act in a context of free markets on the basis of their subjective preferences. Issues of distribution and exploitation are pushed into the background. Incomes accrue to those who own and invest capital, as well as to those who own only their labour power. It is assumed that both labour and capital are mobile factors of



production and that where high profits are earned, competition and innovation will sooner or later work to the benefit of the consumer. This model has proven itself to have much more than analytical power; it has had great influence on policymaking in recent decades and forms the intellectual bedrock of the ideology of neoliberalism. The model's correspondence to reality has become closer in the sense that states have lost much of their power to obstruct the mobility of the factors of production. Over the years the techniques of neoclassical economics have found many echoes in anthropology, e.g. in approaches characterised as 'formalist' and 'decision-taking'.

An alternative analytical model is that of classical Marxism, according to which all social formations beyond the stage of 'primitive communism' are based upon class conflict, and the key concept is that of exploitation. In capitalist society the basic conflict is that between the owners of the means of production and the proletariat. In place of free markets, the Marxist theory of value is based on labour: goods are exchanged at rates determined by the 'socially necessary labour time' which has been expended in their production. Some social scientists have argued that the Marxist perspective can be readily extended to other forms of inequality—for example, to gender exploitation. Others favour retaining the original emphasis on the extraction of surplus value at the point of production.<sup>58</sup>

In contrast to the neoclassical model, in the Marxist case a gap seems to have widened in recent years between the ideal type and the real world. Some central Marxist assumptions, such as those concerning the immiserisation of the working classes and the labour theory of value, are hard to sustain (Roemer 1982). Anthropologists, too, have pointed to difficulties with the labour theory of value in pre-industrial societies, where one might have expected its explanation of rates of exchange to be more convincing than in modern, capital-dominated economies (Firth 1979). Some have scoffed at the possibility of formulating a rigorous definition of terms such as *exploitation* and *surplus*. George Dalton (1974) complained cantankerously that both terms were 'prejudicial words used by some social scientists (perhaps unintentionally) to condemn only those systems of social stratification they disapprove of' (1974: 559). He argued that, in a loose sense, exploitation was present in virtually all human societies, and he challenged the contributors to the peasant studies literature, most of them Western neo-Marxists, to study the forms it took under socialism. Dalton also suggested a more precise, 'technical' meaning for exploitation, namely, 'coerced payments'. A comparative analysis of exploitation, thus defined, would require a careful

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<sup>58</sup> For arguments on both sides, see Nielsen and Ware 1997.

specification of what was transferred and what was given in return for the taxes or tribute received by the alleged exploiters.

Neither of the two general models is adequate for predicting actual patterns of production and exchange. Neoclassical economic theory has gained in influence as market forces have expanded their reach at the expense of states in recent years, but this process can never be completed. The factors of production will never become perfectly mobile, if only because economic actors themselves attach value to local identities and because they take seriously such notions as exploitation, even if some social scientists do not. But I agree with Dalton that ethnographers need to specify carefully what is transferred, and to include accounts of local, 'subjective' models of socio-economic interaction in their analyses. In addition to applying analytical models, it is important to understand the ideals of fairness and justice which people develop in opposition to perceived injustices. At the end of this chapter I shall show that the research programme which emerges from these considerations is not free of methodological and ethical problems.

### **'The Worse the Better': Self-Exploitation in Poland**

Wisłok Wielki (Greater Wisłok) in 1979–1981—'years of crisis' as I termed them in the title of my 1985 monograph—was a tiny, inefficient component of Poland's highly inefficient socialist economy. Located in the Carpathian south-east of the country, adjacent to the border with Slovakia (see map 1, chapter 7), Wisłok's ecological and economic profile differed from those of settlements in the more fertile lowlands. Like many other communities in this corner of socialist Poland, Wisłok had a tragic political history. The indigenous population, whom I shall here term Lemko-Ukrainians, was deported in two steps in 1945 and 1947. The latter deportation, especially, was a prototype for what has come to be termed ethnic cleansing (see chapters 7 and 9).

I maintained that a village very unlike most other Polish villages was nonetheless highly suitable for my study. Wisłok was resettled by ethnic Poles shortly after the evacuation of the original inhabitants, and their history over the following generation exposed the contours of socialist agricultural policy with exceptional clarity. After the political disturbances of 1956, the socialist authorities gave up all attempts to impose mass collectivisation. This circumstance distinguished Poland from all neighbouring states (the only other country in eastern Europe where the peasantry was largely successful in avoiding this fate was Yugoslavia). It meant above all more continuity with pre-socialist forms of family farming. The continuities were especially great in southern Poland, before 1918 the Austrian province of Galicia. This region was notorious for rural poverty and extreme fragmenta-

tion of plots due to partible inheritance. These characteristics applied just as much to the Lemko-Ukrainian districts as to Polish and Ukrainian villages north of the mountains.

The ancestors of the inhabitants of Wisłok had paid tribute to the king in Warsaw, but this upland region escaped the harsher controls imposed during the so-called second feudalism (see Nagengast 1991). The mountains were impossible to police effectively and served as an open frontier for those fleeing the more oppressive environment of the plains. Later, following peasant emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century, an orthodox Marxist would have identified two persisting sources of exploitation: Jewish tavern keepers and Greek Catholic priests. The former were eliminated during the Second World War and the latter shortly afterwards, along with the rest of the Lemko-Ukrainian population.

The resettlement of Wisłok was planned and executed by the socialist authorities in the 1950s. They divided the land into egalitarian parcels of six hectares, which, given infertile soils and the unfavourable upland climate, were barely sufficient to meet subsistence needs. Small-scale farming was typically supplemented by other sources of income in surrounding forests, sawmills, or more distant factories. Machines and other services were theoretically available through an agricultural circle in the larger village of Komańcza, some 10 kilometres away. In practice this did not function well, and in the 1950s and 1960s the peasants of Wisłok had no opportunity to modernise or expand their farms. They consumed a high proportion of what they produced, but they were also encouraged and expected to produce for the market. For basic products such as grain and milk, this meant a socialist market in which prices were determined by the state. Whereas most other Polish peasants could also dispose of their produce privately in local markets where prices were not controlled, this option was hardly open to villagers in Wisłok, for whom the district centre of Sanok was some 50 kilometres away along roads which were not fully asphaltised until the 1970s.

The nation-wide abandonment of collectivisation meant, at least in the eyes of some Communist Party functionaries, that it was necessary to remain constantly vigilant, lest capitalist class divisions resurface in the countryside (or, in the case of this region, lest they appear for the first time). The peasantry as a whole, being still the owner of the land it farmed, was perceived to be a suspect class. The slogan 'the worse the better' (see Hann 1985a: 167) was a simple formulation of the idea that blocking economic opportunities would hasten the ultimate resolution of these class tensions. In this climate of ideological hostility, managing to avoid collectivisation was evidently a Pyrrhic victory. The peasants, who retained nominal ownership rights, were deprived of possibilities to modernise their farmwork and lifestyles, which in



this period were already changing rapidly in neighbouring countries. The resulting shortages of food were undoubtedly a component in successive explosions of protest in the cities.

The leadership of Edward Gierek in the 1970s brought some alleviation of this fundamental tension but no real solution. During these years the government created a category of 'specialist' farmers, who received a variety of supports to enable them to produce the agricultural products which were in short supply in Poland's markets. In the case of Wisłok the authorities granted peasants permission to expand acreage and generous credits to assist them in acquiring machines (notably tractors) as their exclusive property and in making other investments. These provisions were controversial and divisive: farmers not classified as specialists alleged that the criteria applied by the authorities were more political than economic.

In Wisłok a few farmers did begin to produce more for the market, but even the results of this minority were inconsistent. During the years of my fieldwork the specialists complained that crucial inputs were unavailable when needed, or they were so expensive that it was uneconomical to produce for the market. The prices paid for grain, milk, and other animal products were effectively controlled by the state and they did not rise when input costs rose. Despite improved communications, for the peasants of Wisłok private marketing channels were almost non-existent. As an example of the absurdity of this socialist economy, villagers liked to point to the fact that it was cheaper to buy bread in the village shop and use it as pig feed than it was to buy any other source of animal fodder. To act according to this rationality was the radical contradiction of traditional peasant morality, which attached the highest value to bread.

The Gierek policies contributed to a widening of income differentials in the countryside. This continued after my fieldwork and was expressed, for example, in tensions within the Rural Solidarity movement between those who sought to defend the interests of the peasantry as a whole and those more concerned to open up opportunities for entrepreneurial family farming. In the postsocialist years the latter tendency has gained strength. Analysts have identified an intensifying polarisation: a new stratum of commercial farmers is emerging, but at the turn of the century the great majority of farms in Poland were massively disappointed by postsocialist policies and declining real prices for their main products, notably milk. Some producers have tried to boost their incomes by adding water to increase the quantity of milk delivered, but such strategies have failed in the face of increasingly frequent and stringent quality checks. The differentiation which began in the 1970s is visible, in terms of who has built new houses and who owns tractors and cars. But even the more entrepreneurial saw no reason to invest further in

farming in the 1990s: low yields in this upland environment meant that a system which provided a moderate price incentive for a plains farmer left no incentive at all for farmers in the mountains. Wislok remains, therefore, on the whole egalitarian. No villager works for other private farmers, so the classical form of exploitation feared by socialists has still not materialised (it has in other regions of Poland). The main source of supplementary income, now as under socialism, is in the forestry sector.

It is easy to feel sympathy for the farmers of Wislok, who on each occasion on which I have visited since 1990 have expressed their disillusionment with their government's agricultural policies and their fears concerning EU accession.<sup>59</sup> Yet it would be difficult to claim that they have been exploited, at any rate in the technical Marxist sense, in order to finance the country's industrialisation. In some cases the credits extended by the authorities to the 'specialists' were never followed by a significant expansion of production. The number of tractors has increased in recent years, and in relation to production levels the village should have to be considered over-mechanised. This is common throughout the Polish countryside, as a consequence of the failure to reform the agrarian structure in the socialist period. Other households, which did not receive any extra subsidies, continued to practise a variant of self-exploitation. It is difficult to speak of the extraction of surplus value because payments to farmers have been in excess of what the market or 'socially necessary labour time' would have specified. Industrial goods have flowed into the countryside, and levels of consumption there have risen. This is particularly apparent in the money spent on new housing.<sup>60</sup>

From a narrowly economic point of view it was a mistake to seek to re-create a 'traditional' peasant economy in this location. Growing cereals and producing milk in this part of the Carpathians contradicted both the logic of the neoclassical market and that of Marxist 'socially necessary labour time'; sheep would probably have been a better investment. The question now is whether this farm economy will continue to stagnate for years to come or whether the brave new world of EU 'integrated rural development' can create new employment opportunities for the inhabitants of this scenic region. Such measures would take the economy 'beyond the market', but they might be entirely compatible with 'socially necessary labour time' in

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<sup>59</sup> During a brief visit to the village in May 2005, after writing this chapter, I was told that those farmers now in receipt of EU subsidies were well satisfied with the new system, though they remained apprehensive that these payments would soon be withdrawn.

<sup>60</sup> Alongside farm income, the incomes earned by labour migrants, both local and long-distance, and transfers from relatives abroad, are of greater significance in many villages. Even in Wislok, an important contribution to the costs of new housing derives from exploitative labour in cities such as Toronto and Cleveland.

the sense that the creation of jobs to sustain the quality of the landscape or in tourism would be in the interests of the whole society.

Or would it? The answer surely depends on the unit of analysis. Poland's territory is largely flat. The hills around Wisłok Wielki could indeed be made more aesthetically pleasing in order to attract more tourists from the urban population. The rural economist Jerzy Wilkin has suggested that the entire region which used to form the province of Austrian Galicia should be conserved as a kind of museum of the European peasantry.<sup>61</sup> But who would visit this museum? The future of 'agrarian tourism' is more likely to be concentrated in or close to areas of outstanding beauty, such as the Tatras, with which 'second-grade' locations such as the hills around Wisłok will never be able to compete. Besides, who can be confident that rural tourism in Poland will continue to expand? Many Poles now prefer to explore other countries. Substantial investments—whether by the Polish state, the EU, or some combination of the two—in improving tourist infrastructure and sprucing up the forest walkways could turn out to be no more beneficial to local villagers in the long term than were socialist attempts to make them successful farmers. It may be that the population of Wisłok today, though a fraction of the size of the earlier Lemko-Ukrainian population, is still too large to be viable. For the time being, many residents continue to practise a form of self-exploitation which verges on natural economy. This lifestyle is harsh, especially in the long winters, and neither the neoliberal nor the Marxist should wish it on anyone.

## **Between Feudalism and the 'Socialist Commodity Economy':**

### **Xinjiang, China**

In comparison with the continuities of the Polish countryside (which extended even to Wisłok, in the sense that the authorities carefully re-established the conditions of the old peasant economy following political rupture), other socialist economies present more dramatic narratives. Certainly this would appear to be the case for the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of north-west China. My fieldwork among the Uyghur peasants who for centuries have cultivated the oases of the Tarim basin has been very limited in comparison with the other three ethnographic investigations which form the basis of this chapter. In this section I draw primarily on visits Ildikó Bellér-Hann, and I made to a number of settlements of the Kashgar oasis in summer 1996. In particular, survey work in one quarter of the township of

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<sup>61</sup> In comments on a paper given at the 2004 *IAMO Forum* which presented a gloomy prognosis for the future of agriculture in this region: see Żmija and Tyran 2004.



Awat created opportunities to hear peasants express their views on their current economic circumstances and those of the recent past (Bellér-Hann 1997; Hann 1999a).<sup>62</sup>

As in the case of the new Polish community in Wislok, the more distant past—that is, the pre-socialist era—seemed to have had little influence on social memory. The society of that time was characterised by complex social stratification, with peasants positioned at the bottom. Surpluses were extracted from cultivators through both political mechanisms, that is, the payment of taxes to local lords, and economic mechanisms, that is, through sales to merchants in the marketplace. The cultivators were internally differentiated, but local groups were also characterised by strong notions of community, as expressed, for example, in rituals and hospitality (Bellér-Hann 2005). The uncertainties of the natural environment were one set of hazards. Another was the social and political chaos which engulfed the region repeatedly from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. For the ideologists of socialism, as elsewhere in China, this was the era of ‘feudalism’.

After eliminating larger landowners, the socialists who came to power in 1949 promoted various forms of collective farms. In 1958 they went a step further than their Soviet counterparts. In the course of the Great Leap Forward, peasants became members of gigantic ‘people’s communes’ (*gongshe* is the Uyghur adaptation of the Chinese term). The next level of control was that of the ‘brigade’ (*dadüy*), but land was farmed at the level of the ‘production team’ (*shaodüy*), which usually corresponded to a single hamlet or one section of a large village. These collective methods did not prove conducive to economic efficiency. The results of these policies were catastrophic famines in many parts of the country. In Xinjiang, too, peasants recall the entire decade of ‘Cultural Revolution’ (1966–1976) as one of hunger and suffering.

At the same time, however, Maoist ideology asserted the need for balanced development of town and countryside (‘walking on two legs’). In some regions the resources which flowed into rural industrialisation were considerable. In Xinjiang substantial improvements were made to communications and irrigation systems. Despite these investments in infrastructure,

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<sup>62</sup> This research was undertaken in the course of a grant to Bellér-Hann from the Economic and Social Research Council (R 235709, ‘The historical and contemporary anthropology of Eastern Turkestan’). We were not permitted to reside in the countryside but instead visited Awat (along with two other townships) regularly by bicycle from our base at Kashgar Teachers’ College.

As we discovered during a month-long visit in summer 2005, much has changed in rural Xinjiang in recent years. The requirement to grow cotton has been generally relaxed, as have other forms of coercive payment discussed below. There appears to be considerable regional variation in these developments. We were not able to re-visit Awat on this occasion.

the inefficiency of the new collective organisation of production ensured that the extraction of surplus value remained at a low level.

The period of 'socialist commodity economy', which opened up in the 1980s and is associated with the reformist party chairman Deng Xiaoping, is described by Uyghur peasants simply as the 'era of freedom'. In the framework of the 'responsibility system', the household has once again become the main unit of production throughout the country. Land was distributed on an egalitarian basis. Legally it is not owned by its users, but people tend to speak of their plots as if they were owners. Demographic circumstances inevitably lead to new inequalities. We found that land was not regularly redistributed to take account of the fluctuating numbers of family members. Land allocations in the oasis of Kashgar are extremely small—typically around 1 *mo* (one sixth of an acre) per adult household member when the allocations were made in the early 1980s.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the radicalism of the Maoist period and the government's denunciation of feudalism, which has remained a prominent ideological theme in the reform period, a closer examination of rural households in the neighbourhoods of Kashgar reveals continuities with the local past and a large measure of conformity to general models of peasantry. Political subordination has not been significantly modified: the institutional centres of the brigade and commune have been renamed but not in practice disbanded in the reform period. They continue to house a large bureaucratic apparatus, among whom at least some of the leading cadres are non-local, Han Chinese. Technologically, too, this peasant economy remains highly traditional. The main resource is the labour power of the household, and little capital has been accumulated in private hands. Threshing is the only task for which machines are used; formerly owned and maintained by the brigade, by 1996 most of them seemed to be in private ownership.<sup>64</sup>

In a strategy typical of 'green revolution' programmes in many other parts of the world, the authorities have sought to persuade peasants to adopt new seed varieties and cropping methods for maize. Peasants in 1996 were indignant that the authorities were, by requiring the use of plastic film to promote plant growth, interfering in the process of production itself. From the point of view of the authorities this was an enlightened initiative to

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<sup>63</sup> Since the early 1990s family planning policies have limited rural Uyghur, as members of a national minority, to three children. These policies are extremely unpopular, but it has become increasingly difficult to circumvent these controls. But even though birth rates have declined, the density of settlement in the oases of southern Xinjiang remains very high.

<sup>64</sup> In 2005 we found that many peasants had also become owners of small tractors. The discussion here applies to the Uyghur 'peasant sector' as we knew it in 1996. Some areas of Xinjiang are cultivated by large state farms, by the Production and Construction Corps, or by new private entrepreneurs. Most of the labour on these large farms is Han, not Uyghur.

increase output and thereby peasant incomes. From the point of view of the growers it was an unwelcome intrusion; they alleged that the new grain was inferior in taste, while its labour requirements were more demanding.

Peasants were also required to plant cotton and to sell the crop to the state at fixed prices. This work, too, was generally disliked because of its intensive labour demands. Some said they would prefer to use their cotton plots for additional grain production. Some claimed that the price they received was well below the world market price and that the authorities were the main beneficiaries of the coerced cotton sales. The authorities defended their cotton policy on the grounds that it generated an important source of cash income for households.<sup>65</sup>

Under Maoist socialism, as in the classical Soviet system, collectivised agriculture was required to meet politically determined production targets—even though, in practice, they usually proved unattainable. In rural Kashgar we were surprised to find that, almost two decades after the abandonment of collective farming methods, the system of compulsory deliveries to the state had not been abandoned. Each rural household was required to hand over a quantity of grain determined by the surface area it farmed. Payment was made for this delivery, but at a rate significantly below the prevailing market rate. Strict controls prevented attempts to cheat, e.g. by handing over a product containing excessive chaff. Peasants were free to sell their surpluses in the nearby city, and Kashgar has once again emerged as a market centre for a vast region. However, the majority of peasants with whom we spoke did not produce significant surpluses, because their holdings were too small. Most of their production took the form of wheat, and most of it was consumed by the household. We came across cases in which households could not produce sufficient grain to cover their own anticipated needs and were therefore obliged to purchase wheat on the market in order to meet their production target. The political nature of the continuing exploitation of the direct producers is particularly clear in such cases.

The continued levy of *corvée*, or unpaid labour, by the local authorities for purposes such as road building and maintenance of irrigation systems was another manifestation of exploitative practices which had a long history in rural Xinjiang. Compared to earlier decades, there was more flexibility by the mid-1990s. In particular, richer families could evade this obligation by paying for substitute labour at the going rate. In this way, the coercive political appropriation of labour was converted into an economic appropriation.

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<sup>65</sup> In 2005 we were informed that, beginning in 2003, the local authorities had abandoned their policies to promote cotton, since the higher-level state authorities no longer guaranteed price supports. Despite the greater uncertainty, many peasants were still opting 'voluntarily' (*öz ihtiyar bilän*) to grow this crop.



Often, however, the solution was found not in a one-off cash payment but through the rapid development of new relations of patronage and dependency between households with increasingly unequal endowments

In contrast to the peasants of Wisłok, those in Xinjiang were not free to migrate in search of employment in the cities. The peasant remains in principle tied to his or her registered place of residence. In practice, by the 1990s these regulations were being defied on a massive scale throughout China. Xinjiang became one of the main receiving regions for the surplus rural populations of provinces such as Sichuan (with the consequence that the visibility of Han Chinese, especially in the cities, increased sharply). The proximity of the city has meant that some peasants in townships such as Awat have been able to find work there and thereby achieve a higher standard of living than their neighbours. Of greater economic significance in the villages we visited was the pursuit of 'sideline production' within the rural household, such as raising sheep and making felt (Bellér-Hann 1998). The construction of an elaborate gate to the dwelling was a common external indication of wealth. Income disparities were evidently a factor of increasing importance inside the community, but the rural-urban divide also remained significant, e.g. in the provision of social security and healthcare, and in access to good schools and to jobs. As in the Polish case, the villagers acknowledged their rural identity with a term which translates better as 'peasant' than as 'farmer'. In Poland the term *chłop*, though acknowledged, often has an ironic and self-deprecating implication and it has gradually given way to *rolnik*, farmer. Uyghur villagers, however, cannot but be conscious of their identity as *dikhan*, and this is celebrated in popular culture.<sup>66</sup>

In summary, by the mid-1990s a sense of disillusionment seemed to have set in among Uyghur peasants. Following the initial euphoria which accompanied the demise of Maoist socialism, it became increasingly evident that peasant conditions had not fundamentally changed. Household production once again served primarily the subsistence needs of members, technologies remained simple, the expansion of farms was precluded, movement was restricted, and labour was exploited by the state both directly, in the form of compulsory work groups, and indirectly, in the form of compulsory deliveries of wheat to the state at below-market prices. In peasant perceptions, the market rate was a fair price, rather than an alternative mechanism of exploitation. Under these conditions *dikhanchilik* (which is also the standard term for farming, agriculture) became prominent in subjective identity assertions: the gulf between town and countryside remained wide, and the

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<sup>66</sup> In 1996 a cassette recording of the 'peasant's lament' enjoyed great popularity as a thinly veiled political protest against the burdens imposed upon Uyghur peasants in recent years (Bellér-Hann 1997).

peasant remained emphatically the underdog. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to imply that Uyghur peasants were entirely negative about their present circumstances. Those old enough to remember the Maoist period were in no doubt that they had become much better off since the 1980s. The distinctively socialist form of exploitation—compulsory deliveries—persisted, and new market forms had been added, leading to new forms of inequality. But this hybrid system was preferred to its predecessor, above all because it offered greater existential security. While Uyghur peasants would in principle welcome the abolition of the non-market mechanisms of exploitation, some might also be fearful for their long-term social security if, for example, the market principle were to be extended to land itself. For the same reasons, villagers might regret an end to the authorities' paternalistic promotion of sideline economic activities, which have benefited many. Peter Ho (2005) has argued that, across the entire country, the present ambiguity in property rights and the redistributive power of the authorities provide the best guarantee that no one's basic subsistence entitlements will be threatened. Under present conditions, however, with the rural population continuing to expand and labour still restricted in its mobility, it seems likely that Uyghur peasants will continue to perceive the basic antagonism of Xinjiang rural society as one which opposes them, the peasantry as a class, to Han Chinese powerholders (I explore this relation further in chapter 9).

### **Recidivist Peasants? The End of the Third Way in Tázlár**

Hungary, too, pursued a model of 'market socialism', and the village of Tázlár exemplified the country's flexibility, which began even before the official adoption of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968. As I described in chapter 3, Tázlár and many other settlements of the Homokhátság were, for pragmatic reasons, able to avoid full collectivisation according to the Soviet model. The link between family and land was preserved, albeit under greatly changed conditions.

Like the soils around the upland community in Wisłok, the soils of Tázlár are mostly of poor quality. They are much less suited to arable farming than those of adjacent regions. In the late feudal period, following the withdrawal of the Ottoman Turks from this territory in the late seventeenth century, the *puszták* of Tázlár were owned by a noble family which resided north of Buda. The residents of nearby settlements paid rents for summer grazing rights. In the course of the nineteenth century the family's estates were split, and ever smaller parcels of land came onto the market as private property. Population increase began to create shortages of land in many parts of central Europe, and the new community in Tázlár was highly unequal from its inception. Landownership statistics from the first decades of the

twentieth century suggest the pertinence of a Leninist analysis of rural class relations, but these statistics are misleading for a number of reasons, such as soil quality differentials. I found during fieldwork that some villagers could articulate a more or less Leninist view of the community's pre-socialist history, whereas others offered a more Chayanovian account which emphasised the developmental cycle in explaining mechanisms for the transfer of labour between households (especially through farm servants).

The social reality to which these contrasting memories referred was obliterated within a few years of the end of the Second World War. The democratic land reform promulgated in 1944 put an end to the large estates of absentee owners. Of greater significance for Tázlár were the campaigns of the early 1950s against the richer peasants, the so-called kulaks. Here as elsewhere in the Hungarian countryside great psychological pressure and sometimes even physical force were brought to bear on families such as that of my landlady. They were obliged to relinquish much of their holdings to new cooperative groups, and the institution of farm servant disappeared. The collectivisation campaign stalled as a result of the political events of 1956, but in contrast with Poland, the authorities recovered their momentum and were able to push through mass collectivisation by the end of 1961. As I described in chapter 3, this brought no immediate changes to most villagers in Tázlár. Some continued to farm more, and better, land than others, but landownership lost its significance as the prime basis for class differences.

The cooperative groups formed in 1961 (which by 1974 formed a single unified specialist cooperative) were closer to the Polish 'agricultural circle' than to the Soviet collective farm. They provided inputs which farmers needed, including machine services, and they assisted with marketing. For example, one of the main branches of production was milk, which the cooperative collected daily from hundreds of suppliers. In the 1970s, at the time of my fieldwork, the cooperative was taking steps to enable some suppliers to expand their herds (most of them had only one or two cows) by providing credits and fodder. There was general satisfaction with the way the socialist institution organised this activity and with the price received, which, as in Poland, depended on the fat content of the milk; individuals were of course disgruntled whenever testing showed their levels to be lower than average.

It was generally reckoned at the time of my first fieldwork in 1976–1977 that fattening pigs for sale through the cooperative was the most profitable branch of agriculture. One did not need to own land at all to be able to participate in this branch, since it was possible to purchase cheap feed through the cooperative. Similar support schemes were implemented nationwide. In stark contrast to the Polish case, where meat shortages were a



constant grievance of city dwellers, pork consumption in Hungary rose dramatically under socialism. The 'historic compromise' of János Kádár's Hungary involved a general loosening of controls throughout the economy. It meant granting small-scale producers a power untypical of peasantry in world history, because for political reasons the authorities could not afford to risk shortfalls in supplies of food to the urban population. During my field-work, 'hard-line' elements in the party attempted to curtail the high incomes accruing to entrepreneurial farmers through their household plots. When producers responded to a drop in the price for pork by cutting back their production, the authorities were obliged to raise the price again promptly, in order not to jeopardise supplies.

Alongside milk and pork, the third main branch of Tázlár's rural economy was viticulture. There too the general policy was to promote synergies between the socialist cooperative and individual members and their households. In addition to the large-scale vineyard development supported by the state in the 1980s, by the later decades of socialism it was possible for individuals to expand their vineyard holdings to sizes well beyond what they were capable of farming with family labour alone. Although few such entrepreneurs emerged in Tázlár, they were numerous by the mid-1970s in the neighbouring village of Soltvadkert (see chapter 3).

For its services in expediting sales in all three branches of production, the cooperative deducted 10% of the payment due to the farmer, a levy resented by the many farmers who were ideologically unsympathetic to any socialist institution and who complained about non-productive office staff. (These persons were somewhat mollified in the early 1990s when they found that these 'contributions' were taken into account when calculating the distribution of shares in the postsocialist cooperative.)

It would thus be wrong, or at least highly misleading, in the case of Hungarian socialism, to suggest that older, 'semi-feudal' forms of inequality were replaced by new distinctions based on bureaucratic position and socialist ideology. Markets were also important. It was possible for individual producers to sell on the market directly, and a few did so. Most preferred to hand over their produce through the cooperative in the village, because this was easier for them and the prices were generally competitive. The enterprises which bought up this produce were themselves actors in a market, however imperfect. The cooperative leaders invested much time and energy in searching for reliable partners, especially in the wine sector. The socialist state had considerable power to determine price levels. The hiccup in the pork branch in the mid-1970s is indicative of the ambiguities of Hungary's 'market socialism', which ushered in high rates of private accumulation for the rural population as a whole. I argued in my 1980 book that the pressures

this was imposing on villagers were excessive and that sooner or later the incentives to produce supplementary commodities for the market in one's spare time should be reduced. But this was not the view of the villagers themselves. The villagers of Poland and Xinjiang would doubtless have welcomed the opportunities for profitable self-exploitation enjoyed at this time in Hungary.

I emphasise self-exploitation because by and large these commodities were produced with simple, labour-intensive techniques and did not lead to new forms of labour transfer between households. The vineyard sector was a partial exception. In an early article I described the patterns of inequality in the border area of the two settlements, where Tázlár residents were employed as day labourers by their wealthy neighbours for much of the agricultural season (Hann 1980c). This showed that it was difficult to sustain market socialism as a 'third way', one that would open up entrepreneurial opportunities to those wishing to take them, while precluding any return to the kind of structural inequalities characteristic of the countryside before 1945.

In any case, it is interesting to compare Hungarian 'market socialism' with the post-Mao model of 'socialist commodity economy' in China. Neither allowed the emergence of a land market, but the Hungarian authorities went further in abandoning the coercive payment mechanisms of the early socialist era. In villages such as Tázlár everyone could gain access to as much land as he or she needed. This seemed to many observers to be an attractive as well as efficient symbiosis of small- and large-scale entities, of the traditional household economy and socialist institutions (Swain 1985). The benefits were certainly visible: dramatic improvements in housing quality and living standards among the rural population and well-provisioned agricultural markets nation-wide.

Yet a high price was paid for this prosperity. The villagers of Tázlár worked incredibly hard for their new goods. Many held regular wage-labour jobs, so their position was structurally not dissimilar to that of the larger number of collective farmworkers who supplemented their incomes through work on their household plots (*háztáji*). This self-exploitation extended to all members of the household. In addition it was common for urban migrants to return to contribute their labour at peak periods. This persistence of the household economy imposed many restrictions on lifestyle: for example, few Tázlár families thought of taking holidays when I first went there in the 1970s. In other words, there were strong continuities in numerous areas of social life, such as a gendered division of labour whereby women took the main responsibility for all domestic animals, including pigs, while men were in charge of machines and everything to do with grapes and wine. Villagers themselves sometimes cracked jokes about their neighbours, who had the

money to build luxury bathrooms but seldom used them. My prediction at the end of my PhD project was that people would surely grow weary of carrying such heavy burdens, that they would resent this lingering stranglehold of the old peasant economy and welcome a renewed effort by the authorities to break with this heritage.

This was worse than naïve on my part. In fact the last decade of socialism saw the flexible principles which characterised the 'specialist cooperative' spread like a contagion through other sectors of Hungary's socialised economy, rather than the flow in the opposite direction, as I had predicted. By the end of the socialist period even combine harvesters were tolerated as objects of private ownership in Tázlár. It cannot be said that the Hungarian model of 'symbiosis' hindered the rural household from productive accumulation. However, it is certainly true that in Tázlár, as in more statistically typical settlements, by far the greater part of the wealth accumulated in agriculture was expended in the consumption sector.

The collapse of socialism led to changes much more dramatic than anything experienced in rural Poland. The majority of villagers in Tázlár look back on the last decades of socialism as a period of unparalleled prosperity. The prices for their products were good—much better than those of today in almost all branches. Above all the cooperative, though viewed critically by many villagers, provided secure marketing channels, eliminating the uncertainty which has dogged all branches in the postsocialist era. The decline in farm income, which began in the 1980s, accelerated sharply after 1990. Total agricultural production in Tázlár has fallen, and some villagers draw attention ironically to the fact that their agricultural activity is now oriented towards subsistence rather than towards the market. They see this as a 'return to a peasant lifestyle' (*visszatérés a paraszti életmódhoz*). In Hungarian the term *paraszt* has long been viewed pejoratively; it indicates a primitive, 'uncultured' condition. But many Hungarian households which produced commodities for the market in the socialist period as a matter of choice, because they perceived strong incentives to do so, now do so out of necessity. The degree of self-provisioning has increased, at least among some groups. Only a few individuals have made new investments, notably in greenhouse production and in vineyards. Apart from the great difficulties in finding markets for wine, recruiting the labour which is needed at peak periods, above all for harvesting, is a major problem. The most convenient solution is to hire cheap immigrant labour from neighbouring states, Serbia and especially Romania. Some of these migrants are legally entitled to work in Hungary; others are not. Both groups are prepared to work under conditions increasingly unacceptable to many local Hungarians. (The number of Hungarian day labourers is also considerable, especially in Soltvadkert.)



Since the pork and dairy branches have largely collapsed, let us look briefly at the grapes-and-wine sector in order to see how villagers have responded to the new conditions. In the later socialist period new investments by socialist institutions (often in symbiotic combination with households, which became the owners of vines and undertook all labour-intensive tasks) led to a massive expansion in the output of wine. At the same time, the relaxation of political controls opened up this sector to private initiative. Tázlár producers had the possibility to sell outside their cooperative to private wine makers and bottlers in the nearby towns of Soltvadkert and Kiskőrös, who in turn built up their private networks to outlets all over the country, but above all the bars and restaurants of the capital, Budapest. Enormous private wealth was accumulated in this sector in the last decade and a half of socialist rule. The rich entrepreneurs of Soltvadkert attracted attention and some envy, but the commentaries were seldom entirely negative: these dynamic individuals were taking risks by chipping away at the edifice of socialism, and their initiative did not place them outside the moral boundaries of the community.

The situation in the 1990s was quite different. The collapse of domestic marketing mechanisms and especially of the previously secure COMECON markets induced a crisis which affected the Homokhátság more seriously than any other region. Many producers could not sell their wine and either ceased production altogether or returned to their 'old peasant tradition' of producing only a few hundred litres for personal consumption and hospitality. Others, however, responded to declining prices by attempting to sell *more* wine than before, in order to try to achieve something nearer to their previous income level. These strategies were facilitated by the availability of new sources of cheap labour. In addition to intensified exploitation of immigrants, some producers modified their techniques, justifying 'cheating' by referring to past levels of return and their need to provide for their dependants. Small quantities of sugar and additional water were routinely added to wine in the past, as is common and accepted in other wine-producing countries. Not only did these practices increase dramatically, moving far beyond the legally accepted amounts, but some producers began to market wine produced entirely from chemicals (Liddell 2003: 30).

The Homokhátság had long been seen as a producer of 'mass wine' (*tömegbor*) rather than of quality wine, but at least no one had previously doubted that the liquid in the container was wine. Now consumers were unsettled. The documentation of a few notorious cases sufficed to raise a general doubt among consumers concerning all wine from this region, which had always entered the national market in bulk as 'regional' wine, rather than as 'quality wine'. Some people whom I talked to insisted (as do the

promoters of the wine industry) that the problem was quite new, and it was a matter of punishing the few criminals responsible for the abuses. Others acknowledged some continuity with practices which began in the socialist period, when many producers adulterated their wine with more than the allowed amounts of sugar in order to increase their returns. With incomes to producers declining in real terms in the 1990s, a decline in wine quality, as adulteration with sugar and chemicals was pushed to new extremes, was perhaps predictable. Those in Tázlár who have struggled to maintain the standard of their product must now pay a high price for these abuses; most can hope at best to sell cheaply to producers based in another wine region.

As in the other cases considered, economic 'rationality' cannot be assessed without consideration of a wide range of conditions—ecological, macro-economic, and demographic. Hungary's pursuit of a market socialist economy allowed farmers in villages such as Tázlár to enrich themselves in a productive symbiosis with socialist institutions. That symbiosis contrasted with the ideological stalemate which dragged on over decades in Poland. Yet from the perspective of contemporary neoliberal ideology, Tázlár and Wisłok display certain similarities. Both are located in unfavourable environments for agriculture. Neoclassical rationality dictates that comparative advantage must lie elsewhere. Yet throughout the socialist era, small-scale production was encouraged—production which simply has no future, especially if EU subsidies to agriculture decline. As I noted in chapter 3, the massive investments in vineyards seem to have been a particularly expensive mistake; in the postsocialist era it seems obvious that the low-quality wine produced around Tázlár is never going to be able to compete in international markets. Production of low-quality wine in large-capacity containers for the home market seems, realistically, the only way in which growers such as those of Tázlár can continue to dispose of their produce. If this *tömegbor* (mass wine) can maintain its niche, it will be a lasting memorial to the socialist development policies which did so much to raise rural living standards in this region. Yet by neoliberal logic, the new houses which have been built here with the profits of these activities should never have been constructed. Their owners should have moved away to the cities a long time ago. Only a few would still be needed locally, to supervise extensive sheep grazing and to keep the forests in order. The combination is not unlike that which an economist might prescribe for Wisłok, despite the great difference in the two environments. From this perspective, questions of class exploitation pale into insignificance in comparison with the significance of the systemic irrationalities which, under socialism, allowed many rural residents to become major beneficiaries of public transfers.

## **'Green Gold': The Transformation of Turkey's Eastern Black Sea Coast**

So far I have concentrated on three rural experiences of socialism and post-socialism. None of the local cases features the classical Soviet institutions of the collective farm and state farm, but each gives insights into diverging national experiences. All three rural economies are now much more integrated into the world economy than they were when I began to study them. The European Union continues to produce large surpluses of milk and wine, the basic products of Wisłok and Tázlár, respectively. China cannot control the world cotton price and nowadays allows even grain prices to be set by the international market. Before turning to consider these trends in the concluding section, I want to enlarge the framework of comparison by introducing a country which has never been socialist. I present this fourth case study in more detail than the earlier ones, because in this project I paid more attention to multiple dimensions of exploitation and inequality, as well as to both objective and subjective assessments of labour inputs.<sup>67</sup>

The twentieth-century transformation of Turkey's eastern Black Sea coast, a region remote from the country's major cities and power centres, reflects the main thrust of national-level developments in each successive phase of Turkish republican history. A new cash crop, tea, was initially promoted from the centre in the period of one-party rule. It became part of a systematic strategy of modernisation which transformed the rural economy of the Rize region after 1950. Major difficulties were evident by the late 1970s; these were temporarily alleviated by drastic measures under martial law in 1981. Limited privatisation in 1985 did not resolve the fundamental problems. This cash crop exemplifies a process of rural transformation in which technology remains simple and labour is the dominant input, even after households become almost entirely dependent on the market. Many local people are generous in acknowledging the benefits of the new cash crop, while also being fully aware of the new patterns of exploitation it has brought in its train.

Rize is the approximate centre of a narrow belt along the eastern Black Sea coast (see map 2, chapter 8) where distinctive climatic conditions, notably high rainfall and mild winters, make it possible to grow tea. People have drunk tea in Turkey for centuries, but it became the national beverage par excellence only after the expansion of domestic production in the 1950s. The product was protected from competition from cheap foreign teas, and

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<sup>67</sup> This section derives from an article previously published in Turkish: see Hann 2001b (with Bellér-Hann). Some of the details concerning intra-household dynamics, for which Bellér-Hann was responsible, have been omitted here.



the state retained a monopoly over production until 1985. During this period the national Tea Board was responsible for distributing tea throughout the country and for attempting to export it, although Turkish tea has never had a significant effect on the world market. What made the story of tea farmers in Turkey different not only from that of collectivised peasants (such as those who grew tea on state farms in neighbouring Georgia) but also from the story of plantation workers responsible for the bulk of tea production in South Asia was the persistence of a smallholder structure alongside the new bureaucratic organisation. In this respect the transformation of rural society and the family-labour farm in Rize was less radical than that brought about through the introduction of this cash crop in other parts of the world.<sup>68</sup>

In the late Ottoman period Rize was the centre of a province called Lazistan (see chapters 8 and 9 for a discussion of 'Laz' identity). Its rural society remained primarily oriented towards subsistence in the early republican periods. Maize was the staple, though a few larger landowners grew fruits and hazelnuts commercially, which led to relations of patronage and economic dependence. Out-migration was heavy, and Laz men were conspicuous in many sectors of the imperial economy and the armed forces. Farming tasks devolved heavily upon the women who stayed behind. Many farmers made no use of the plough but dug steep slopes entirely by hand. This contributed to a widespread stereotype according to which the women of the Laz region were extraordinarily tough, able to carry out all physical tasks. At the same time they were held to be dominated by their menfolk. This subordination was considered to be most evident in the way women transported heavy loads on their backs.

After the groundwork had been laid with a parliamentary law in 1940 and investments in the first processing factories, the new Tea Board transformed the regional economy and society under Democratic Party rule in the 1950s.<sup>69</sup> The price paid to growers for the leaves of their tea bushes was high enough to provide a strong incentive for converting maize gardens to tea. Even small plots suddenly became viable economic units. Men who would

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<sup>68</sup> Smallholder structures for tea are found in other parts of the world, notably Africa, but they are rarely accompanied by a state monopoly as in Turkey. This structural combination of state monopoly and smallholder growers was the main focus of the original research project in 1982–1984, which was supported by a grant from the Social Science Research Council in London and a scholarship from the Ministry of Education in Ankara. Further details and full acknowledgements can be found in Hann 1990a. For more ethnographic background see Bellér-Hann and Hann 2000a.

<sup>69</sup> For an analysis of Turkey's changing political economy in this period, see Keyder 1987. The 1950s were an era in which the market principle expanded enormously, but the growth of the tea industry exemplified the continuing significance of the strong developmental state (see Boratav 1981).

otherwise have migrated elsewhere were persuaded to stay at home to help in planting the new bushes and also to take up seasonal jobs in the proliferating factories of the Tea Board all along the coast. There were many economic spin-offs for the market towns, and this isolated regional economy boomed. Many households were able to combine wage-labour income with farm income from tea plucking. For a period in the 1960s and 1970s it seemed as if the inequalities characteristic of the old rural society had forever disappeared. Tea was a social leveller, freeing the rural poor from traditional dependencies on the notable families *ağalar*. The new cash crop brought the apotheosis of a populist peasant economy, in the sense that it diminished the incentives for labour migration and undermined traditional social hierarchies. Conditions appeared more appropriate to a Chayanovian analysis attributing inequalities (e.g. in the size of gardens and the labour expended) to the demographic composition of the household and its developmental cycle rather than to a Leninist analysis emphasising class conflict.

This golden age was fleeting. Migration chains were never completely severed, and new opportunities, notably for work in Germany, were never short of takers. The dominance of family-labour farms was short-lived, because the former *ağalar* soon planted their large estates in tea (often in place of hazelnuts) and began recruiting labourers and sharecroppers to pluck. The political and economic instability of the 1970s had highly adverse effects on this new constellation. The annual determining of the price paid by the Tea Board for green leaves from the growers became politicised: the political parties vied with each other to set the more generous price in the expectation of garnering more votes. In the resulting 'stagflation', peasants were not slow to notice that the real value of what they were getting for their tea—for instance, in terms of how much bread or sugar they could buy for a kilo of tea—had declined considerably since the high yields obtained in the 1950s and 1960s when they first switched to the new crop.

How would growers respond to this perceived deterioration? They had representative associations, but these were unable to mobilise their members and were politically powerless. Rather, the growers' response exemplified the sort of indirect resistance for which peasants are well known (Scott 1985). Their options were limited. They faced a state monopoly, and to withhold production was hardly possible, given that they now needed cash incomes to survive. Moreover, tea bushes constituted a capital asset with a productive life of up to a hundred years, but they deteriorated quickly if not pruned and maintained. The former subsistence gardens had all been converted to tea, and alternative sources of income were unavailable in other sectors of the economy. What the growers did towards the end of the 1970s was perhaps the only option left open to them: overproduction on a massive

scale. To be able to process good-quality tea, the Tea Board instructed its buyers to purchase (and the growers to supply) only the top 'two leaves and a bud' of the young tea shoots. Now these rules were effectively ignored as peasants began plucking with shears and delivering much larger quantities than before. The Tea Board's purchasing agents (*ekisperler*), who were themselves usually growers, colluded with the peasants whose produce they acquired. As a result the peasants were able to double or treble their harvests and hence their cash flow, but the processing factories were so stretched that large quantities of leaves had to be dumped into the sea, and a final product of poor quality was delivered to consumers.

The success of this strategy of peasant resistance was short-lived, at least in this flagrant form. Order was restored after the military coup of 1980. Its instigator, General Kenan Evren, drove the point home in a speech in Rize in which he asked tea growers to provide a quality product for the nation, just as they themselves had a right to expect to receive quality produce from other parts of the country.<sup>70</sup> Strict measures were implemented, notably the introduction of quotas and the banning of shears in favour of hand plucking. This provoked an angry response from some peasants, which amounted almost to a strike: production and incomes declined sharply in 1981 as many growers either refused to make deliveries or had their product rejected. However, production rose substantially in 1982 (as everyone knew it would have to, in order to satisfy demand), and the main drama was over by the time I entered the field in 1983.

My first fieldwork location in the region was the village of Sümer, which lies in the county of Fundıklı, east of Rize. The local economy was dominated by leaf production and by wage labour in Fundıklı's tea factory, a few miles away on the coast. Memories of the debacle of the first harvest after the military coup were still fresh when I carried out my survey. Growers were inclined to exaggerate the labour time they put into their tea gardens. When asked, 'How many days of family labour are required in your tea gardens?' people commonly answered that each active member of the family labour force worked for six months. On further questioning, they typically scaled the figure down to three months or 90 days. Tea is normally plucked in three distinct flushes between late April and November, but in most households only the first flush in May comes close to demanding a full month's work.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> The example he gave, in a speech which can be interpreted as a moral economy argument which poses the nation as the community, was the market for lemons!

<sup>71</sup> An accurate measurement of labour inputs is extremely difficult, partly because few persons worked full days continuously in the tea fields at any period. Much of the work was done in spurts by persons who were also engaged in other economic activities.



This inflated estimate of their labour time implied a low rate of return on labour, yet only a minority felt the price determined by the Tea Board in 1983 to be unfair. Those who had been active supporters of one or another of the old political parties (banned in 1980) tended to call for a higher figure. Others cited the higher real incomes of the recent past as grounds for discontent but refrained from explicitly criticising the recent action of the state. The majority felt that the price offered in 1983 was not unreasonable, although this did not inhibit them from continuing to contravene the quality controls whenever possible in order to boost their incomes. Their attitudes and strategies were consistent with the general characteristics of the family-labour farm, which did not count the labour of its members as a cost. The state's decision back in the 1950s to leave intact the structure of smallholdings created a potential for the state to exploit 'captive' labour, once everyone had switched into the new crop. Households could be expected to maximise their harvests and their incomes, because their labour resources had no alternative outlet, no 'opportunity cost'. Households' varying progress through the developmental cycle introduced important elements of flexibility. For example, families with children available to undertake plucking and in need of funds to bring marriage plans to fruition might attempt to squeeze out a fourth low-yielding harvest in the autumn; they were also likely to make labour available to other households in return for payment.

Once again the question of exploitation is complex. Some tea growers in Sümer were convinced in moral terms that the price offered for their product was unfairly low, but the majority thought otherwise. This was not due to deferential attitudes towards the state power. Rather, this degree of satisfaction was rooted in an understanding of how fortunate the Rize region was to have tea. The growers were aware that, even if the returns on tea labour were falling from the high levels of the past, they remained, in comparison with returns in other parts of the country and other branches of production, relatively attractive.<sup>72</sup> They knew this thanks to the communications revolution which also began in the 1950s. An additional channel of information for tea growers was provided by the new sharecropping population, which by 1983 was already prominent in villages such as Sümer. That this mobile labour force preferred to come to Rize rather than pick cotton or tobacco in other regions was good evidence to local people that tea growers were continuing to receive a fair deal from the state.

Most growers therefore went about their work without calculating returns to labour or moralising about a 'just price'. The fine tuning of their

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<sup>72</sup> We do not know the political factors which have secured such relative advantages for the Rize region over the last half century, but they certainly pre-date the emergence of Mesut Yilmaz as an influential politician on the national stage in the 1980s.

output was regulated by the availability of labour, by ad hoc circumstances, and by life-cycle commitments such as the need to save for a wedding or a house. The outcomes also depended on the attitudes of the authorities and in particular the strictness with which they implemented the policy of 'two leaves and a bud'. Sümer tea growers accepted the 'morality' of General Evren. But the Tea Board needed to raise levels of production to keep up with rising domestic demand, so within a few years it was again turning a blind eye to quality control. Given the opportunity to save labour time and increase one's income by supplying an inferior product, what rational agent would behave otherwise? My analysis at the end of the first phase of this research therefore suggested a contradiction between the rationalities of the tea growers and the macro-rationality of the industry. The smallholder base was incompatible with the discipline necessary to produce high quality tea. I related this to more fundamental structural problems: Was it rational to produce tea at all in Turkey, given that both ecological factors and lower labour costs favoured production in the tropical zones of Asia and Africa? Was the Kemalist modernisation of the Rize region misjudged from the beginning, involving as it did a high level of public subsidy to provide a product which was inferior to cheaper foreign competition?

The force of these questions has been intensified through accelerating globalisation. In 1983 I thought it likely that there would be further confrontation between the state and the growers, who might be expected to develop new forms of political solidarity. This did not come about. The new government led by Turgut Özal decided to tolerate the use of shears and, in 1985, consistent with its general commitment to open up the Turkish economy to market forces, to lift the state's monopoly in tea production. Growers welcomed the rapid appearance of a large number of private factories as additional outlets for their product, given the quotas still enforced at peak periods by the Tea Board. The private firms offered the same price as that fixed by the state. However, within a few years the private sector was heavily criticised for its failure to pay promptly and for the low quality of its product. Many smaller factories declared bankruptcy, leaving large debts to their suppliers and also to their employees. The Tea Board, by contrast, was increasingly perceived as a source of stability. Its 45 factories remained in state ownership and maintained their dominant market position.<sup>73</sup> This limited opening to the private sector therefore had mixed results. It provided numerous entrepreneurs with an opportunity to enter the market and undercut the retail prices of the Tea Board. It accentuated the overproduction problem. At the same time, however, the emergence of a private sector

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<sup>73</sup> The tea-bag sector was an exception: here the intervention of the transnational corporation Unilever created a market advantage for the brand known as Lipton Yellow Label.

helped to defuse conflict, or at any rate to deflect it away from the state. Instead of coming together to protest politically that the price and the quota were too low, growers sought out individual links to the new private operators; and when these let them down, as they often did, they complained about the private factory and not about the state. The new configuration made the 'globalisation pill' easier to swallow: the price paid to growers continued to decline in real terms while imports of foreign teas increased significantly.<sup>74</sup> Tea Board officials and the growers, far from opposing each other, were united in complaining about low-quality imports and, in particular, about the smuggling of tea from Iran.

Tea has retained its dominant position in the regional economy of Rize, despite a seemingly endless search for alternatives by an array of officials. In 1983 many growers in Sümer were hopeful that silkworms would provide them with a secondary source of farm income, but the scheme failed. In 1999 some people had similar hopes of kiwi production, but in the absence of state support comparable to that given to tea back in the 1950s, growers were unwilling to dig up their tea bushes (on the contrary, some have continued to expand their garden areas). In the early 1990s the 'Russian market' provided a major distraction from the problems of the tea sector. A decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent upsurge of petty trading in the border region, it seems that the social effects of the newly permeable border have exceeded its economic significance. The upgrading of the coastal highway in the early years of the new century is improving communications, but it is unlikely to bring significant new investments into the Rize region. Tourism in the Kaçkar Mountains has made some progress but is unlikely ever to become a major source of income and employment.

Recently population decline has set in. It is most marked in the remoter rural areas, where many schools have been closed due to policies of centralisation. Despite the continued expansion of the city of Rize itself and some of the smaller market towns, the region as a whole is in decline. The statistics mask more complex migrations. Some of those who leave for Istanbul or Ankara eventually return to their homeland (*memleket*), but they are more likely to choose to live in the local market town than in their natal villages. Regardless of long-term residence, it remains exceptional to dispose of one's inherited tea gardens through the market. Large numbers of sharecroppers from the Anatolian interior and other districts of the Black Sea have moved in permanently; they have come to form a new rural proletariat, especially in areas with low population densities where wealthy local fami-

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<sup>74</sup> The price fell to US\$0.19 per kilo of green leaves in 1994, which was barely one-third the average figure for the late 1970s. It has since risen slightly.



lies have long since given up working the land themselves. Thus tea, which has brought prosperity to elites and significant improvements to the living standards of the broad mass of smallholders, has also contributed to the formation of new class structures in the region (Hann 1990b).

The Rize region has been increasingly integrated into the national society (an integration which is reflected in voting patterns). Its residents take pride in modernisation and express awareness of the benefits brought by the 'green gold', but they also express an abiding sense of living on the periphery, with the tea monoculture a symbol of dependency and unfulfilled promise. Continuities with older traditions remain significant, above all in the rural family, which has by and large retained its significance as a unit of production. Tea has been conducive to a persistence of stereotypical representations of women, who have remained the main *recognised* agricultural workers, above all in the most visible activity, the plucking of tea leaves and their transportation to collection points. It is still women who tend the vegetable gardens, look after the animals, and have the prime responsibility for all domestic and 'caring' tasks.

The main change is the range of employment opportunities available to men. Many are connected directly to tea: men work in the tea factories, as lorry drivers transporting tea, and as 'experts' who purchase the green leaves at village collection points. They have also borne the brunt of the labour involved in converting maize gardens and hazelnut groves to tea, in pruning the bushes, and in spreading fertiliser. When I asked in Sümer in 1983 about changes in work and the division of labour between the sexes, the general opinion was that both men and women worked harder than formerly, following the introduction of tea, and that women continued to work harder than men overall. This difference was attributed primarily to the fact that almost all domestic work (cooking, cleaning, childminding, and nursing the old were the main examples) fell exclusively to women. In other respects it was felt that in economic terms relations between the sexes were equal (*eşit*).

Labour cooperation has shown a marked decline. The engagement of external workers or sharecroppers has become the preferred method of resolving labour shortages in the plucking of tea.<sup>75</sup> Bellér-Hann and I found, however, that women continue to cooperate with each other in subsistence activities such as collecting and carrying wood and gathering grass for their animals. They may cooperate in carrying tea to collection points, since they often need help in lifting and releasing the heavy baskets. Three technological changes have eased women's burdens significantly. First, the introduc-

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<sup>75</sup> Even when neighbouring families are in a position to help each other because they are at different phases in their developmental cycle, they are more likely to do so on a cash basis or via sharecropping than on the traditional basis of reciprocity.

tion of shears has enormously reduced the time spent plucking. Second, the spread of a kind of wheelbarrow (*el arabası*) since the 1980s has simplified the task of transportation. And third, where carts do not help because there is no road, goods are increasingly transported by cable lift (*teleferik*). This last innovation tends to be controlled and operated by men.

Where women are still to be seen carrying heavy loads, as in the traditional stereotype, they are often strangers to the locality whose families do not own land and have not invested in the improvements just mentioned. In these families, men and women sometimes pick tea side by side. Sometimes, however, the household head delegates plucking and transportation entirely to the women (and perhaps also to younger men of the household); he himself does no manual labour but controls that of others; and he alone collects the eventual payment on behalf of the household. Such extreme patriarchal forms of exploitation, implicit in the common stereotype of this region, are not the norm among the indigenous population; they are entirely consistent with the Chanovian theory of the family-labour farm.<sup>76</sup>

In summary, the application of a 'peasant studies' paradigm to the Rize region is questionable on numerous grounds. Most definitions of peasantry (e.g. Shanin 1982) are based on a clear demarcation between town and countryside. In this region, however, a high proportion of town dwellers own tea gardens and work them in the same way as people who live in the countryside. Many households now follow a pattern of dual residence across the rural-urban divide. Are we to say that they are still peasants for half the year, even though the comforts they enjoy in their rural homes may be virtually identical to those of their apartments in the towns? Are we to say that migrants who return for some part of the tea-plucking season are still somehow part-time peasants? Residence in Istanbul for a generation does not necessarily transform the lifestyles and values of the older generation; but their children are more thoroughly urbanised: they view these trips to the *memleket* as part of their summer vacation, not as a homecoming.

In some respects the promotion of tea as a cash crop on the eastern Black Sea coast placed peasant growers as effectively under state control as their socialist equivalents who had collectivisation forced upon them. In both cases the state was able to dictate remuneration without recourse to a market mechanism. For a period in the 1970s 'cheating' and 'overproduction' were effective ways of boosting peasant incomes. Later the balance of power was tilted against the growers, who had to accept a significant decline in real income from the crop on which they depended. Recent decades have brought

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<sup>76</sup> Non-local pluckers are also more vulnerable than local tea growers to the whims of purchasing agents, who are more likely to turn a blind eye to leaves of inferior quality when these are delivered by co-villagers.

increased social differentiation through the immigration of new groups of workers and sharecroppers. Far from the 1950s dream of an egalitarian society of smallholders, the Rize region at the beginning of a new century clearly replicated the fundamental class distinctions of the national society. Yet the Chayanovian 'family-labour farm' has remained the central productive unit. Its labour is not costed in a capitalist manner, and this opens the way to 'self-exploitation'. Many forces influence its deployment, including migration patterns and patriarchal ideology; the expansion of tea as a cash crop has reinforced a strongly gendered division of labour, though stereotypes of idle males have little basis in reality, at least among the locals.

Micro-level Chayanovian approaches are insufficient. The analysis of the family-labour farm must be supplemented not only by closer enquiry into unequal relationships within the household but also by investigations into wider structures of power, nationally and globally, and their historical development. As in those Hungarian villages where wine is the main high-value product, expensive investments set limits to Rize tea growers' options and make for a high degree of 'path dependency'. Once the key decisions were taken back in 1940, and certainly once most peasants had replaced their maize with tea bushes in the 1950s, later adaptations were severely constrained. For more than a generation the basic cleavage was that between the state, as represented by the Tea Board, and the smallholder growers. This led eventually to a crisis, which the lifting of the state's monopoly helped to resolve. But the arrival of a third party on the scene, private enterprise, has not resolved the ultimate question concerning the rationality of producing this product in this location. A neoliberal economist might ask why tea growers in Rize should continue to receive far more for their product than those who produce higher-quality teas in other parts of the world. Although the labour of some groups, notably women and sharecroppers, may indeed be exploited, the tea growers as a whole do not 'objectively' fit the ideal type of the peasant 'underdog' exposed to 'political subjugation' (Shanin 1987: 4). Furthermore, I think that most inhabitants of the Rize region have some subjective sense that they have benefited from the state's defiance of the logic of globalisation.

## Conclusion

In analysing data from four very different rural societies, I have drawn on the 'peasant studies' literature and on the contrasting ideal models of neo-classical theory and Marxism, in which value is based on market-driven rationality and socially necessary labour time, respectively. If nothing else, I hope to have shown how difficult it is to operationalise such models.



Let us take the concept of peasant first. The rural residents I have studied diverge in some respects from the standard definitions. Whereas most definitions of peasantry emphasise that a large proportion of household consumption is produced on the farm by household labour, this is no longer the case for most rural households in the places discussed in this chapter, apart from Xinjiang. Harriet Friedmann (1980) argued that 'simple commodity producers' give way to capitalist farmers under conditions of increasing commodification. However, the Rize region demonstrates that it is possible for production of a non-staple to be fully commodified without the development of capitalist farming or a transformation of the labour process through the application of tractors and other machines. These villagers use sophisticated technologies in consumption, as is evident in high rates of ownership of cars and other major consumer durables. It would be strange to see them as more 'peasant-like' just because they have fewer tractors than their counterparts in the Anatolian interior.

My cases include examples in which producers have responded to market signals by cutting production. This happened on a dramatic scale in the case of Turkish tea in 1981; it also happened in the case of pig farmers in Tázlár and milk producers in Wisłok. This contradicts the proposition in the peasant studies literature that peasants' response to price fluctuations is generally 'inelastic' (Wolf 1966: 43). Peasants are commonly reported as holding strong notions of a 'just price', based on labour inputs (Gudeman 1978). They are prone to underestimate the amount of time they spend working (Ortiz 1979). In these respects as well, many of the villagers I have discussed may have to be classified as 'post-peasant'. Even the villagers of Xinjiang generally have some alternative ways to obtain cash income, separate from their main agricultural activity.

The classical tradition in peasant studies makes family labour the decisive criterion and places subjective attitudes towards 'drudgery' at the heart of the distinction between the peasant and the capitalist farmer (Chayanov 1986). It is therefore important to examine the relations of patriarchy which prevail within the apparent unity of the household. But the most basic assumption of the peasant studies literature which I have challenged is the one which derives from Lenin rather than Chayanov. Peasants are commonly assumed to occupy what Teodor Shanin called the 'underdog position'. According to the stronger formulations of the Marxist tradition they are exploited by external powerholders either through the coerced payment of tribute and/or taxes, or some form of market appropriation.

Relationships of exploitation, in which value is extracted from one group, the producers, by another group, those who own the land or other means of production, are sometimes easy enough to detect. In the data I have

presented, the clearest examples are the use of illegal migrant labour on vineyards in postsocialist Hungary and of day labourers and sharecroppers from other regions to harvest tea in north-eastern Turkey. The 'stranger' aspect clearly facilitates the economic transactions in these cases. Even in these examples, however, the full picture is more complex. Owners and workers enter into long-term ties which complicate their relations and disguise its exploitative character to one or both parties, e.g. through the making of gifts and extension of support in times of need. While Marxists may claim mystification, the anthropologist will take seriously local understandings of such reciprocities and their moral implications.

Closer enquiries inside the household and consideration of its developmental cycle may also modify the diagnosis. The greater part of the labour expended in the Turkish tea gardens is female; are the male heads of sharecropping households then to be classified with the exploiting owners? If sharecropping is commonly a transient phase in the process of accumulating the resources necessary to expand one's own farm elsewhere, then a structural diagnosis of opposed rural classes will need to be replaced by recognition of more complex household dynamics, of which the most important determinant is the developmental cycle.

The same crop can of course be associated with radically different relations of production. The grapes picked by an illegal immigrant for a large-scale Hungarian wine producer are no different from the grapes picked by a city dweller who returns to the village each year to help out on the small plots owned by his rural relatives. It is the same story with tea in Turkey, where a large part of the harvest is still accomplished through the self-exploitation of the household, augmented by kin and neighbours whose labour is mobilised through mutual aid groups and other institutions of the kind which appear to exude a non-exploitative character. But should alternative solutions be denigrated? Some owners of large tea gardens or vineyards may have worked extremely hard in the past to establish those estates. If, as a result of demographic circumstances or out-migration, no family labour is available, then such owners may be obliged to seek external labour. Of course some actors may make investments which anticipate the employment of external labour from the beginning. In the decades when tea gardens and vineyards were thriving thanks to policies pursued at the state level, such investments were entirely rational. In no sense did they condemn the individuals concerned to exclusion from the local moral economy.

Issues of morality arise when expectations are not fulfilled and villagers have recourse to resistance strategies. From the point of view of the producer, it is equally rational to supply a product of inferior quality if this will increase returns and if he can get away with such cheating. Examples

occurred in all the cases I have considered: water can be added to both milk and wine, and the chaff can be left in with the wheat. In Turkey, the increasing use of shears to cut tea leaves brought a great saving of labour, but at the expense of quality. In Hungary it has long been standard practice to 'improve' wine through the addition of sugar, but the intensification of this practice and its culmination in the use of dangerous chemicals led to prosecutions and a major loss of confidence in the market for cheap wines from the region where Tázlár is located. Consumers look to their governments to protect them from what they may perceive to be worse than exploitation—from wine which is likely to poison them or even from radioactive tea, a sensitive issue in Turkey for several years following the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in 1986.

Neoliberals do not deny that markets need to be legally regulated and controlled for quality. But they favour competition on a global basis, and if better-quality tea can be produced more cheaply in tropical locations, they would counsel against state interventions to support the Turkish product. The returns to tea growers have fallen substantially in recent decades as a result of Turkey's gradual opening to the global economy, though loyalty to a familiar product and a greater concern with keeping costs down than with maintaining quality has slowed the rate of this decline. It seems likely that something similar is in store for the wine producers of the Hungarian Great Plain, who cannot compete in terms of quality but may retain their niche in the production of 'mass wine'. It is harder to see what the future holds for small-scale farmers in the Polish Carpathians or the oases of Xinjiang. Without new programmes of public investment—for example, in the forestry sector in Poland—the relentless spread of market forces will mean not just the end of traditional agricultural practices but a threat to the viability of the communities at current population levels.

The effects of neoliberalism, assessed from the point of view of our other ideal type, the labour theory of value, now appear ambivalent. If the rise of global markets means the provision of goods more efficiently to consumers and puts an end to abuses such as *corvée*, tea made from stalks, and wine made from chemicals, then market rationality is conducive to the common weal. Mechanisms of exploitation may persist (though their precise specification may be a lot more difficult than previously supposed) but, if certain social consequences of market rationality are considered unacceptable, it remains open to the political authorities to promote jobs outside the market, such as in environmental improvement.

It is difficult to sustain strong claims about exploited peasantries in states which have transformed their political economies in the ways analysed in these cases. Villagers who are condemned to inefficient productive sys-



tems, as in Xinjiang and the Polish Carpathians, may be deserving of sympathy, but that does not justify terming them exploited in the sense that surplus value is being extracted, either coercively or non-coercively. As for the tea growers in Rize and the wine producers of the Danube-Tisza interfluvium in Hungary, thanks to the policies of strong, interventionist states rural producers of these regions have been largely freed from a preoccupation with subsistence and survival of the kind classically analysed by James C. Scott (1976). This success did not, however, alleviate every social problem or satisfy every aspiration. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the collapse of Kemalist protectionism in Turkey and of socialist rule in Hungary brought new problems in their train. These states were not strong enough to prevent producers from 'cheating' by flouting quality controls, and the victims of this cheating were their fellow citizens.

To understand the evolving tensions in all these cases, it is necessary to go beyond not only analysts such as Chayanov and Scott, who concentrate, respectively, on individual farm and community under conditions of subsistence-oriented agriculture, but also those such as Wolf and Shanin, who take the subordination of peasants to larger structures as axiomatic. The realities are still more complex. Elements of exploitation certainly persist, both within the household and in regional and wider structures. But transformations in the four states analysed have proved emancipatory for many. Arguably, these conclusions might be generalised to the rural sector throughout Eurasia. This is my belated answer to the provocations of George Dalton (1974), who was convinced—like so many other Westerners—that socialist rural populations were relentlessly oppressed. However, the recent upsurge of neoliberalism may now be reversing this emancipation; the beneficiaries thought it was permanent, but it turned out to be ephemeral.

In a comprehensively globalised neoliberal economy, none of the main items produced in these four villages would have become a speciality of its location. Can notions of value based on 'socially necessary labour time' be invoked to legitimate regional development policies and economic nationalism? The combined effects of the interventions of states and the trend towards an ever more integrated world market based on neoliberal principles greatly complicate the analysis of that key Marxist term, *exploitation*. A simple focus on the point of production is inadequate. The anthropologist must be ready to pursue complex chains, following the path of a product far beyond the original community of producers (on which I have concentrated in this chapter), pinpointing the links of bureaucracy and market at which surplus is appropriated (cf. Marcus 1995). If we follow such chains from the local to the global, we will be in a better position to recognise multiple dimensions of exploitation. In the case of the Turkish tea

industry, for example, one must acknowledge the exploitation of sharecroppers and women and yet recognise that this sector has enjoyed privileges in relation both to other rural producers in Turkey and to tea growers in other parts of the world.

In spite of these evident difficulties, which are not new but present themselves ever more forcefully due to global development, I see no reason to abandon the concept of exploitation. Its macro-economic analysis will be simplified if a blanket model of neoliberal economic rationality is effectively implemented globally and all state interventions cease; but that day is still far off, and there is no need for anthropologists to discard the concept in the meantime. Exploitation is especially transparent in cases where men appropriate the income earned by women, as among some sharecroppers in the Turkish tea region, or when some are paid lower wages than others because they are illegal immigrants. In other cases, exploitation is not transparent at all. The difficulties to which Firth and others have drawn attention in the recognition and measurement of labour can only be overcome through careful analysis of production processes. The notion of 'socially necessary' requires us to look at the moral economy alongside the political economy. Only if we examine the norms and values underpinning estimations of work and grasp how rewards to labour are perceived subjectively will we be able to understand the strategies adopted by producers to counter perceived unfairness.

The final problems concern ethics and policymaking implications. My account suggests that, at least in the cases of Hungary and Turkey, the 'modernising' initiatives of a socialist and a capitalist state, respectively, brought substantial benefits over several generations to previously disadvantaged rural populations. From the neoliberal vantage point, however, these interventions can be questioned. Why should the tea growers of Rize and the wine growers of the Danube-Tisza interfluvium have been able to enrich themselves much faster than, and to some extent at the expense of, other sections of the Turkish and Hungarian populations? Even though I did my fieldwork among the beneficiaries of these selective development policies, I feel I have to ask this question, but I do not have an answer.

Ethical issues also arise at the level of ethnographic documentation. I might try to pretend that the cheating described above was something I heard about only in other places, and that no one in the villages where I worked engaged in such practices. Probably no reader would swallow this. Obviously I must not disclose the identities of individuals when discussing this behaviour. But the phenomena are in fact well known, thanks in large part to the media. I see no sense in denying the prevalence of such actions, but I stress that they should be seen as a rational adaptation in the given context.

In both Hungary and Turkey the cheating began long before the introduction of political changes and influence of neoliberalism. To notice and document such adaptations does not mean that the anthropologist has lost sympathy for those whose lives he is trying to understand and explain. But identifying such patterns may increase his conviction that controls are needed—probably more controls than most neoliberals would wish to see—to ensure that the conditions of production meet the standards to which most citizens wish to adhere. This might, for example, mean enforcing a limit on the maximum acreage and/or capital stock which a single individual or family could own. It would then be a question of creating institutions to make these laws a reality, together with the collective moral preferences undergirding them, and to close down the temptations for individuals to defect and abuse the norms of the community.



## PART TWO

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### RELIGION, ETHNICITY, CITIZENSHIP

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In terms of the Marxist dichotomy, the essays in the second part of this book are concerned with 'superstructure' rather than with the economic 'base'. Such distinctions have not found much popularity among sociocultural anthropologists, because our materials tend to bring out the tight interconnectedness of these phenomena. In more recent parlance, these chapters are all concerned in one way or another with questions of 'identity politics'. In chapter 6 I discuss the rapidly expanding literature on civil society and criticise the tendency to reduce the concept to the study of formal associations (NGOs). The concept of civil society has a specific history in the modern West, but anthropological approaches must adopt broader definitions and be open to the civil potential of non-Western forms of sociality and political order. The same notion of civility leads to a new interpretation of 'civil religion'. I develop a Polish illustration of these themes in chapter 7, with respect to the Greek Catholic (Ukrainian) minority in the city and diocese of Przemyśl, where democratic freedoms were not always conducive to civility in the first postsocialist decade.

Among the problems raised by these materials is that of defining the eastern boundaries of Europe. From Max Weber to Samuel Huntington, Western social scientists have emphasised a sharp boundary between East and West, often identifying the Western streams of Christianity with European civilisation as a whole. These are powerful discourses; but if anthropological work at the micro level indicates that the values and practices of civility and tolerance in postsocialist Poland do not differ significantly from those one finds elsewhere, then it becomes more difficult to justify excluding the populations of countries such as Turkey and Russia from the privileges of European citizenship.

In chapter 8 I pursue issues of collective identity in a different context. I begin by noting the problematic relation between anthropology and history in the modern British school of social anthropology. Even when they began cautiously to build an historical dimension into their fieldwork-based case studies, few anthropologists in practice achieved much in this direction. I

develop this point by criticising my own fieldwork in the region of Rize, Turkey, between 1983 and 1999 and showing how some more recent work, notably the contributions of Michael Meeker, have brought anthropology and history together more fruitfully. I am also critical of generalising the concept of ethnic group, which in recent years has become an exciting topic of discussion for intellectuals in Turkey. It is also of major concern to many external groups, including highly organised diaspora communities, politicians, European Union negotiators and international NGOs. Anthropological debates around the concept of ethnicity, launched in 1969 by Fredrik Barth, therefore have a pertinence extending far outside academia.

In chapter 9 I extend the analysis to cover the same four case studies introduced in chapter 5. For Ernest Gellner, the nation-state promotes the cultural homogeneity of all its citizens as an inescapable requirement of modernity. For Will Kymlicka, minority cultures must be protected from the consequences of such state building. I argue that the 'congruence' of culture and polity is never as complete as posited in the Gellnerian model, but I question the desirability of legislating to protect ethnic minorities in states which have achieved a high degree of homogenisation. In countries such as Hungary and Poland a minority identity, however meaningful to the individual, cannot begin to provide the full life-world available through participation in the mainstream. More complex problems arise in cases such as Turkey and China, where some minorities are very large and potentially capable of providing that full life-world, but are unable to do so because of the power exercised by the dominant group. In situations such as these the Gellnerian model loses its relevance, and new models of 'polyphonic' citizenship must be worked out. I question whether the concept of culture can help in this task. It has been increasingly essentialised and is now a major part of the problem rather than a key to the solution.

## ***Chapter 6***

### **Civil Society, Civil Religion, and Postsocialist Civility**

Civil society and civil religion are venerable concepts of Enlightenment origin.<sup>77</sup> That is, they are products of intellectual discourse in western Europe during an age when the industrial revolution had barely begun and the scale of social complexity was very different from that of today. Of the two, civil society has recently had a dazzling career, both inside and outside the world of academia (Hall 1995; Hann 1996e, 2003c). The dominant usage can be termed Hegelian. In a dichotomy which was foreign to earlier Enlightenment intellectuals, civil society is defined in stark opposition to the state.

The concept was deployed in this sense by dissident intellectuals in several countries of eastern Europe in the last years of socialism. It seems to have become less popular with scholars in those countries in recent years, but elsewhere it remains fashionable—especially in the new guise of ‘global civil society’. Civil society is still a favourite phrase of Western governments and international agencies. They frequently use it to refer to the new nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), national and international, which are allegedly taking over some of the functions of the old ‘totalitarian’ states and thereby contributing to the consolidation of democracy. Civil society is also understood more broadly as the realm of voluntary associations or as a ‘third sector’ between the state and the family or between public and private. Whatever the exact definition preferred, civil society is contrasted both to state bureaucracy and to ‘familism’. It stands for ‘civic values’ and the power of free individual citizens to organise social life, subject only to the rule of law. A strong civil society is thus widely seen as the key to the ‘health’ of a polity.

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<sup>77</sup> I have followed the academic debates around the concept of civil society with intensifying skepticism ever since their eruption in the 1980s: see Hann 2004g for a recent assessment. By contrast it is only recently, in the course of our current projects at MPISA, that I have begun to explore links to civil religion; this chapter is a revised version of a text recently published in Polish (2005g).



This perception appears to be having a considerable bearing on flows of aid. Writing in the 1970s from a political economy perspective, Keith Hart (1982) argued that only a radical transformation of West Africa's economic base could remedy the disintegration evident in that region, as in other parts of the third world, during the first postcolonial decades. The subsequent disintegration of the second world has intensified disillusionment with such approaches. Instead, development experts have sought to address the problems of non-viable states by channeling resources into the promotion of civil society (in close association with human rights and anti-corruption campaigns). In some quarters all this evokes a negative reaction: powerholders in Beijing, Moscow, and elsewhere frequently condemn the role of Western-supported NGOs, which they see as undermining the power of the state.

What are anthropologists to make of these developments? In this chapter I restrict my discussion to postsocialist countries which, according to the standard argument, in recent years are supposed to have been rapidly developing their civil societies (in some cases for the first time). Much of the general argument can be extended to other countries. The same is true of the theme of civil religion, to which I turn in the second part of the chapter.

### **Anthropological Approaches to Civil Society**

Unlike property, which I discussed in chapter 2, it cannot be claimed that civil society has been an important concept in the development of anthropological theory. Anthropologists have generally been associated with the study of groups whose social order was not founded on a differentiation between state and society. Despite the fact that the amount of ethnographic research undertaken in modern civil societies has increased enormously, societies composed of individual rights-bearing citizens have not become objects of theoretical enquiry by anthropologists. Yet there are plenty of good reasons for taking an interest in civil society today, empirical as well as theoretical. The very fact that substantial material resources are made available to support this ideal is one good reason for paying attention to the rhetoric. Anthropologists can contribute ethnographic studies of the types of organisations which are supposed to constitute civil society and of the subset of organisations specifically devoted to 'civil society promotion'. They can investigate the influence of such organisations on the wider society and the dilemmas commonly experienced by organisation members (Mandel 2002; Sampson 2002).

At the same time, however, anthropologists are likely to have reservations about the whole enterprise of generalising a term from Enlightenment Europe to address the integration problems of twenty-first-century societies

facing very different conditions. One way of dealing with the problem is to assert that we do not need to know anything of the history of the concept in order to appreciate its pertinence to our contemporary condition. This was the position taken by at least one distinguished anthropologist, Ernest Gellner, who devoted one of his last major works to civil society (Gellner 1994). According to Gellner, the intellectual history of the concept of civil society was a frightful 'muddle' which had no bearing on the suitability of the concept for pinpointing the virtuous emergence of free, democratic societies in the West. He contrasted civil society with both the totalitarianism of the second world and tribalism ('the tyranny of cousins') in the third world. Gellner's model, which restricts the core ideas and institutions of civil society to Western Europe and its offshoots, is a strong version of 'the West versus the rest' theorising. For Gellner, individualism and liberal politics are highly desirable and they could not emerge anywhere else. He was not sanguine about the difficulties of exporting the Western liberal understanding to regions where it had no historical roots.

Other anthropologists are sceptical of such approaches (see e.g. Hann and Dunn 1996a). More careful investigation within the West itself suggests that Gellner's model is an ideal type, remote from any empirical reality. For example, associational life has long been rich in Germany; there and elsewhere in continental Europe it seems unhelpful to theorise civil society in the language of Anglo-American individualism. Even in the English-speaking countries, the role of associations and the motivations which lead persons to become active in the 'voluntary sector' remain under-researched by anthropologists.<sup>78</sup>

Other scholars have widened the perspective by introducing arguments which allow us to recognise civil society outside the modern West. The philosophers Simone Chambers and Will Kymlicka (2002) have recently identified civil society as a key area for intercultural translation. The sociologist Masoud Kamali (2001) took up a definition put forward by S. N. Eisenstadt which emphasises that a civil society requires autonomous centres of power outside the central state. In the Middle East Kamali found such autonomous power in the *ulema*, the body of Islamic scholars, thereby reaching conclusions diametrically opposed to those of Gellner, for whom the core values of civil society were incompatible with that religion.<sup>79</sup> Similar arguments can be made concerning the allegedly 'totalitarian' countries of eastern Europe before 1990. Certainly the countries in which I worked,

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<sup>78</sup> See Robert Putnam's (2000) recent perspective on the decline of associations in the United States.

<sup>79</sup> For an argument that the substantive teachings of Islam imply a notion of civility in the sense of tolerance, see Hefner 2000.

Hungary and Poland, had numerous organisations whose activities could not be fully controlled by the state, Poland's Roman Catholic Church being only the most prominent.

Jack Goody noted that civil society was a product of Enlightenment discourse in the West but suggested that similar practices might be found in other parts of Eurasia, notably in China (Goody 1998). Other ethnographers have addressed the problem more obliquely by identifying 'equivalent' institutions. For example, one possibility in defining civil society is to privilege the strand of political accountability: the job of the comparative anthropologist is then to examine how other hierarchical societies achieve the accountability effects associated with civil society in the currently popular ideal type (Hann 1996e). Another is to accept the formulation that specifies civil society as an intermediate space, neither private nor public. For example, the small town which Ildikó Bellér-Hann and I studied on Turkey's Black Sea coast did not boast a rich associational life in the sense of Tocqueville and Robert Putnam (Bellér-Hann and Hann 2000). But it was not difficult to fill a chapter with descriptions of the forms of social life we observed which lay between the familial sphere and that of the state and its numerous branches. This intermediate social sphere was highly segregated along gender lines: café socialising was largely restricted to men, but women came together regularly in other ways. To understand how opinions were formed and spread in this small town, it was more important to explore the workings of these informal groups and networks than to concentrate on formally constituted groups such as trades unions and political parties. As in the allegedly totalitarian states, it was unhelpful to confine civil society to registered associations such as sports clubs and Scouting groups.

But many readers will find this too vague. If the study of civil society must expand to include the study of social relations more generally, then do we still need a concept of civil society at all? Before coming to my own preferred usage, let me note the opposite danger, that of focusing only on the new NGOs. I see this as a shortcoming of much contemporary anthropological work on civil society, in postsocialist contexts and elsewhere. Without denying the importance of formal groups, I believe that if ethnographers do not expand their studies to include the informal—all those by-waters of social life which other disciplines cannot hope to discover because they do not carry out long-term fieldwork the way we do—then we give up our most important comparative advantage. In contemporary circumstances, when a lot of resources are being put into NGOs, it goes without saying that their discourses and social practices are legitimate objects of study. It may make good practical sense for a researcher to seek an affiliation with such an organisation in order to facilitate entry and provide support in the field. But



we shall have a very distorted picture of postsocialist societies if ethnographers confine their attention to the internal dynamics of these organisations. At the very least it is necessary to examine the wider context of their operations. In cases where the influence of new organisations is limited, it is important to explore the reasons; this is likely to lead to consideration of older patterns of sociality, which play a more important role in people's everyday lives than do new, foreign-funded NGOs. David Lewis's (2004) analysis of both old and new forms of civil society in Bangladesh, and of their increasingly tangled interactions, provides a model which could usefully be extended to the postsocialist world.<sup>80</sup>

### **In Search of Civil Society in Eurasia: Some Examples**

To indicate the reasons for my dissatisfaction with the recent academic debates and policy developments concerning civil society, let me turn briefly to some empirical examples. Because the concept is still current in a number of disciplines, examples are not difficult to find, but I begin with two cases which I documented personally in the course of fieldwork focused on quite different topics.

Poland figures prominently in the literature on civil society, and deservedly so. Not only did intellectuals such as Adam Michnik play a leading role in theorising a new mode of political opposition in the 1980s but, in the Solidarity movement, Poland developed a social movement which epitomised the constructive potential of civil society. It seemed that all the main groups in Polish society were united in their opposition to a hated socialist regime. It is well known that this movement began to implode even before the first free elections of 1989, but the transformation of Poland is nonetheless widely perceived, at least by Western scholars, in terms of the successful rediscovery of a liberal civil society. My own ethnographic perspective suggests a different account. At the height of the initial success of Solidarity in 1980–1981, I was conducting fieldwork in a village in the Polish Carpathians, a long way from the centres of power and media attention. The region had experienced ethnic cleansing in the early socialist period, but some of

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<sup>80</sup> In my own chapter in the volume co-edited by Lewis (Glasius, Lewis, and Seckinelgin 2004), I argued that those who show such naïve faith in the emancipatory effects of a proliferation of new NGOs have come to form a new 'church' (Hann 2004g). It is awkward to be so critical when no one would dispute that many NGO staff members, like the anti-communist intellectuals who set 'civil society' on its way in the 1980s, are motivated by the most laudable ideals. Nonetheless, there is little evidence that such initiatives have actually contributed much to spreading liberal values and increasing civic participation, and a good deal of evidence for concluding that some interventions justified with the rhetoric of civil society have in practice undermined their ostensible objectives (Sampson 2002; see also Lomax 1997; Hann 2003c).

those deported had returned to their homeland in later decades. They differed in ethnicity and religion from the dominant Roman Catholic majority. This minority was internally divided: ethnically, between those who identified as Ukrainian and those who preferred the designation Lemko (some argued that it was possible to combine the two; see chapter 9), and in religious terms, between Orthodox and those who adhered to the semi-clandestine Greek Catholic Church. (I address the position of the latter in more detail in the following chapter.) Some members of the minority, regardless of their precise ethnic and religious affiliation, were alarmed by the Solidarity movement. They saw it as a vehicle for Polish nationalism and were especially sensitive to the prominence of Roman Catholic churchmen in shaping the movement. Admittedly, Poland's ethnic minorities are relatively small, and 15 years later it can hardly be gainsaid that most of them enjoy greater freedom and recognition than they did under socialism.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, postsocialist developments such as stringent anti-abortion legislation and the concordat with the Vatican have led large numbers of Poles to perceive that the influence of the dominant church in their public sphere is not always consistent with modern liberal ideals.

During the 1990s, away from the picturesque villages of the hills, I also did some fieldwork in the border city of Przemyśl, which had a small Ukrainian minority of some 2,000 persons. The new freedoms to register formal associations and take initiatives in the public sphere were utilised most conspicuously by veterans and others of a Polish nationalist orientation. This led to major conflicts (see Hann 1998a, 1998b; chapter 7, this volume) and caused many members of the minority to feel under daily pressure from the majority in a way they had not experienced under socialism. The problem was that in an open civil society it was impossible to prevent citizens from coming forward to air difficult issues which had been impossible to discuss publicly under socialism, notably the tragedy of Polish-Ukrainian conflict in the 1940s. The main consequence was that, for a number of years, members of the minority felt beleaguered. During this same period the city of Przemyśl became one of the main centres of a tremendous expansion of small-scale cross-border trading. This was a lifeline for many Ukrainians and also of economic benefit to local Poles. It meant, however, that Ukrainians became visible in significant numbers for the first time in many decades. This was no more welcome to Polish nationalists than moves to re-establish and return property to the Greek Catholic Church. Stereotypes of the 'dirty trader' developed—and indeed, the new marketplaces often were dirty and

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<sup>81</sup> The picture, however, is uneven. Groups such as Belarussians, who lack an effective state to protect their interests, are handicapped in relation to groups such as Ukrainians, Jews and Germans, and also in relation to 'regional' groups such as Kashubs. See Fleming 2002.

unappealing. In other words, the economic freedoms generally associated with a free civil society also had the effect of heightening inter-ethnic antagonism.

A more dramatic example of the effects of new forms of trading following the collapse of the Soviet Union could be found on the eastern Black Sea coast of Turkey in the early 1990s (Bellér-Hann and Hann 2000). In this case, unlike that of Przemyśl, negative attitudes towards the traders were strongly linked to prostitution. The traders themselves, who came from virtually all regions of the former USSR, emphasised economic necessity as their dominant motivation. They experienced their new freedoms, including the freedom to travel, as a loss of security and of moral integrity. As in the Polish-Ukrainian case, we found that trading of this type was linked to negative ethnic stereotypes. In this instance the sex dimension played a decisive role, generating anger and anguish among local Muslims. Middle-class feminists in Trabzon, the main city of the region, established an association and sponsored a public protest against prostitution. Elsewhere, in smaller towns such as the one in which we were living, women gathered to express their disgust. These protests were organised by the Islamic party, and far from illustrating the forms of a new embryonic civil society as specified in the Gellnerian ideal type, they were characterised by strong anti-modernist rhetoric and increased ethnic stereotyping (Bellér-Hann 1995b).

Ethnographic studies have had little effect on mainstream political science studies of the postsocialist countries, in which it has become common to address problems of democratisation in the language of civil society and to attribute virtually all social problems of the transition to a deficit in this sphere. Central Asia is a good case in point. The editor of a recent collection (Ruffin 1999) distinguished between indigenous forms of association and the new NGOs, often dependent on foreign grants, which contract with branches of the state and sometimes aspire to substitute for it. Contributors to the volume noted the importance of local values and the potential of tolerant strands of Islam. Olivier Roy stressed the continued role of the collective farm, even after its formal abolition, as a solidary institution, closely bound up with kinship and essential in preserving a modicum of stability within the dislocation caused by economic transition (cf. Roy 2000). Yet the main emphasis in the end was placed on the new organisations and the possibility of 'jump-starting' democratic processes. M. Holt Ruffin concluded optimistically that, in ex-Soviet Central Asia as a whole, positive trends existed 'towards societies with vibrant sectors of nonprofit organisations and voluntary associations independently providing important public services' (1999: 22).



Whether civil society is defined narrowly in terms of formal associations or more broadly in terms of the principle of 'rule of law' and 'democratic values', few observers would claim that it has prospered in Central Asia in recent years. The German political scientist Beate Eschment (n.d.) recently analysed the continuing absence of democracy in all five former Soviet republics. Contrary to those Western political scientists who have identified signs of democratic consolidation in the region, in her view, even with the application of a minimalist definition, not even Kyrgyzstan deserved to be viewed as an 'island of democracy'. Instead Eschment presented damning accounts of the political careers of the dominant presidents, their backgrounds in the old Communist Party, their manipulation of election results, their obstruction of an effective multi-party system, and, not least, their strategies to ensure familial succession to the countries' highest offices. The deeper reason for this sad state of affairs, according to Eschment, was the continuing absence of a civil society comparable to that which had emerged over centuries in Europe. The groups favoured in the contemporary promotion of *Zivilgesellschaft*, typically English speakers with good information technology skills, were radically different from the social groups responsible for democratising nineteenth-century bourgeois society.<sup>82</sup> Eschment herself has a great deal of first-hand experience of recent NGO initiatives, and her verdict is as negative as that reached by Ruth Mandel on the basis of her observations in Almaty, Kazakhstan (2002). According to Eschment, there is often absurd competition between the donors, such that postsocialist Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan, is full of NGOs to promote women's issues, but they do little in practice beyond giving some local elite women temporary access to a Western income stream.<sup>83</sup>

Eschment's sharp analysis of the current situation in Central Asia is supplemented by what I find to be a romantic view of the state of affairs in the West, where citizens are said to be capable of disinterested action for the benefit of the whole (*das Ganze, das Gemeinwohl*). Unfortunately, she proceeds to argue, in Central Asia it has so far proved impossible to transcend the particularisms of blood (family and clans) and local community. Nothing in local institutions and practices, summarised as neo-patrimonialism, offers any potential for democratic development. For Eschment it is irrelevant whether the kinship ties are real or whether they serve as an idiom in which to express new kinds of political alliances and patron-

<sup>82</sup> I find it significant that in the original German version of her paper Eschment used the recent Anglicism *Zivilgesellschaft* rather than the older German expression, *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*.

<sup>83</sup> Only the Swiss, according to Eschment, have a good record of tailoring their project assistance to the needs of local people in this region.

client relations, perhaps with their origins in networks of social capital originating in the socialist period. According to her definition, a healthy civil society is one in which the free actions of individual citizens are conducive also to the collective good of their community, and this must mean the entire political community and not merely a tribe or local entity. All the new states of Central Asia remain remote from this ideal.

Eschment leaves unanswered the problem of how exactly a state can evolve the magic liberal formula whereby individuals pursuing their selfish interests also contribute to the greater good. In Central Asia today it seems that the Hegelian-Marxist theorising of civil society is more pertinent: it is a realm of egoism, of selfish utility-maximisation by individuals, which is inconsistent with the *Gemeinwohl*; it therefore needs to be countered by effective political authority. That is what the people themselves seem to recognise, and it lies behind increasing cynicism not only towards the new NGO sector but towards the basic liberal institutions of market economy and private property. External efforts to promote civil society have not helped to counter the massive dislocations caused in Central Asian societies by the political and economic disintegration of the Soviet Union. It does not occur to most foreign advisers that indigenous forces, including religion, might have some potential to promote the values of civility and tolerance. Instead, the West's civil society lobby tends to dismiss religion in much the same way it abhors 'tribalism'.

For a contrasting case, let me turn briefly to China, not, strictly speaking, a postsocialist state at all but one in which for many practical purposes the reforms launched under Deng Xiaoping from the late 1970s can be usefully compared with post-Soviet developments elsewhere across the Eurasian landmass. The role of environmental activists in establishing new social movements in the late socialist period is well documented for a number of countries and sometimes perceived as a litmus test for civil society and democratisation in general (Pickvance 1998). Whereas Central Asians have managed to develop strong NGOs in this field (Watters 1999), in China even to register as a 'social organisation' remains difficult and the term NGO is perceived as potentially subversive. Many 'green NGOs' do exist in China, but they have had great difficulty in organising effective protest actions and maintaining their autonomy from organs of the state (Ho 2001). The prospects for the consolidation of civil society in the modern Western sense are therefore gloomy. But is this all there is to be said about changing patterns of sociality and democratic accountability in contemporary China?

One of the most dramatic outcomes of China's economic liberalisation has been the emergence of a vast 'floating' population: as many as 100 million peasants have left their overcrowded villages to seek their fortunes in

the booming urban sector. Li Zhang (2001) studied a community of such migrants in Beijing which eventually fell foul of state repression. Her rich monograph includes an account of a voluntary association which, for a while, seemed to offer the possibility of establishing a 'third realm', a new public sphere independent of both state and market. The inspiration for the Jingwen Loving Heart Society came from intellectuals at Beijing University who, in the post-Tiananmen years, renewed the search for new moral principles, to counter the domination of the market. The migrants who formed a local branch at the Jingwen marketplace initially pursued only limited social welfare goals, such as the provision of drinking water and minor improvements in the facilities of their market. Soon, however, they were perceived by state officials as a potential threat to their own control. This threat did not materialise. Leaders of the association forfeited popular support when they failed to defend migrants against local officials and were perceived—just as those who work for foreign NGOs often are—as pursuing their private interests and not those of the migrants as a community. Li Zhang (2001: 113) concluded that

the fate of the Loving Heart Society founded by Wenzhou migrants suggests that visible civic associations cannot serve as a plausible or long-lasting basis for the development of non-state power precisely because they can be easily identified, monitored and suppressed by the state authorities. Civic power within the migrant population is more likely to derive from traditional forms of social networks such as kinship ties, *bang* (sworn brotherhood) coalitions, and clientelist ties that are less visible to outsiders.

I draw the following conclusions from these examples. First, the opening of borders, the recognition of new marketplaces, and the registration of new associations, including many with foreign sponsorship, does not suffice to promote a liberal public sphere or the acceptance of new notions of accountability and civility. There is nothing in the Euro-American historical record to support the view that the desired alignment of private and community interests can be achieved by social engineering in the 'voluntary sector'. In this respect the prospects of China, where autonomous associations are currently repressed but the economy continues to boom, may be more promising in the long term than those of ex-Soviet Central Asia, most of which is still suffering from great economic dislocation (see also Schak 2003).

Second, and complementing this materialist perspective (which might not appear to leave much room for anthropological inputs), it is worth paying closer attention to local ways of expressing similar kinds of virtues to those which Gellner and others have associated with civil society. The export of Western models seems not to work. But there is no need to reduce civil



society to formal associations built up of individual members conceived primarily as entrepreneurial actors, as the theoreticians of neoliberalism would have it. By adopting a broader approach we may recognise the ways in which older local institutions and values—including perhaps some of those associated with socialism—may be adapted to meet contemporary conditions. Anthropologists have a role to play in uncovering these patterns of adaptation and innovation, and this is the level at which we need to engage with the interdisciplinary debates. Some of the new forms of civil society engineering may turn out to be detrimental to self-professed goals, by the standards of both locals and their new international ‘partners’; this is particularly likely when new forms are introduced in inappropriate ways by foreign staff. Meanwhile the older sources of value and their institutionalisation tend to be closely linked to religion and ritual. Let me now turn to consider religion and suggest how investigations of contemporary civil society might benefit from a reassessment of the concept of civil religion.

### Civil Religion

In the middle of the eighteenth century, when Adam Ferguson was developing one of the richest accounts of the emergence of civil society, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his French contemporaries were similarly concerned to lay the conceptual foundations for a new type of polity and to specify the new role of religion. For Rousseau, faith was to become a matter of individual conscience, confined to the ‘private sphere’. In effect he proclaimed the death of the Christian God a century before Friedrich Nietzsche. Yet Rousseau was fully aware of the shortcomings of a society based on brittle rationality alone. Out of his recognition that no state or society could sustain itself without religion, at the end of *The Social Contract* he developed his conception of ‘civil religion’. This attempt to circumvent potential drawbacks of the Enlightenment dichotomies of public and private and of religious and secular is still worth reading, if only because the problems are still very much with us in the Europe of the early twenty-first century. Rousseau’s deployment of the language of citizenship and tolerance is especially interesting, given current debates focusing on the same concepts. A civil religion, for Rousseau, was ‘a purely civil profession of faith, the articles of which it is the business of the sovereign to determine; not exactly as religious dogmas, but as sentiments of sociability, without which it is impossible to be either a good citizen or a loyal subject’ (1994: 166). This rationalised religion was designed to remove power from the priests and place it with the secular ruler, but it would do so by appropriating Christianity’s moral teaching rather than explicitly challenging a belief in God:

The dogmas of the civil religion must be simple and few, precisely expressed, without explanations or commentary. The existence of the Divinity, powerful, intelligent, beneficent, prescient, provident, the life to come, the reward of the just and the punishment of the wicked, the holiness of the laws and the social contract; such are the positive dogmas. As for those excluded, I limit them to one: intolerance; it belongs to the religions that we have rejected. (Rousseau 1994: 167)

Contrary to the expectations of many early social scientists, in the Christian countries of the North Atlantic secularisation turned out to be far from inevitable (Martin 1978). For Thomas Luckmann (1967), religion was an inescapable aspect of being human, and it was therefore illusory to suppose that it would vanish in the course of modernisation. Many other scholars have reached similar conclusions. Religions, especially when they can claim dominance within a particular country or cultural group, have repeatedly violated rules nominally confining them to the private sphere (Casanova 1994). The empirical utility of David Martin's concept of 'secularisation', José Casanova's 'public religion', and Luckmann's 'invisible religion' varies from one country to another. The case of the United States raises especially interesting issues. This country is politically dominant world-wide and technologically by far the most advanced, yet American society remains one of the most religious in the developed world in terms of the usual indicators of religiosity (not merely affiliation with a church but also regular attendance, full ritual participation, etc.). The Enlightenment origins of this state dictate that religion is formally separated from politics. Plurality prevails, and the American religious market is forever generating new cults and sects, some of which achieve ephemeral notoriety. But the US Constitution, which confines religion to a private sphere, is itself predicated on acceptance of the Christian God. Robert Bellah pointed in his reworking of the concept of civil religion (1967) to the importance of the rhetoric and symbols of Judeo-Christian traditions in the forging of modern American political culture and national identity.<sup>84</sup>

Bellah's analysis remains influential in recent discussions of civil religion. However, in comparison with the civil society debates, debates about civil religion have had little public impact. Whereas the definitions of civil society emphasise individuals and the diversity of associations, the emphasis in approaches to civil religion is usually placed, in accordance with Durk-

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<sup>84</sup> This account, predicated on the ultimate separation of the civil and the theological (Rousseau's dichotomy), is arguably in need of updating in the presidency of George W. Bush, whose strong (arguably 'fundamentalist') Christian convictions are generally reckoned to have contributed significantly to his political success.

heimian assumptions, on collective solidarity. Civil religion thus refers to 'a set of cultural ideas, symbols, and practices oriented to the direct worship of a society by its members' and to 'the folk religion of a nation or a political culture' ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). An alternative approach, and an obvious way to link civil religion to the recent debates over civil society and human rights, would be to define a 'civil' religious environment as one in which every community of faith (terms such as *church*, *cult*, and *sect* are mutually substitutable here) would have the same basic legal rights and obligations as other organisations of civil society. All would be obliged to accept religious plurality as inherently desirable; in other words, they would have to support a free and open 'marketplace of religions'. Such calls are being made vociferously not only by religious groups themselves but also by international lawyers and human rights activists who view the freedom to choose and to change one's religion as a fundamental human right.<sup>85</sup>

This latter approach has a closer affinity with the economic ideology of neoliberalism than with the teachings and theology of the major established churches. It might be viewed as the final realisation of the Enlightenment dichotomy, a generalisation of the double separation of church and state and of private and public spheres which began to take shape in early modern Europe. The trouble is that even the countries which pioneered these distinctions are far from generating uniform legal regulations, let alone a uniform sociological reality in the domain of religion (Lehmann 2003). The French state, for example, has pursued more rigorous secularist policies and had considerable success in curtailing the traditional Christian churches. Yet recent attempts to assert this secularism vis-à-vis the country's Islamic minority have generated divisive controversy. In Germany, by contrast, the two main Christian churches enjoy a privileged relation to the state, and the religions of immigrant communities are largely ignored. If their own country cannot yet be said to have accomplished 'civil Christianity' in this sense, then on what basis can Germans call for 'civil Islam' in countries such as Afghanistan or Indonesia?

There are deeper theoretical issues at stake in these contemporary controversies. First, given that the term *civil* was often defined historically in opposition to the religious (as well as to the military and the governmental), there is irony in the fact that some religious communities should now seek (or feel compelled) to claim their rights as organs of civil society. Second, the tradition of theorising about civil religion, from Rousseau to Bellah, emphasises the collective, binding function for the community of a single encompassing religious tradition. Yet scholars such as Christopher Bryant

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<sup>85</sup> See, for example, *Forum 18 News Service*, [www.forum18.org](http://www.forum18.org), and several contributions to Danchin and Cole 2002.



(1995) argue that the development of civil religion in the West is to be understood as a result of the intensifying individualism of those societies. The implication is that in other societies—for example, those in which collectivist legacies were maintained by twentieth-century socialist regimes—one should not expect to find comparable forms of civil religion. Rather, Bryant argues, Christel Lane's (1981) notion of 'political religion' is the more appropriate one. Grace Davie (2000) is another major theorist who tends to posit sharp differences between East and West, as so many European social thinkers have done before her. She draws particular attention to the thick social networks associated with religious communities in Western countries and notes the absence of a strong voluntary sector in the post-socialist countries, an absence which corresponds to the 'civil society deficit' noted above.

### **Religion and Postsocialist Citizenship**

Religious identities and the negotiation of church-state relations have been central to the development of concepts of citizenship in Europe. Recently the religious foundation of citizenship has received renewed attention across a range of disciplines, e.g. the controversies concerning how (if at all) to make reference to religious or spiritual heritage in the drafting of a new European Constitution. Although most European governments agree that religious freedom should be codified as one of the fundamental rights of the citizen, they remain highly disparate in their regulations to assure such freedom. The enlargement which brought Poland and nine other new members, most of them formerly under socialist rule, into the European Union in 2004 increased this diversity. Some states which repressed religion in the socialist decades are now exhibiting new tensions between religious identity and both national and European levels of citizenship. These tensions are most visible in the responses of majority churches to increased competition from new minority churches. It is by no means generally agreed, either 'on the ground' or among the 'experts', that all types of religious identity should enjoy equal rights. In many countries, even the definitional criteria for 'religion', 'church', and 'sect' remain contentious. In short, the reconciling of rights to religious freedom, at both the individual and the collective levels, with strongly held identities which make it difficult in practice to treat all religious communities in the same way is an important unresolved issue in contemporary citizenship debates.

In the socialist states, the extent to which religion was repressed and the atheism of Marxism-Leninism functioned as a form of civil or political religion varied over time and from one country to another. No doubt all Communist parties, at least in their early years, could count some 'true

believers' among their members. As Lane (1981) showed, attempts to create new symbols and to inculcate new ritual cycles throughout the population enjoyed some success. But the church of socialism failed to generate new charismatic leaders, and party membership became a matter of routine career advancement rather than a commitment of faith by 'enthusiasts'. That seems to be a key factor in explaining the generally swift and peaceful capitulation of these regimes in 1989–1991. Yet the continued strong performance of socialist and ex-socialist political parties after the revolutions is evidence that many people are still attached to at least some elements, perhaps some values, of the socialist period. Of course, the movement which promised salvation on this earth, in the form of material prosperity and the eradication of capitalist class differences, was always perceived differently from more conventional religions of redemption. The socialists struggled against other churches and repressed them, but only in the case of Albania was a serious attempt made (successful, it would seem) to abolish them. More commonly, socialist powerholders contented themselves with implementing the basic Enlightenment dichotomy and sought to confine religion to the private sphere.<sup>86</sup>

The sudden demise of socialist regimes transformed the possibilities for religious organisation across vast regions of Eurasia. This aspect of postsocialism has attracted some attention from social scientists (Polish scholars have been especially prominent: see Borowik and Babiński 1997). However, religious changes in the former Eastern bloc have not figured prominently in the work of Western anthropologists. Katherine Verdery (1999a) and Caroline Humphrey (2002a) have addressed the revitalised significance of historical ecclesiastical figures and the revival of forms of shamanism, respectively, but everyday forms of mainstream religious life, changes in practices and affiliations, and the social and political consequences of such changes have been on the whole neglected. What role can churches play in the development of new forms of identity and citizenship under postsocialism, above all with regard to the promotion of tolerance? We can expect to find significant differences between countries and also at the level of regions within the larger countries. Might we also be able to identify patterns on a larger scale, such as differences between Christianity and other faiths or between the Eastern and Western streams of Christianity itself?

There is no evidence of a correlation between the extent to which the 'historic' churches suffered under Marxist-Leninist regimes and the extent to

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<sup>86</sup> It can of course be maintained that the practical discrimination experienced by the committed members of the older churches was a form of repression incompatible with Enlightenment ideals (though it was arguably compatible with the standpoint of Rousseau).

which Marxism-Leninism itself fulfilled some of the functions of a religion for some sections of the population. It is, however, clear that historical factors, including 'legacy' factors from the socialist era, continue to influence the way the historic churches are coping with the Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Scientologists, and other groups now expanding rapidly throughout eastern Europe and much of Asia. Church-state relations in Poland have differed for centuries from Church-state relations in Russia. In the former, the Roman Catholic Church was a highly effective vehicle of political opposition throughout the socialist period. What happens to such a powerful church when it achieves its goal and socialist powerholders are swept aside? No one expects the Polish episcopate to content itself with the status quo of, say, the French Catholic Church, but what do ordinary citizens think of the church's public role? The same basic questions can be posed for Russia and the Orthodox world as a whole, with its alleged traditions of 'Caesaropapism'. It has been suggested that Orthodox churches exhibit distinctive patterns of 'cultural intimacy' which give them not only a closer link to a secular national identity but also greater immunity to foreign missionaries.<sup>87</sup> But such generalisations cannot explain the internal divisions affecting numerous Orthodox churches today, nor can they explain differential rates of conversion, sometimes even between different regions of the same country. Only ethnographic projects can yield more satisfying answers concerning how different churches are perceived, the needs they fulfill, and the precise pastoral mechanisms and techniques by which they achieve their social effects.

Despite the historical differences between the dominant churches in Poland and Russia, their contemporary predicaments are in some respects similar. The abstract obligation associated with citizenship—to grant equal rights to all religions—is countered by a more specific claim grounded in the primacy of a secular collective identity: it is claimed that *one* religious community has an especially powerful bond with the nation. In the Polish case, joining Europe seems to have had no significant effect on this basic tension. Both inside and outside the current EU, all the dominant churches of postsocialism—regardless of whether they played an oppositional role under socialism or whether they were to some extent co-opted by the regime—are faced with the challenge of devising new strategies of adaptation, both to new secular powerholders and to new religious competitors. Each dominant church seeks to present itself as a unique national institution—though it may at the same time be open to various influences of religious globalisation,

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<sup>87</sup> Galia Valtchinova, personal communication (2004), drawing on a concept of Michael Herzfeld (1997).



analogous to the increasingly globalised Protestantism which usually forms the principal challenger.

Although the 'religious factor' appears almost everywhere to have gained in strength and significance under postsocialist conditions, this may be limited to specific social spaces. There is no evidence that religious teachings have greater influence than before on personal moral decision-taking. It may now be possible, in the second decade of postsocialism, to detect clearer evidence of a renewal of long-term secularisation. Certainly in some countries the initial resurgence of religion in the public sphere has begun to wane, and participation in some types of rituals is declining. We may need to distinguish more carefully between contradictory trends. On the one hand, the new public space afforded to religion and its recognition as an element of 'national heritage' help to explain the strong consolidation of established churches in the 1990s. On the other, religion has also traditionally offered solace to the poor and the marginalised—in this case spiritual compensation or consolation to the 'losers' of postsocialism. If this large constituency is dissatisfied with the dominant church and feels more attracted to the new religions on offer, then we need to explain why this is so, how exactly the effects are accomplished, and what implications these religious developments have for notions of citizenship.<sup>88</sup>

### **Generalising Civility from the English Case**

How great, then, are the alleged differences between East and West in the domain of religion? If neither German nor French models offer a perfect model for export, might other models deriving from the western European experience be worthy of attention in postsocialist countries? Elements of the Dutch experience of faith-based multiculturalism have often seemed attractive; but I prefer instead to consider the case of a dominant church closely identified with national identity (since that is the more common situation in the postsocialist world). England and the Anglican Church may—somewhat paradoxically—provide an attractive model for a variant of civil religion which differs from the free market model.<sup>89</sup>

The Church of England is a state church with the monarch at its head—a concentration of secular and religious authority unmatched in the Orthodox churches. It is hard to imagine a non-Anglican head of state or even a non-Christian prime minister for the United Kingdom. Lack of reli-

<sup>88</sup> The questions raised in this section are being addressed in the current MPISA projects on 'Religion and Civil Society'.

<sup>89</sup> Lest this be interpreted as an extraordinary, ethnocentric suggestion for an anthropologist to make, let me hasten to point out that I am Welsh, not English, and have no personal links to Anglicanism. (It is true that the present Archbishop of Canterbury is also a Welshman.)

gious faith was a major political handicap for Neil Kinnock, Tony Blair's less successful predecessor as leader of the Labour Party. Yet legal restrictions affecting the life chances of the members of minority religions (Jews and Catholics) were removed in the nineteenth century. In recent decades the Anglican Church has experienced a steady decline in numbers of active members, and in many ways it exemplifies trends of secularisation. It continues, however, to play an important role in the life of the community at multiple levels, from the village vicar to the archbishop of Canterbury (Davie 1994). Numerous activist bishops have campaigned to ameliorate urban social conditions for people who do not belong to their traditional congregations; their efforts are supported by dense networks of volunteers. The Anglican Church is prominently involved in major public issues of the times, such as debates over gender equality and homosexuality. It has been at the forefront of efforts to promote a non-racial, multicultural society in England and has appointed a black bishop to an historic English see (Rochester). The church has engaged itself in support of the rights of small religious groups and new denominations, including Islam. I suggest that this impressive record on the part of a dominant church can point us towards an alternative model of 'civil religion', one which is unlikely to satisfy the 'religious human rights' zealots but which may be more compatible over the long term with ideals of tolerance and civility in the field of religion.

The general message was expressed in the speech given by Queen Elizabeth II to her Commonwealth on Christmas Day 2004, in which she said that 'every religion has something to say about tolerance and respecting others'. The queen went on to emphasise in an almost anthropological manner that what mattered most in this domain was not the abstract declaration of principles but their implementation in micro-level interactions: 'Most of us have learned to acknowledge and respect the ways of other cultures and religions, but what matters even more is the way in which those from different backgrounds behave towards each other in everyday life'.<sup>90</sup>

Let me return now to the term *civil*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a long list of entries for it, among them 'of or belonging to citizens; of or pertaining to the community of citizens'. It can be argued that the notion of citizen is also a specifically European concept, but this usage of *civil* dates back to Middle English and is perhaps sufficiently abstract to withstand charges of ethnocentricity. A later usage (dated 1592) specifies 'pertaining to the *ordinary* life and affairs of a citizen; as distinguished from *military*, *ecclesiastical* etc.'. This, too, seems to offer a helpful opening to social anthropology. At various times the term *civil* has been used in the sense of 'orderly, well-governed', 'civilised', 'educated, refined', 'sober,

<sup>90</sup> Cited from the internet version at [www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk).

decent, grave', 'humane, gentle', and 'decently polite'. Not listed in the OED (basically a Victorian compilation) but, I think, prominent in most English speakers' contemporary understandings of *civil* and *civility* is some notion of tolerance, as it was used by the head of the Anglican Church in her broadcast. The implicit antithesis is always violence.

This Anglican model can hardly be transferred through the adoption of a new constitution or other legislation, any more than it is possible to 'jump-start' civil society. It has come to seem attractive only in recent decades, at the end of a process lasting centuries. There are still limits to the Church of England's ecumenism, and died-in-the-wool republicans are not its only critics. Still, I suggest that it is useful to bear this church in mind when turning back to consider the postsocialist countries, many of which remain similarly endowed with a dominant church which has played a key role in the formation of a modern national identity. It is unsurprising to find, when one consults the websites of the 'free religious market' pressure groups, that Orthodox churches turn out to be infringing the rights of new Protestant groups almost everywhere. Their record seems to be fully as reprehensible as that of Islam in predominantly Muslim countries. One consequence of the widespread media coverage of such infringements is that Orthodox Christianity comes to be seen as 'non-European'. Evidence concerning the mistreatment of religious minorities in, say, Belarus or Bulgaria (not to mention Turkey) provides support for those who would prefer to postpone the further enlargement of the European Union for as long as possible, on the grounds that once one leaves Western Christianity behind, one finds oneself in an entirely different 'culture' or 'civilisation' (Huntington 1996).

On the other hand, Greece, an overwhelmingly Orthodox country, has been a member of the EU (then the EEC) since 1979, a fact which shows that religious orientation is not a decisive criterion when other factors are deemed to warrant a country's inclusion in this Western club. Of course Greece has continued to figure as a prominent offender at the European Court of Human Rights for refusing to create a 'level playing field' for new religious movements. In its reluctance to legislate the separation of church and state, Greece shows a substantial measure of continuity with the traditions of the Ottoman Empire, where religion was the prime basis of one's identity and citizenship. (By contrast, the new Turkish republic moved very quickly to implement the principle of laicism and has adhered to it faithfully.) But of course this is not a problem affecting Orthodox churches alone. The Roman Catholic Church in Croatia has identified itself as closely with nationalist political parties as has the Orthodox Church in Serbia. Both Catholics and Protestants in other parts of Europe have also called for pro-



tection against competition which they perceive as unfair because it does violence to their hard-earned position in the life of a nation.

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland provides a good example of the issues. This church has occupied a dominant position in the life of the entire Polish nation since the national movement of the nineteenth century, though the roots of the symbiosis are much older. It reached a new intensity in the socialist period: a hard-pressed secular regime tolerated and even encouraged a plethora of minority religious groupings, from Orthodoxy to the Polish Buddhists and Krishnas, but the status of the Roman Catholic Church was never threatened, and it was further consolidated after Karol Wojtyła's move to the Vatican in 1978. With the collapse of socialism, however, cracks which had been present all along widened into rifts. Once the Church was no longer making common oppositional cause with the intellectual proponents of civil society, it turned out that the ambitions of some factions were far from 'civil' in the sense of promoting tolerance and ecumenism. The Church as a whole became conspicuous in contested issues in the political domain, notably by promoting a reversal of the abortion provisions which had become standard under socialism. It has supported legislation which draws a distinction between churches with an historic presence on Polish soil and new cults and sects, and it has insisted on strict implementation of registration to curb the spread of new rivals. Yet this dominant church is perhaps less monolithic than it ever was in the past: there is a sharp contrast, for example, between the populist nationalism which infuses the radio station Radio Maryja and the liberal ecumenism displayed by most intellectual Catholics (above all the Jesuits). Pope John Paul II regularly lent support to the latter, but it often seems that, within the Polish episcopate, the 'liberals' remain a minority. Anglicanism, too, is a complex coalition, yet it seems clear that the voices of tolerance and ecumenism are stronger in that Church.

The key question is how best to address problems of deep-seated suspicion and intolerance within the dominant church. It is probably unrealistic to expect that anthropologists might be allowed to carry out fieldwork among the episcopate, but there ought to be scope for fieldworkers to investigate how the bishops' pronouncements are interpreted and implemented at lower levels. Some Roman Catholic clergy in Poland still seem to have difficulty in maintaining any form of dialogue with Jews, or even with fellow Catholics if they represent a different rite and a different nation; and such attitudes are likely, if uttered regularly from the pulpit, to have an effect on the views of their parishioners.<sup>91</sup> My general hypothesis is that the posi-

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<sup>91</sup> Of course even in the socialist era not all clergy in Poland spoke with exactly the same voice. In those days it was easier for priests to speak out without inhibition than it was for

tion of Poland's dominant Church is not so different overall from what one finds in similarly dominant Orthodox Churches elsewhere in eastern Europe (which also include courageous, ecumenically oriented exceptions among their members). Some Protestant fundamentalists favour addressing the problems by means of an interventionist policy as vigorous as that for which neoliberal market fundamentalists argued a decade ago. However, many postsocialist citizens find the notion of a free market in the religious domain even more antipathetic and disturbing than its economic equivalent. Moral criticism is likely to be strongest when the two domains mix—for example, when some groups proselytise and succeed in recruiting converts thanks to their powerful financial support from overseas, which enables them to make generous material gifts to new members. Conversion nearly always leads to divisive disputes within families and often to personal tragedies and wider social tensions.

For the reasons mentioned above, Western countries are in no position to impose a new blueprint to regulate the postsocialist religious scene. To commend the historical evolution of the Anglican Church might seem futile, when contemporary postsocialist circumstances are so diverse and so many new groups are vying for followers. Yet the commitments and values asserted recently by the queen are surely attractive. Without underwriting the old 'monopolies', it is worth drawing attention to ways to strengthen ecumenical elements *within* the dominant churches, rather than forcing those churches into a defensive fortress from which to rail against the financial advantages enjoyed by foreign missionaries.

### **Religion and the Power of Moral Ideas**

I have argued that a focus on civility provides a means to draw together the concepts of civil society and civil religion, along with their large literatures. The urgent questions to be addressed in investigations of both civil society and civil religion concern the values and practices of civility, tolerance, and non-violence. Are the new NGOs in the formerly socialist countries promoting these values? Do their activities in practice contribute to the dissemination of liberal understandings of tolerance? In the case of civil religion the agenda might appear more complex, because civil religion is usually conceived of as a single encompassing system of ideas or ideology. Yet civil society is commonly invoked in a similarly collective way, in opposition to 'the state'. The key questions are the same: are particular civil associations

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bishops and cardinals, and many low-level clergy played highly political roles in their communities.

(NGOs), churches, and other actors in the 'religious marketplace' promoting and implementing the values and practices of a civil, tolerant community?

This focus on the civil commits us explicitly to addressing *moral* issues. This is not to claim that issues of civility will everywhere be expressed in similar terms and find similar prominence in local understandings of morality. Whatever else those understandings might represent—for example, to theologians or to psychoanalysts—one central strand running through social science accounts of religion—arguably *the* central strand—is the attempt to account for the secular utility of morality in terms of providing members of the community with normative rules to guide practical conduct. Recent anthropological work on religion has hardly engaged with the sorts of 'big questions' which animated anthropologists a century ago. For example, James Frazer (1909) asked how it was that so much 'superstition' could demonstrably serve the cause of rational scientific progress in the broader scheme of human history. This kind of questioning tends nowadays to be the preserve of speculative evolutionary biologists arguing for the 'adaptedness' of religion in the context of theories of group selection and 'open-ended' cultural and psychological processes (Wilson 2002). I think it is worth revisiting such theories and assessing what light the evidence from post-socialist societies can shed on them and their contemporary variants.

For David Sloan Wilson, a human constant runs from the simplest hunter-gatherer societies through the most complex societies of today's world. It is 'a strong moral sentiment that society must work for all its members from the highest to the lowest' (Wilson 2002: 224). Socialism can be approached as an attempt to organise modernity on a more moral—certainly a more egalitarian—basis than its capitalist rival. Numerous researchers have attempted to view socialist ideology and the rituals established by socialist states in Durkheimian terms, as establishing new secular symbols of sacredness (e.g. Lane 1981). But this 'political religion', as Lane called it, clearly failed. One factor may have been the excessive scientific content of the belief system. To put it in the terms of the trade-off identified by Wilson, there was too much 'factual realism' and not enough 'practical realism'. More to the point, perhaps, is the blatant failure of most socialist systems to reconcile their normative aspirations with the requirements of economic efficiency. What then happens at the normative level when a gospel of secular salvation is dramatically discarded and irretrievably lost? Does the capitalist world, the former 'first world', have a ready-made alternative to which people want to subscribe? To some, civil society is the answer, but to others it is merely the ideological facade of neoliberalism. I can see little evidence that Western civil society, according to currently fashionable definitions, has the capacity to assume the sort of normative load formerly



sustained by socialist ideals. It is therefore worth exploring all the alternatives available, including those which derive from the realm of institutionalised religions. We need to investigate how far historic Churches have been able to recover the ground which most of them lost under socialism, because only they can resonate deeply with locally specific, historically shaped values. Equally, we need better understandings of the successes and failures of new churches and sects. To what extent can these be explained with reference to the norms and values which they preach? Can such ideas be disseminated where they patently lack historical grounding, or must new religious movements rapidly acquire that grounding if they are to succeed?<sup>92</sup>

## Conclusion

Discourses of civil society, some of them originating (or skilfully revived) in the critiques of late socialist societies articulated by 'dissident' intellectuals, have been widely applied in the postsocialist era. I have argued that the currently dominant definitions are too narrow and too closely tied to the individualist, market-driven thinking which characterises neoliberalism. To 'strengthen' civil society in this sense is to weaken it in another. The tensions are particularly visible in the domain of religion. Repeated attempts to implement an Enlightenment model which would confine religious faith to a 'private sphere' have proved difficult to implement in many parts of Europe, the region where they have been pursued longest. Particular problems have arisen in the countries formerly perceived as 'totalitarian', where religion experienced varying degrees of repression. The abstract proclamation of the individual citizen's right to freedom of religious expression is insufficient. It is necessary to ensure that the collective rights and obligations of minority religions are as carefully implemented as those of the majority. Finding solutions to the problems posed by religious pluralism is thus a crucial step in solving broader challenges of 'multicultural citizenship', to which I return in chapter 9.

There is increasing talk of an emerging European civil society in which many kinds of NGOs and social movements transcend the boundaries of the state. Some analysts are inclined to view churches as just another form of voluntary group jostling for position, and indeed many churches are already well organised at the supra-national level. It is relatively easy to imagine a future in which the religious human rights lawyers will devise legislation for that mythical 'level playing field' for all religious groups on a pan-European scale. That would be one way of approaching civil religion—

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<sup>92</sup> These are some of the questions we intend to address in the next phase of the current religion projects at MPISA.

to define it ultimately according to the (neo)liberal philosophy of competitive markets, which is also the philosophy underpinning most contemporary theories of civil society. But the substantive implementation of such legislation is bound to prove difficult, because many dominant churches still wield considerable power. Many millions of people are deeply attached to a religious identity which gains much of its strength from its historical link to the most powerful of secular identities, namely, a national identity.

Given this heritage, I have suggested that the history of the Anglican Church is instructive for the dominant national churches of postsocialism. As a state church, the Church of England continues to play a special role in the life of the nation: only the head of this church can crown a monarch or bury a princess. At the same time, in the conditions of a mature and highly secularised industrial society, this church continues to demonstrate dense voluntary networks at the grass roots. Indeed, Anglicanism meets at least three different specifications of civil religion. First, its Durkheimian ritual provision transcends the spiritual and, in tandem with the monarchy, has wide resonance in English (and arguably British) society, because this Church is uniquely bound up with the identity of a nation. Second, from another perspective the Anglican Church can be seen as another type of voluntary organisation *in* civil society, competing for individuals' leisure time along with sports clubs, garden centres, and alternative communities of faith. Third, this church nowadays promotes a collective idiom of tolerance and civility which it extends to the entire population. I have emphasised the last, normative aspect in this chapter. The paradoxical tolerance nowadays espoused by Anglicans from their privileged position in the British state was not imposed from the outside but evolved over centuries. It seems to me at once more attractive and more realistic as a model for the postsocialist world than the neoliberal vision, which extends the market model even into the realm of religion.

## Chapter 7

### Greek Catholicism Today

For quite a few years now, when asked about which specific groups of people I study as a social anthropologist, I have included in my answer 'the Greek Catholics of central Europe'.<sup>93</sup> Reactions to this information vary considerably. In Britain virtually no one has any idea who these Greek Catholics might be, and we quickly change the subject. In Germany I find that people tend to try a little harder, perhaps just to be polite. 'Oh, really, how interesting! I had no idea that there were Greek Orthodox in *Mittleuropa*.' If I, too, am feeling a need to be polite, I will begin for the umpteenth time to explain that the Greek Catholics whom I study are not members of any Orthodox Church, nor do they have anything to do with ethnic Greeks.

It is much easier to discuss these matters in Poland. There, when people hear of my interest in Greek Catholics, the response is likely to be, 'Ah, so you study Ukrainians, do you?' The answer is yes, though it would be incorrect to assume that all the Greek Catholics in Poland, let alone those in neighbouring Slovakia and other countries of the region, consider themselves to be Ukrainians. In the western Ukraine the Greek Catholics are a numerous denomination but for some of the faithful in the Transcarpathian region the identity *Rusyn* (sometimes translated as *Ruthenian*) may be more meaningful than the identity *Ukrainian*. The fact is that, although Greek Catholicism has played a role in several national movements in central Europe, it cannot be mapped neatly onto any single secular identity any more than it can be neatly pinned down to just one Christian traditions, Western (Catholic) or Eastern (Orthodox). This complexity is precisely what makes the Greek Catholics so interesting for the anthropologist.

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<sup>93</sup> This chapter is based on an inaugural lecture delivered in June 2004 at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. A German version is forthcoming: *Die Griechisch-Katholischen heute: Eine ethnologische Perspektive*. In Hans-Christian Maner und Norbert Spannenberger (eds.), *Konfessionelle Identität und nationales Engagement. Die griechisch-katholischen Kirchen in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Leipzig: GWZO. As in all my recent work on Poland, I am grateful for the advice of Stanisław Stępień.





Map 1. The Greek Catholics of Central Europe (adapted with permission from Paul Robert Magocsi 2002, map 34a, p. 113).

## Fragments from Wisłok Wielki

Let me begin in the manner typical of much modern anthropology, with anecdotal reminiscences to explain how I 'discovered' this group during the course of a fieldwork project in Poland which had entirely different objectives. The next section presents a condensed account of Greek Catholic modern history in the wider region formerly known as Galicia. This history followed a different course in adjacent regions which belonged to Hungary rather than to Austria in Habsburg days, but I cannot go into these differences today. In any case I am not an historian and my depiction of the Greek Catholic past is based not on scholarly sources but on the way it was narrated and acted out in the postsocialist years in a particular location where I have some fieldwork experience. At the end of the lecture I shall suggest how anthropological work on classification can help us to make sense of the Greek Catholic predicament. I also show the pertinence of this work to current political debates about Western culture and the uncertain location of its eastern boundary.

Wisłok Wielki (Greater Wisłok) is a settlement in the Lower Beskid section of the Carpathians which nowadays contains about 60 households. The county (*województwo*) centre is in distant Rzeszów. I did fieldwork in Wisłok intermittently between February 1979 and September 1981, and I have visited on many occasions since. The choice of this particular village was accidental. A friend of mine in Paris had friends in Warsaw, and they in turn knew of a young man who had 'dropped out' of education and the big city life in order to pursue a new lifestyle as an independent farmer in the Carpathians. Krzysztof was unusual, and yet his presence in this corner of the country was not so remarkable. Until 1947 Wisłok and the surrounding countryside were populated primarily by an East Slavic minority. The indigenous inhabitants were forcibly deported in two phases, first in 1945 eastwards behind Poland's new border with Ukraine, and then in 1947 northwards and westwards, to help repopulate the regions which Poland had acquired from Germany. Most of the villagers I found in 1979 were Polish colonists brought in by the authorities from neighbouring regions where agricultural land was scarce. But their numbers have not reached even 10% of the pre-1945 population. It was therefore possible in the 1970s for an unusual character like my Warsaw contact to be allocated by the socialist local authorities a house which had once belonged to a native of the village plus almost 30 hectares of land—a very large area by the standards of rural Poland, then and now.

My main concern in this research project was to compare the organisation of family farming in Poland with what I already knew about the Hungarian case, where villagers had been more or less fully collectivised

since 1960 (see Hann 1985a; chapter 5, this volume). Despite the catastrophic rupture of the 1940s, the village of Wislok still bore many marks of its pre-socialist history. In addition to the abandoned houses, the lower hamlet still had an old church building which had belonged previously to the original inhabitants.<sup>94</sup> A similar church in the upper hamlet had been destroyed in the 1950s, I was told, by state farm bulldozers, but its location was still clearly visible because the new Polish colonists were reluctant to disturb the adjacent cemetery. The surviving church in the lower hamlet had distinctive architectural features, and I was told that although it was now used by the local Roman Catholics, it had previously been Greek Catholic.



Plate 21. The mid-nineteenth-century Greek Catholic *cerkiew* of Saint Onufry, nowadays the Roman Catholic parish church of Wislok Wielki (lower hamlet).

<sup>94</sup> Wislok Wielki was too small to have its own priest at this time. The priest who visited on Sundays from neighbouring Komańcza to say mass was well respected for his commitment to pastoral work. He seldom addressed topical political issues explicitly in his sermons but preferred to emphasise the sanctity of the family and its historic role as the 'natural' unit of farming in the Polish countryside. Another priest who visited regularly from the monastery in Komańcza was sometimes more directly political, but some parishioners did not welcome this; his efforts to encourage local farmers to join Rural Solidarity were unsuccessful.



At this point I was still almost entirely ignorant concerning Greek Catholics, but I noted that even the Polish word for their church building was different. Without undergoing any significant external alternations, this Greek Catholic *cerkiew* had been converted into a Roman Catholic *kościół*. Little had changed inside the building either. The most valuable icons had been transferred to the historical museum in Sanok, the nearest market town and district administrative centre; but the interior was still dominated by the darker colours of the original nineteenth-century iconostasis, modified by gaudy images of the Polish pope and the Virgin Mary. The burial plots around the *cerkiew/kościół* had been sadly neglected, but the newcomers had created a tidy new cemetery of their own a short distance away.

I lived for several months with my Warsaw contact in the village's lower hamlet, attending church occasionally (though he did not) and gradually picking up more information about the Greek Catholics. My host dismissed them as 'dirty Ukrainian terrorists'. A few had returned to the village in recent years, I was told, but they lived in a cluster at the top end of the valley and did not attend Sunday mass with other villagers in the lower hamlet. Eventually I met some of these 'returnees', and later I spent several months living with an elderly couple. Some were reluctant to discuss their life histories and even to acknowledge a Ukrainian identity at all. Mychajlo, my host in the upper hamlet, could not hold back his tears when he related how his only children, two daughters, perished in 1946 when his house was burned down by Polish soldiers. His wife had died in 1976. She was buried in the old cemetery next to the church in the lower hamlet, not in the new Roman Catholic part (plate 23).

Mychajlo seldom attended church, but other Greek Catholic returnees did. They preferred to attend Sunday mass in the larger neighbouring village of Komańcza, even though this was much less convenient than making the shorter trip down the valley to the old church of lower Wisłok. The church they attended in Komańcza was a *kościół* and not a *cerkiew*. Komańcza possessed an exceptionally fine wooden *cerkiew* from the early nineteenth century, but it had been taken from the Greek Catholics and was now in the possession of the Orthodox Church (plate 24). No one in Wisłok had considered converting to Orthodoxy. However, Komańcza had a young Greek Catholic priest who was allowed by the local Roman Catholics to use their church for services in the Eastern rite. Despite many obvious signs that the building was foreign to their traditions, the returnees put up with the inconvenience of travel and expense in order to participate in a service where they could sing in their own language and, as one woman put it, be with their own people, *swoi*.



Plate 22. Polish settlers on All Souls' Day in the new Roman Catholic section of the lower Wislok cemetery (1980).



Plate 23. The grave of a Ukrainian returnee in the older section of the same cemetery.



Plate 24. The former Greek Catholic church in Komańcza (early nineteenth century), used by the Orthodox since 1961.

### **Contested History in Przemyśl**

This, then, was how I became acquainted with Poland's Greek Catholics in 1979 in the specific settings of Wisłok Wielki and Komańcza. I later learned that the Greek Catholic Churches are also known in the literature as Uniate Churches, a reference to their genesis through the formal agreement of a union with Rome. The union which brought the East Slavic populations north of the Carpathians to acknowledge the authority of the pope was signed in Brest in 1596. Much later, the Greek Catholics who found themselves in the Romanov Empire were forcibly reunited with the Orthodox. Those who lived under the Habsburgs flourished, and in the nineteenth century the Greek Catholic Church played a significant role in the origins of the Ukrainian national movement in Galicia. This association with the Ukrainian cause rendered the Church suspect in the eyes of most Poles. Stalin's suppression of the Greek Catholics in 1946 was copied in most of the new People's Democracies, including Poland. Since 1990 the 'catacomb Church' has re-emerged as a major religious grouping in Ukraine. In Poland, where it was never so thoroughly repressed, it is nowadays known officially as the Ukrainian Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite. This name, however, is seldom used by Church members. For many, the term Uniate is



perceived as a denigration. They themselves, throughout Central Europe, continue to use the term bestowed upon them by the Empress Maria Theresa in the eighteenth century.

Although my knowledge of Greek Catholic history is now greater than it was in 1979, it remains biased by the original fieldwork project. Thus, in pursuit of archival materials concerning the history of Wisłok, I first found my way to the Historical Library in Sanok, the former district (*powiat*) centre, and eventually to the state archives in Przemyśl, adjacent to the Ukrainian border. Przemyśl had been a diocesan centre for both Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics over many centuries, as well as home to a large Jewish community. I gained access to nineteenth-century parish records for Wisłok in a church building which had formed part of a Greek Catholic monastery (Basilian) until its suppression in 1946. During these visits I met and established lasting friendships with local historians. These proved immensely helpful when I returned to this corner of Poland after the demise of socialism.<sup>95</sup>

Analogous to the situation in Komańcza but on a larger scale, the Greek Catholic Church was able to organise semi-clandestine services in Przemyśl in the last decades of socialism under the protection of the dominant 'sister church'. Przemyśl is nowadays a city of almost 70,000 inhabitants. It is overwhelmingly Polish, but a few hundred families—made up of returnees and a few who had somehow managed to avoid the deportations of the 1940s—provided the congregation for Greek Catholic services. The same people formed the bulk of the membership of the Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Association, formed in 1956 with state authorisation, but always under careful political control. Members of the minority were optimistic that the political changes of 1989–1990 would bring a re-evaluation of Greek Catholic history and in particular remedies for the injustices experienced in the 1940s. They claimed the return of all confiscated property, including their former seminary, their Bishop's palace (which had been converted to serve as a state museum), and of course the buildings of the Basilian monastery.

All of these claims were eventually granted by the authorities. Only one was not: the claim for restitution of the so-called Carmelite church, prominently located on a hill in the centre of the old town, which had served

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<sup>95</sup> My first contact was with Dr. Jerzy Motylewicz, at the time head of a small unit (*placówka*) of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Przemyśl. In 1991 Motylewicz left to take a chair at the pedagogical high school in Rzeszów (now the University of Rzeszów). He was replaced by his deputy, Dr. Stanisław Stępień, who has successfully led the group ever since as an independent research centre, the Południowo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy. I am greatly indebted to these scholars and also to Romuald Biskupski in Sanok for collegial assistance and informal advice over a period of almost a quarter of a century.

as the Greek Catholic cathedral until 1946. Despite enlisting the support of the pope himself for a proposed solution which would have restored this cathedral to them, at least temporarily, the Przemyśl Greek Catholics were ultimately unsuccessful in this campaign (Hann 1998d). They had not reckoned with the strength of nationalist sentiment among the local Roman Catholics. An extremist minority was able to poison the newly opened public sphere with anti-Ukrainian sentiment. One of their techniques was the selective use of historical sources. They pointed out that the Carmelite church had been commissioned and built in the early seventeenth century according to the instructions of a Roman Catholic Pole, and that it had been transferred to the Greek Catholics only in 1774, when Emperor Joseph II suppressed many Roman Catholic monasteries throughout the Habsburg territories. Ukrainians countered that the building materials had been taken from an older building sacred to Eastern Christians and that, more tellingly, their ownership of the Carmelite church had not been disputed in the inter-war decades, when Galicia was again part of an independent Polish state. From their point of view, the Roman Catholic majority was seeking to profit from violent communist appropriations.

The postsocialist years in Przemyśl provide good illustrations of the way different epochs and different social (in this case religious) groups construct their own versions of the past. Particularly galling for members of the minority community was the general reluctance of the Roman Catholic clergy to support the claims of fellow Catholics. The blame could no longer be placed at the door of the socialist state: evidently other groups in mainstream Polish society had reservations concerning this minority.<sup>96</sup> The Greek Catholics eventually had to content themselves with a less prestigious building, the 'Garrison church' of the Jesuits, which they had been using unofficially since 1956. Controversies continued for almost a decade over its interior and exterior conversion and the erection of a new bell tower. Meanwhile the Roman Catholics held onto the Carmelite church, decorated its interior with nationalist motifs, and succeeded in having its nineteenth-century dome removed on the grounds (objectively erroneous but nonetheless symbolically potent) that this was an 'Eastern' distortion of a Western Catholic church (see plates 25 and 26).

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<sup>96</sup> Although the number of anti-Ukrainian activists was small, they were highly effective in the new public sphere. The complicity of the majority of Roman Catholics was an important element in their success. Had I been able to carry out fieldwork in the years when these conflicts peaked, I would have paid close attention to the role played by lower-level clergy. It seems to me likely that many priests were in practice of undermining—if not explicitly contradicting—the appeals for tolerance and ecumenism which were regularly issued by more senior churchmen. It is possible that a similar pattern prevailed among the Greek Catholics.



Plate 25. The Carmelite church in Przemyśl, the former Greek Catholic cathedral, during the demolition of its cupola in 1996 (photo courtesy of Stanisław Stępień).



Plate 26. The same church with its new 'western' spire (1998).



Shortly after these matters were fought out—literally—in the streets of Przemyśl, the Greek Catholics celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of the Union of Brest, the foundation of their Church in 1596. I am not qualified to assess a wealth of new scholarship, covering all periods of Greek Catholic history down to the present day.<sup>97</sup> As an anthropologist, working within the ‘synchronic’ perspective pioneered by Bronislaw Malinowski, I am more interested in how people use elements of this history as resources to support claims being put forward in the present. Although the campaign to regain the ‘original’ cathedral failed, most Greek Catholic claims for property restitution in Przemyśl have been successful. The Greek Catholics’ moral claim is undisputed by the majority of Poles, and it has been slowly converted into legal reality. Thus they have once again taken possession of the splendid Bishop’s Palace, converted in the socialist period into a museum, and also their former seminary (most of which is now let out to other institutions because it is much larger than the Greek Catholics can use). The monastic church which I first entered when it served as the state archives has been handed back to the Basilian order and marvellously restored.

The members of the Greek Catholic minority who invoked property histories to support material claims in the 1990s had managed to preserve and transmit their identity throughout the socialist period, when there was no realistic prospect of reestablishing their own ecclesiastical institutions. More than four decades of repression were not enough to erase the consciousness of belonging to a Church which could look back on four centuries of history. It is true that many of those who were forcibly dispersed in the 1940s have, under the homogenising pressures of the People’s Republic, joined the mainstream and become affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. Others (a much smaller number) have converted to Orthodoxy. This option became more attractive to Ukrainians in Przemyśl in the 1980s, when a disused suburban Greek Catholic *cerkiew* was officially handed over to be the centre of a new Orthodox parish. Interviews in Przemyśl suggested that, if forced to choose between attending a Roman Catholic church and an Orthodox *cerkiew*, Greek Catholics would usually opt for the latter, because the practical and emotional experience of an Orthodox service was so much closer to their own (Hann and Stępień 2000c). But the most striking fact to emerge from these interviews was the strong identity people felt as Greek Catholics: their church had been theirs for four centuries. Its revival in the postsocialist era was conclusive evidence that neither Roman Catholics nor Orthodox could dismiss it as an interstitial anomaly.

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<sup>97</sup> See in particular the series ‘Polska-Ukraina 1000 lat sąsiedztwa’, which is published by the Południowo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy in Przemyśl.

My only parish-level insights in recent years stem from the nearby village of Krasiczyn, which was formerly home to both Polish (Roman Catholic) and Ukrainian (Greek Catholic) communities, and had a smaller Jewish minority. Since 1947 only the Roman Catholic faith has been practised there. Stanisław Bartmiński, the parish priest, is well known for his commitment to improving ecumenical relationships. Elsewhere (Hann 1998c) I have described a memorable Sunday mass in his parish church, when he officiated jointly with a visiting Greek Catholic. Even if the message conveyed on that occasion did not, in the end, challenge national preconceptions, the liberal, 'civil' intentions of this priest are evident. He has invested much energy in preserving the cultural heritage of the minority and facilitating visits to Poland by Ukrainian youths. During the years of acute tension in the neighbouring city, Bartmiński's enthusiastic multiculturalism led to open criticism from fellow Roman Catholic clergy. On the other hand, he has won plaudits from the chief rabbi of Cracow for his efforts to clean up and restore the village's Jewish cemetery.

My brief visits do not allow me to comment on how this priest is perceived by his flock, the reception of his pleas for more civility and tolerance of other religious traditions, and their effects on everyday social relations. My impression is that he is respected and loved. I think this has something to do with the fact that his ecumenism is not that of a remote intellectual.<sup>98</sup> His intimate relations with ordinary believers are reinforced when he visits each family personally in the winter months (this pastoral attention remains the norm throughout the country; it is made possible by the size of the clergy—unlike neighbouring countries, in socialist Poland the number of vocations remained high; recruitment to the priesthood has remained buoyant in the postsocialist era, especially in rural regions such as the south-east). Father Bartmiński has in recent years lent his support to a new Marian cult in an outlying hamlet of his parish which was formerly populated by East Slavs—evidence of his commitment to an expression of popular religion with the potential to bring Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics together.<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately, it seems likely that Father Bartmiński is an exceptional figure in the ranks of the Roman Catholic clergy in Poland, and it is perhaps no accident that he has not been promoted in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

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<sup>98</sup> Father Bartmiński does in fact hail from an intellectual family: his brother is an economist and banker with a distinguished record of public service, and the priest himself contributes regularly to the local media and has written a volume of memoirs.

<sup>99</sup> There is one further channel through which this priest may have an effect on a much larger population. Father Bartmiński has for many years acted as a consultant to a highly successful television soap opera set in a Catholic presbytery, *Plebania*.

## Civilisational Frontiers in the Heart of Europe

I want next to discuss Greek Catholics at a more rarefied level—not that of the village, the eparchial centre, or even the entire Greek Catholic population of Poland (123,000 according to the official data of 2002), but that of all the Greek Catholic churches of central Europe together. My interest is the light they cast on that powerful symbolic dichotomy between East and West, which the end of the cold war and the beginnings of an eastwards enlargement of the European Union have so far done little to alter. This classification is widely practised ‘on the ground’. Roman Catholic Poles in Przemyśl identify themselves with the West and stigmatise the Greek Catholic minority as belonging to the East, an emphatically lower form of civilisation or culture. Greek Catholics themselves would dispute that their tradition is of inferior worth, but I think most of them accept the basic classification of the majority and see themselves as falling to the east of that vertical line. The classifications are somewhat different in the western Ukraine, where for Orthodox Christians the Greek Catholics are a minority identified with the West. At least some Greek Catholics in and around L’viv appear to see themselves as an outpost of the West, sharing Habsburg and even older traditions with their Polish neighbours (Hrytsak 2005).

It is therefore by no means obvious how to classify the Greek Catholics in this sense. Their ‘practical religion’ links them—despite centuries of cultural borrowing from the West, usually glossed as ‘Latinisation’—to the religious traditions of the Orthodox East. Yet in terms of ecclesiastical politics they are an eastern rite of the universal Catholic Church, acknowledging the pope as its head in just the same way as those who practise the dominant Latin rite.

Probably the most influential theoretician of civilisational differences in recent years is Samuel Huntington (1996). This American political scientist defines civilisation as ‘culture writ large’. In the tradition of Max Weber, he uses religion as the key criterion in classifying civilisations, and he sees eastern Christianity as forming a distinct bloc from the western streams, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant. Many anthropologists have criticised this kind of analysis as ‘culturalist’ and ‘essentialist’—indeed, I have voiced such criticism myself (Hann 2000g). But a thoroughgoing essentialist would surely classify these Greek Catholics with the East. Whatever the differences ‘on the ground’ between Poland and western Ukraine, in both countries the great majority of Greek Catholics are and have always been speakers of an East Slavic language and much more readily distinguishable from western than from eastern neighbours. In fact Huntington sees the Greek Catholics as falling within the Western orbit. For him the Ukraine is a divided land, because the former Galician districts, where Greek Catholics have re-



emerged since 1990 as the dominant church, are a different 'civilisation' from the central and eastern regions, where Orthodoxy dominates. The Habsburg Empire, in Huntington's argument, was basically Western and pluralist, while the empire of the Romanovs was Eastern and irredeemably autocratic.

The contrasting fate of Greek Catholic congregations is powerful evidence that there were indeed important differences between these empires. However, I suggest that the case of the Greek Catholics is better interpreted as casting doubt on the value of any reductionist dichotomy between East and West. There were periods of intense Latinisation, when Greek Catholics came to look and behave much more like Roman Catholics. There have also been periods of reaction against syncretic forms, with Greek Catholics occasionally going further than the Orthodox in their efforts to (re)assert 'pure' Eastern forms in their ritual practices. I suggest that their very existence as a major denomination over several centuries in the heart of Europe poses a problem for those who insist on drawing a sharp vertical line between civilisations. In terms of Mary Douglas's approach to classification (1966), the Greek Catholics are 'matter out of place' for their neighbours, both in the east and in the west.

I am not arguing that the binary classification has no validity at all. On the contrary, it is clear that this 'hybrid' church did *not* modify the basic separateness of Eastern and Western traditions as reference points in this region of central Europe. The line did, however, become fuzzy. Cities such as Przemyśl were the centres of religious activity for both communities, even before the emergence of the Greek Catholics from the Orthodox. There was ethno-religious segregation in both town and countryside, but there was also a long historical record of tolerance and intermarriage. In other words, if we want to have recourse to the vocabulary of civilisation, we must recognise *overlapping* civilisations in this region. The two main Christian traditions were supplemented by the Jewish. Religion was always a basis for difference, but all groups were skilled at what is nowadays termed 'intercultural communication' (see also Hann 2005f).

This multi-denominational co-existence has implications for the present, especially for those who seek to fix the long-term eastern boundary of the European Union to some sharp line drawn according to 'culture' or 'civilisation'. The very existence of the Greek Catholics highlights the futility of this exercise. But perhaps we can go further. In some parts of Europe the boundaries between Protestants and Catholics create social divisions as great as those between Catholics and Orthodox or between Roman and Greek Catholics. Why are we inclined to think only of the latter pairings as *civilisational* differences? How helpful is it to view the multiple

traditions of Bosnia in terms of three clashing civilisations? As in the Greek Catholic zone of central Europe, it is important not to reconstruct inter-denominational relations of past centuries by the anachronistic imposition of today's models of multiculturalism (Hayden 2002). The earlier experiences of peaceful coexistence and high levels of cultural interaction suggest that models which presuppose civilisational conflict are, to say the least, one-sided. They also suggest that the similarities between the various religious traditions underpinning these so-called civilisations might be as important as the differences. With only a little expansion of perspective, we can identify similarities with other 'world religions', 'non-Abrahamic' in origin. We would then have to conclude that the major pre-industrial empires of Eurasia shared so much that we should be viewing the entire landmass as a civilisational unity, instead of worrying about where to draw a line between East and West within Europe. The key question which then arises for anthropology is a very old question in the discipline: to what extent can these profound similarities (in this case in the field of religion) be attributed to contacts and 'diffusion' across Eurasia, as opposed to similar structures and institutions making for multiple emergence?

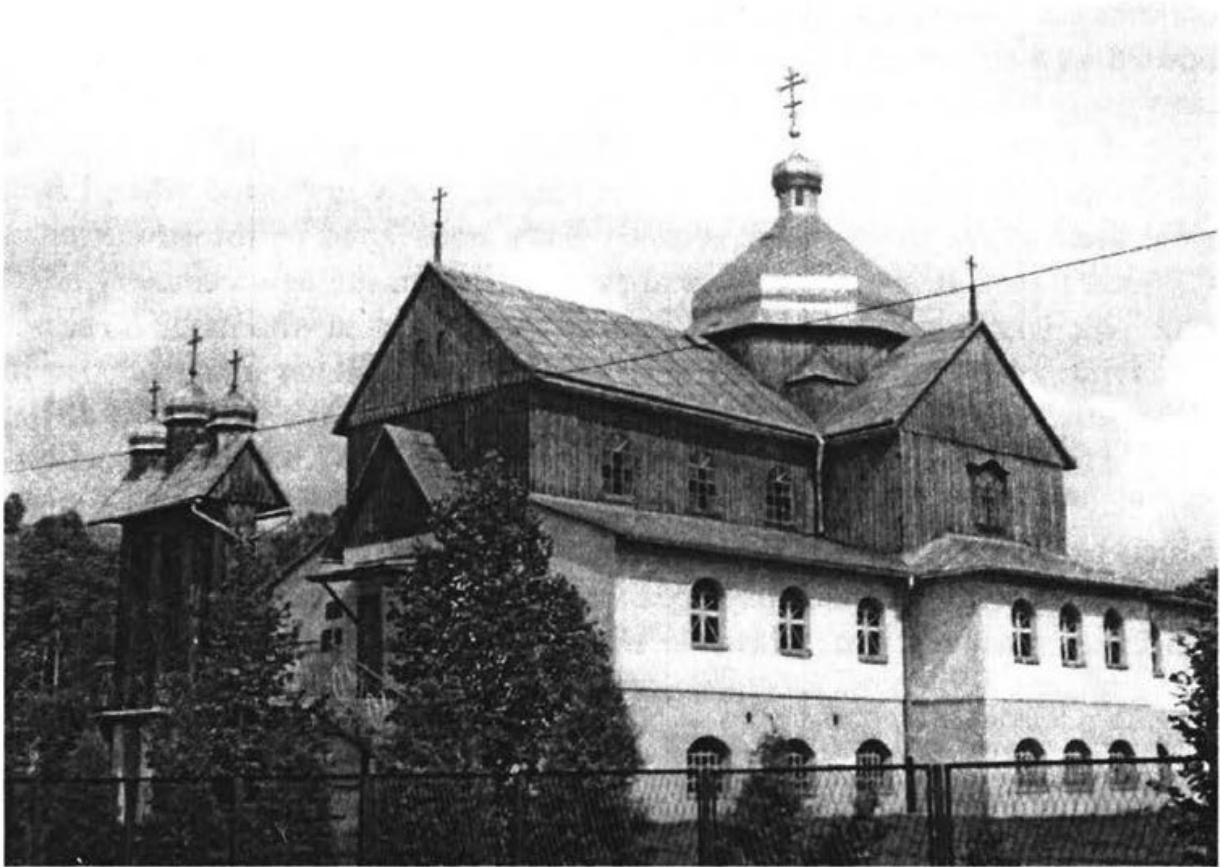


Plate 27. The new Greek Catholic church in Komańcza.

## Conclusion

Beginning with village anecdotes, I have moved in this chapter via the contested history of a postsocialist city to speculative remarks about geopolitics and cultural-civilisational boundaries. However outrageous and unscholarly these moves might seem to the specialists of other disciplines, they are in fact quite typical in anthropology. As Clifford Geertz once wrote, we study *in* villages, but we do not study villages *per se*; the local setting is never the limit of our interest. In this case the local context of Wisłok Wielki provided me accidentally with an initiation into the predicament of the Greek Catholics. My informants of 1979 are almost all dead now, and I doubt that anyone from Wisłok takes the trouble to attend Greek Catholic services in Komańcza. In this larger village the Greek Catholics were able after 1990 to organise their own parish, separately from Roman Catholics. They were unable to regain possession of their old *cerkiew*, which has remained in the hands of the Orthodox, but with financial help from North America they have constructed a large new church nearby. As for lower Wisłok, the old *cerkiew* there continues to serve as the Roman Catholic *kościół*. The village has not grown, but it now has its own priest, who lives nearby in a newly constructed presbytery. The old Greek Catholic presbytery is no longer needed as a school and has become the holiday home of a Polish businessman with no roots in the region.

It remains instructive to visit the burial grounds. The Greek Catholic graves around the church in the lower hamlet, sadly neglected when I first went there in the 1970s, have recently been landscaped by the new Roman Catholic priest; Roman Catholics are still buried in the new cemetery adjacent. One Ukrainian resident of the upper hamlet, a man who made no secret of having taken active part in the struggles for Ukrainian independence in the 1940s, was not content to be buried with *swoi* in the graveyard at the other end of the village. Instead, when he died in 1997 he left instructions that he be buried in the copse marking the old cemetery of the upper parish, which had not been used or tended for half a century. This was considered highly irregular, and perhaps illegal, but no one attempted to impose any sanctions, not even later when the simple wooden cross marking the grave was replaced with a more elaborate gravestone (see plate 28). So, for the time being at least, even though the indigenous population has almost disappeared, the Greek Catholic history of Wisłok remains inscribed physically on the landscape of both of its constitutive hamlets.





Plate 28. The gravestone of a Ukrainian native of the upper hamlet in Wisłok, the first burial on this site in half a century.

The future of Greek Catholicism in Przemyśl is a great deal more promising. After the conflicts and disappointments of the early 1990s, the minority church has consolidated impressively under the leadership of Metropolitan Jan Martyniak. Building work to convert the former Jesuit *kościół* into a Greek Catholic *cerkiew katedralna* was largely completed between 1996 and 1999. Icon painters were recruited from the Ukraine, and the redecoration was carried out to a high standard. Of course this was not sufficient: it was also important to furnish the new cathedral with artifacts to reinforce the historicity of this community. An appropriate iconostasis dating from the seventeenth century was found in the ethnographic museum at Lubaczów. It includes an image of Saint Jozafat Kuncewycz, a Greek Catholic martyr of the early seventeenth century whose icon is found in many Greek Catholic churches throughout Galicia. The cathedral also houses relics and other sacred objects associated with this saint. Adjacent to this venerable iconostasis are two new icons in a very Western style representing two important martyrs from the church's recent history. Jozafat Kocylowski was the last ordinarius of the Greek Catholic diocese of Przemyśl before its suppression in 1946. He and his suffragan bishop, Hryhorij Lakota, suffered and died at

the hands of the Soviets. During his visit to Ukraine in June 2001 the pope raised both to the status of 'beatified', and they are now among the most important cultic figures of contemporary Greek Catholic identity. Their icons are counterbalanced by two miraculous icons of traditional type (though also showing Western and 'folk' influence) depicting the Virgin and St. Nicholas.

In this way an old, somewhat musty Jesuit building has been appropriated and converted into an impeccably clean and stylish Greek Catholic place of worship which alludes to three distinct time frames: the recent tragic history of repression; the repression of earlier centuries, when 'Uniates' were condemned by those who remained loyal to Orthodoxy; and beyond this history of martyrdoms, the common Christian heritage in its Eastern variant, which the Greek Catholics share with the Orthodox. The rich ritual life of the Greek Catholics affects the public sphere in Przemyśl every year on 19 January (Epiphany), when the entire congregation processes from the cathedral through the old town down to the bank of the River San for the blessing of the water known simply as *Jordan*. Tensions with certain elements of the local Roman Catholic church persist, but prospects for peaceful ecumenical coexistence seem a lot brighter nowadays.

I have suggested that the Greek Catholics are of interest outside the specific spatial reference of south-east Poland and the temporal reference of 'postsocialism'. Their emergence and persistence 'between East and West' over more than four centuries should lead us to reflect on the nature of that boundary and the units it separates, the entities we refer to loosely as 'cultures' or 'civilisations'. If these were really so separate, how was the Greek Catholic combination possible in the first place, and how does it retain its appeal to substantial congregations even today, in spite of all the pressures to abandon its identity? To echo a famous phrase of Claude Lévi-Strauss's in a different anthropological context, the Greek Catholics are *bons à penser* (Lévi-Strauss 1962). But their message is in a sense the opposite of the structuralist conclusion drawn by Lévi-Strauss at the end of his analysis of totemism. The Greek Catholics are an extreme illustration of the fact that human societies are complex formations which cannot be adequately classified and described by the binary oppositions of structuralism. Recognition of this complexity has practical implications, notably for policymakers attempting to define sharp cultural and political boundaries down the middle of the pseudo-continent we call Europe.

## Chapter 8

### History and Ethnicity in Anatolia

The arguments I wish to set out in this lecture are closely related to those put forward in *Turkish Region*, the monograph which Ildikó Bellér-Hann and I published recently (Bellér-Hann and Hann 2000).<sup>100</sup> In one important respect, however, I criticise the approach which we followed there. The deficiency is evident when our work is set alongside Michael Meeker's new book, *Nation of Empire* (2002). Contrary to some common assumptions, Meeker here shows that ethnicity in the same region of Anatolia was de-emphasised in the later Ottoman period, when even peripheral groups were integrated into the state system. Drawing on other recent work, I then return to the present and address the question of ethnicity in the contemporary Turkish republic. This state has often been criticised for its failure to recognise ethnic groups and is likely to come under increasing pressure to recognise the rights of minorities as a condition for entry to the European Union. Within anthropology, however, there is no consensus about how recognition of group diversity should be translated into political practice. Key terms such as *culture* and *ethnicity* have become unstable. According to Fredrik Barth's influential discussion, ethnicity is a person's 'basic, most general identity'.<sup>101</sup> But in north-eastern Turkey, the dominant identity appears to be that associated with the Turkish republican state and its Ottoman predecessor. These people may have formed ethnic groups in the Barthian sense at some point in

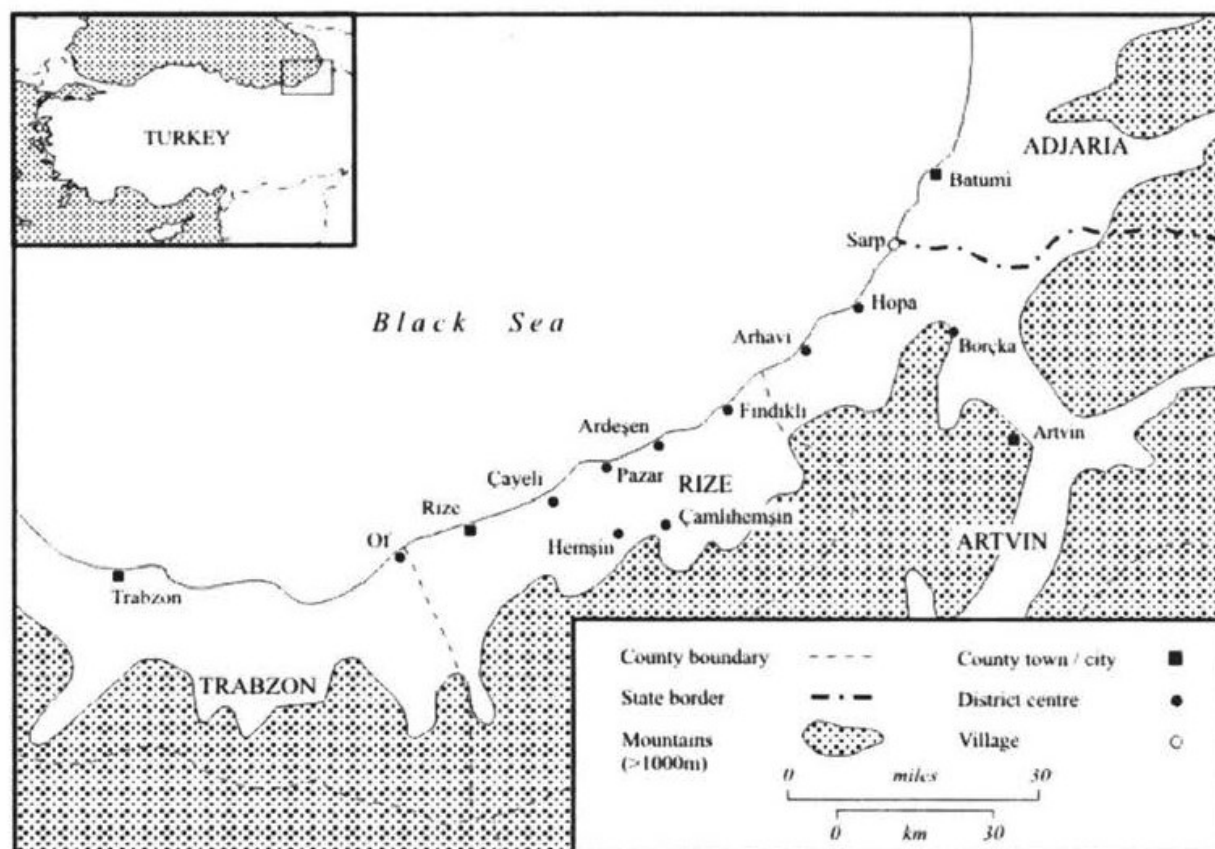
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<sup>100</sup> This chapter is an expanded version of a lecture given at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, on 17 January 2003. I am grateful for stimulating discussion with numerous members of the Turkish Area Studies Group and especially to Sigi and John Martin for their excellent organisation of this event. Thanks also to Peter Alford Andrews, Krisztina Kehl, Michael Meeker, Mathijs Pelkmans, Fernanda Pirie, and Lale Yalçın-Heckmann for helpful comments on an earlier draft, which was published as a MPISA Working Paper (No. 50, 2003).

<sup>101</sup> According to Barth (1998 [1969]: 13–14), 'a categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purposes of interaction, they form ethnic groups in this organizational sense'.



the distant past, but ethnicity seems not to have been the critical principle in social interaction in recent centuries. To force them into the category 'ethnic group' now would, I shall argue, constitute a greater rupture than the replacement of Ottoman diversity by the Kemalist unitary state.



Map 2. North-east Turkey and Adjara.

### *Turkish Region*

Let me begin by placing *Turkish Region* in an intellectual context and giving a brief indication of its contents. Bellér-Hann and I first stayed in the Rize region for four months in 1983. We revisited in 1988, then made a longer stay in 1992–1993 and finally brief field trips in 1999 and 2003. Our interests and skills were complementary. I had the stronger background in anthropology and a bias towards issues of political economy; our work in the 1980s was focused mainly on social consequences of the introduction of tea, which became a dominant cash crop in this region after 1950 (see chapter 5). Bellér-Hann is the stronger linguist, and in addition to taking a special interest in matters concerning women, she has published separately on numerous topics, including local constructions of the past (1995a) and the effects of foreign prostitution in the 1990s (1995b). *Turkish Region* is the major joint publication to emerge from our fieldwork.

Our main intellectual debts are, as we say in the preface to the book, to two recently deceased and much missed 'giants of British social anthropology', Paul Stirling and Ernest Gellner, both of whom we knew personally. Stirling was the pioneer of anthropological fieldwork in Turkey, beginning his study of two communities near Kayseri in 1949 as a student of Evans-Pritchard at Oxford. Among his major publications were the monograph *Turkish Village* (1965) and the book chapter 'Cause, Knowledge and Change: Turkish Village Revisited' (1974).<sup>102</sup> Gellner did not work on Turkey and is better known for his contributions to the theory and philosophy of anthropology than for his own fieldwork in Morocco (which was partly supervised by Stirling). He was nonetheless fascinated by modern Turkey. For him, the emergence of the unitary Kemalist state in place of the diversity of the Ottoman Empire was an exemplary illustration of the evolutionary shift from agrarian civilisations to modern states based on industry and a standardised 'high culture' dependent on mass literacy in a single dominant language. This model is most comprehensively outlined in his *Nations and Nationalism* (1983). Gellner also published extensively on Islam, noting that its 'puritan' characteristics endowed Islam with advantages over other world religions in modern social conditions where 'each man is his own clerk'. He did not apply these arguments in any detail to the Turkish case, though no doubt both he and Stirling would have been fascinated by the fluctuating fortunes of 'politicised Islam' in Turkey in recent years.

Neither Stirling nor Gellner is a fashionable figure among contemporary anthropologists. Major criticisms of them run as follows. In the case of Stirling, though much of his detailed ethnographic work is still admired and cited (e.g. concerning the village as a community, the negotiation of marriages, and labour migration), critics allege that it is characterised by major gaps, among them the neglect of gender and religion. Stirling made little effort to investigate the pasts of the communities he studied. He did not attempt archival work, nor did he take much trouble to collect life histories from villagers, some of whom, at the time of his original fieldwork, would presumably have been able to give him valuable insights into the late Ottoman period and the early effects of Kemalism. Of course these shortcomings were hardly unique to Paul Stirling. It was characteristic of the generation of anthropologists shaped decisively by Malinowski in the inter-war decades to offer detailed accounts of the way societies functioned in the present—that

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<sup>102</sup> In his later years Stirling did much to encourage the use of computers in anthropology, and virtually all of his work, including diaries and other unpublished field data, can be consulted at the website of the department which he established at the University of Kent (<http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/Stirling/index.html>).

is, at the time of fieldwork. This synchronic 'functionalism', as Malinowski labelled his theoretical perspective, was a reaction against the 'conjectural history' which had underpinned so much nineteenth-century anthropology. For 'tribal' societies lacking historical sources, this was perhaps good advice to give to anthropologists in the late colonial period; it was at any rate highly productive in the British school. However, it was hard to ignore the inadequacies of the synchronic, 'snapshot' approach and not only for regions such as Anatolia with an abundance of written sources. Beginning with Evans-Pritchard's Marett lecture (Evans-Pritchard 1950), there was a reaction against the rejection of history; but it would seem that this came too late to influence the work of Paul Stirling.

As for Ernest Gellner, he was greatly attracted by Malinowski's functionalism and never tempted by archival work. He differed from most of his contemporaries in Britain in his predilection for reworking ethnographic materials into structural models, some of which he applied in addressing long-term continuity and change (e.g. his application of Ibn Khaldun's 'pendulum swing' theory of town-tribe interaction in the Islamic world; see Gellner 1981). Gellner's best-known model is the one noted already, that of the modern nation-state (Gellner 1983; see also Hall 1998). But it is also a model which has attracted criticism: for the alleged circularity of the 'functional' link it posits between industrialism and the nation-state or, alternatively, for attaching too much weight to industrialisation as a prime cause of nationalism; for paying too little attention to other dimensions of modernisation, such as the growth of the state apparatus; and for exaggerating the homogeneous 'block-like' character of the new form of society.

Some of these criticisms of Stirling and Gellner can be readily applied to *Turkish Region*. Like Stirling, we spent little time in the archives (though we did try harder than he did to do justice to religion and gender issues). Our debt to Gellner is a more complex matter. In the book we return to his model of the nation-state repeatedly, noting some instances where it seems to fail, such as in the persistence of minority languages. On the whole, however, we find that this 'ideal type' offers useful insights into the incorporation of the Rize region into a new type of national society. We trace this both in 'objective' ways—for example, by noting improved communications, social mobility, and the prosperity brought by tea—and in more 'subjective' ways, suggesting that the inhabitants of this geographically remote region have come to think of themselves as 'fully paid-up members' or *citizens* of the new national entity. We sketch this framework in the introduction to the book, which also provides an overview of the region's geography and a brief review of its recorded history (for which we rely heavily on Bryer and Winfield 1985). The bulk of the book is then organised around a notion of



'social identity', which we use in a deliberately loose sense, to enable us to touch on many separate dimensions of social experience with little in common except that they seemed to matter to local people.

We begin our book with an account of the state and the experience of its activities at regional and local levels, including the establishment of the tea industry, the introduction of new systems of administration and education, and the active inculcation of nationalist ideology. In this regard we note the historian Fahrettin Kırzioğlu's attempts to prove that all the peoples of the eastern Black Sea region are of Turkic ethnic origin, despite the fact that some of them have regrettably lost their pristine language in the course of time. After dealing with the state, we then look at the complementary force of 'the market', which has gained strength and visibility in recent decades, not only in the tea sector but also, as a result of the opening of the state border to Georgia and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union, in the proliferation of informal trade throughout the region. There follows a chapter on 'civil society'. It should not come as a surprise that this is one of the shorter chapters in the book, since the discussion is largely based on the currently fashionable Western definition of civil society, which gives priority to 'intermediate' organisations, associations, clubs, and so forth. This sort of civic culture is poorly developed in north-eastern Turkey. Only when the criteria are widened to include women's visiting patterns and 'male café society' does it become apparent that there is, after all, quite a lot going on in this intermediate realm between the institutions of the state and the private sphere of the family.

It is this private sphere which matters most for most human beings, and we proceed to explore gender relations and changes in marriage and wedding customs in two detailed ethnographic chapters. We show, for example, the failure of the Kemalist state to reduce significantly the region's high rate of first-cousin marriage. The following chapter, the longest in the book, is devoted to another apparent 'failure': in this region, as elsewhere in Turkey, many people reject the official republican dogma of laicism. On the one hand, modern forms of political Islam and even 'fundamentalist' trends have become conspicuous, while on the other, a traditional world of superstition and 'popular Islam' has by no means been extinguished. This lengthy discussion of religion is followed by a chapter on 'ethnicity'—again rather short, because we did not find this to be a major source of identity for many inhabitants of the region. Finally, in a short conclusion we try to show how the 'ordinary people' of the region creatively draw on all these sources of identity in their everyday lives, and we call into question the concept of culture. We argue against those who equate 'culture' with a nation or ethnic group and also against those in our own discipline who have employed the

term culture to argue for the significance of a single overarching idea or cosmology, the dominant frame or filter through which all social phenomena are interpreted. We posit, instead, for this case, a more complex world of ideas and often contradictory material realities, in which individual persons are condemned to 'muddle through'.

### **The Ottoman Foundations**

To summarise: *Turkish Region*, which we wrote in the academic tradition of Paul Stirling and Ernest Gellner, makes almost no attempt to investigate the history of the population of the eastern Black Sea region. We did not even pay much attention to social memory and 'the past in the present'. The presentist bias of the discipline of anthropology in the generation after Malinowski fitted well with the radical secularist, modernist ethos of the Kemalist state, the ideology of which asserted a radical break with the Ottoman past. The people of the Rize region were exposed to this ideology, and they were also among the clearest beneficiaries of the modernising state's economic development policies through the investments in the tea industry (see chapter 5). No wonder, then, that the people themselves seemed to reinforce the presentism of the ethnographers: they couldn't tell us much about their history, and we didn't press them; and anyway, they didn't seem to care much about it.

Concerning ethnicity, we documented the presence of four groups in the region of our study: in ascending order of size, Georgians, Hemşinli, Lazi,<sup>103</sup> and 'unmarked Turks'. I say 'unmarked' for this fourth category because members of each of the other three could—and often did—also argue that they were 'Turks', and not just in the sense that they were citizens of the Turkish republic. Even many of those who acknowledged another 'ethnic' label, including those with knowledge of a non-Turkish language, had somehow been persuaded that they could also lay claim to Turkish identity (for discussion of Lazi 'dual identity' see Benninghaus 1989). This corresponded well with Gellner's model of the homogenising national identity of the modern industrial state, which obliterates the ethnic diversity characteristic of agrarian empires such as that of the Ottomans. Gellner, in his model of the pre-modern condition, took the existence of such groups for

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<sup>103</sup> The Lazi are a group found to the east of the district of Pazar who speak (or used to speak) a Kartvelian language, Lazuri. They number no more than a few hundred thousand, including diaspora groups, and must be distinguished from 'the Laz', a designation commonly applied to the entire east Black Sea region, with a population of many millions. Many Turks are unaware of this distinction. This extension of the ethnonym from the Lazi group to the wider region can probably best be seen as an outcome of the processes of integration outlined by Meeker 2002; see also Meeker 1971, and chapter 9, this volume.

granted. People have always lived in groups, he insisted, implicitly equating these with (ethnic) 'cultures', while at the same time pointing out that the main principal behind the *millet* system, the Ottomans' distinctive method for organising agrarian diversity, was in fact religion. But did the speakers of Kartvelian, Armenian, and Greek languages in the Ottoman period have any sense at all of constituting an ethnic group, as we use the concept today? Was ethnicity a key principle of social organisation in the (non-culturalist) sense elaborated by Barth (1998 [1969])? The only way to answer such questions is to move beyond the fieldwork methods of the ethnographer and adopt the methods of the historian. This is precisely the move made by Michael Meeker, whose *Nation of Empire* (2002) is an excellent example of how the two disciplines can fertilise each other.

Meeker began his fieldwork in 1965 when he first visited the town of Of on the western boundary of our 'Turkish region'. Of and the surrounding district had been greatly influenced over the centuries by neighbouring Trabzon. Although predominantly Muslim by the late sixteenth century, substantial numbers of Greek speakers and an uncertain number of 'crypto-Christians' persisted well into the republican period (the majority were 'exchanged' and obliged to move to Greece following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which took religion as the basis for deportation). Meeker's dissertation (University of Chicago, 1970) was an elegant treatise on honour, family, and descent, based on his ethnographic materials. It seems to have left him dissatisfied: at any rate he chose not to publish it. In later decades he turned increasingly to historical materials—published work by local historians and foreign scholars, but also Ottoman and foreign consular archival sources—in order to understand better what he had already documented as a presentist ethnographer.

Regarding ethnicity, Meeker, too, found that it was downplayed, that the speakers of different languages seemed to have no interest in articulating a distinctive ethnic identity. He probed further by investigating foreign observers' reports on conflicts characteristic of the region in the early nineteenth century. The result: 'A thorough reading of the reports of British and French consuls together with a view of the reports of European travelers at the time provides no indication whatsoever of an ethnic basis for this hostility' (Meeker 1996: 58). Instead of assuming that the 'natural' units of conflict in agrarian society were groups distinguished by language, religion, and other 'cultural' characteristics—in other words, the precursors of today's ethnic groups—one needs to look more carefully at regional political and administrative history over a long historical period. The insignificance of ethnicity in this case was a consequence of 'the Ottomanization of local political culture' (1996: 45). In his 2002 book, Meeker attempted to trace



this history as far back as the sources would allow. Meeker endorsed the doyen of Pontic scholars, Anthony Bryer, who wrote: 'The ethnic origins of the eastern Pontic peoples (18 are listed in an unofficial census of 1911) are probably past disentangling' (Bryer 1969: 193, cited in Meeker 2002: 93). Nonetheless, drawing on the work of a local historian, Meeker suggested that there might be some truth in the nationalist historiography after all: some early Turkoman immigrants to the region may have 'assimilated themselves to the existing inhabitants, losing their language and their religion, only to get them back centuries later' (2002: 91).

This begins to smack of the conjectural history that Malinowski was determined to eliminate from modern anthropology. However, rather than pursue the concern with ethnic origins, Meeker supplemented his scant documentary sources with plausible inferences from the region's distinctive geography to sketch how the 'imperial project' of the Ottomans took local root. The 'hillbillies' on the periphery were able to transcend their distinct ethnic origins as a result of their incorporation into wider social systems, first Constantinople, then the Pontic kingdom of Trabzon, and then again Istanbul after its conquest in 1453. As soldiers and preachers, the inhabitants of Of partook of the work of the empire, as did later generations of labour migrants in the republican period. In the centuries when Ottoman central government began to disintegrate, the structures which held the local society together were modelled continuously on those of the centre. The local *bey* in his *konak* imitated the *padişah* in his *saray*, and this Ottoman political culture eventually overcame all the linguistic, religious, and 'ethnic' diversity of the region. Moreover, the integration of this peripheral region into the wider state system was not just a one-way process, the 'Ottomanization of Trabzonlus', as Meeker put it. In one of his more speculative suggestions, he first linked the extreme concern with male 'honour' to the ecological conditions of the region (the flexible horticulture which did not require continuous male labour inputs) and then suggested that the people of the region 'transmitted the moralization of gender relations to other parts of Anatolia. ... Ottomanization of Trabzonlus led inexorably to Trabzonization of the Ottomans' (2002: 106–107).

One need not accept every idea in this immensely stimulating book in order to recognise the value of its original perspective. Contrary to most historians of the Ottoman period, who consider places like the eastern Black Sea coast to be social and political as well as geographical peripheries, Meeker shows how 'a population of gardeners residing in remote mountain hamlets [found] themselves a place in the imperial system' (2002: 110). Contrary to Gellner, who took Kemalist ideology at face value and assumed that incorporation into a larger state system was a twentieth-century

achievement, Meeker shows that many important elements of that system were put in place by Ottoman modernisation. And contrary to Bernard Lewis, whose classic account *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961) portrays the republic as the product of Turkish and Islamic 'streams of influence' but largely overlooks the institutional legacy of the Ottoman Empire, Meeker shows that a key Gellnerian point, that nations are the *products* rather than the *causes* of the modern state, can be applied to the Ottoman Empire itself. Modernity in the Gellnerian sense did not originate with Atatürk's republic, nor with the reform movements that gathered pace in the nineteenth century. Rather, its origins must be dated back at least to the seventeenth century. Throughout the period of imperial decline, elite 'oligarchies' dominated their regions while simultaneously forming the lowest rung of the state system itself. They persisted in the transition from the 'post-classical imperial system' to the 'Westernised imperial system' of the Tanzimat period, and after only a brief eclipse they emerged unscathed to flourish in the local institutions of the Kemalist republic once it had opened up to multi-party competition after the Second World War. Meeker found, for example when investigating novel institutions such as the cooperatives set up to provide fertiliser to growers of tea, the cash crop which spread in the 1950s, that the same elite families were able to maintain their domination of the district of Of through all these vicissitudes.

Of course radical changes took place under Atatürk (or rather, as far as most villagers were concerned, in the generation after his death, when his reforms filtered through to the lower levels of society; see Stirling 1974). But even if people themselves emphasise that moment of rupture, the historical anthropologist is able to show significant continuities over many centuries. Why does this matter? Many 'presentist' anthropologists content themselves with laying out the history of their subjects insofar as it matters to the people themselves. Meeker, although he draws on the work of some local historians, deconstructing some of their narratives to expose their Kemalist frame, does not claim that his dogged pursuit of the Ottoman legacy reflects deeply internalised local concerns. Yet his historical turn has more than a purely scholarly justification. Many issues which are of tremendous contemporary significance to many Turks, in the eastern Black Sea region and elsewhere, can be better understood when we recognise the effects of Ottoman modernity. Ethnic identity is perhaps the most obvious, but Meeker's historical anthropology of the Ottoman state system has implications for many other topics: relations between Islam and the state, between different levels of the state apparatus, between town and countryside, even between men and women. For all these reasons, his original panorama of the *longue durée* deserves to find a wide readership.

## The View to the East

Meeker worked in a district immediately to the west of our Turkish region. To the east, Mathijs Pelkmans recently completed research for his PhD dissertation at the University of Amsterdam on the former Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Adjara, which at the time of his fieldwork in the 1990s was a largely autonomous province of postsocialist Georgia (Pelkmans *Forthcoming a*). Pelkmans did research in various parts of the region, including its capital, Batumi, and the border community of Sarp, where since 1921 a small stream which had previously divided one Lazi community had marked the frontier between the Soviet and the Turkish states. There he was able, by collecting oral histories, to recover a long record of deportations and other traumatic experiences.<sup>104</sup>

Like Meeker, Pelkmans was not content with presentism and the conventional community focus of the ethnographer, even when supplemented by oral history. He wanted to understand how the people of Adjara (a regional designation) felt about their identities in the late Ottoman period. Following the Russian-Turkish wars, large numbers of Muslim Georgian speakers, previously subjects of the Ottoman sultan, became subjects of the Romanov tsar. It was a surprise and a shock to the Georgian nationalists of this period to discover that Muslim speakers of Kartvelian languages, rather than identify themselves as Georgian, preferred to flee in large numbers to remote parts of Anatolia, where they could continue to enjoy the security of Ottoman rule. Many of these communities still exist today in Turkey, though some of these Muslims returned to their homeland when the tsarist regime guaranteed recognition of religious difference. In the Soviet period, a crucial early decision was the decree of 1921 creating an autonomous Adjarian Republic within Georgia. The circumstances are not entirely clear, but the decision seems to have been enforced by Stalin personally. The implementation of Stalin's nationality principles brought recognition to many groups, including the Soviet Union's small Lazi population, but this often proved to be short-lived. Both the Lazi and the new Adjarian identities were eventually repressed (though the former was initially promoted for political reasons). The Muslim population of this corner of the republic was left with little choice but to declare itself Georgian by nationality (ethnicity). Curiously, Adjara retained its administrative autonomy, though few natives of the region attained the top jobs in Batumi.

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<sup>104</sup> For another recent anthropological study showing the potential of oral history methods to correct 'official' narratives and give voice to the 'muted' members of a minority group, see Eiji Miyazawa's analysis of the Circassian minority of Uzunyayla (2004). A few Turkish historians have also practised such methods in recent years (e.g. Neyzi 2003).



Georgian domination for the rest of the socialist period might have been expected to lead to a reaction in the postsocialist years. In fact Adjara remained peaceful. Pelkmans has shown that this is not to be attributed to a 'primordial' sense of shared identity. In the late nineteenth century the link to Georgia was barely acknowledged. Rather, this outcome is related to the weakening of Islam, which under socialism became effectively confined to the private sphere. This atrophy in turn had its roots in the nature of Islamisation in the Ottoman period, which was mainstream Sunni and involved the strong presence of religion in the public sphere. Unlike neighbouring parts of the Caucasus, where Islam is a potent political force today, religious brotherhoods were never important in this region. Adjarian identity today is thus primarily regional. Pelkmans points out that all other autonomous republics of the former USSR in which religion was the key criterion of difference gravitated into violent conflict with the republic's capital. Adjara was the only case in which this did not occur.<sup>105</sup> As the Gellnerian model predicts, the homogenising pressures in this state have been and remain strong. Mingrelian and Lazi linguistic minorities have no official recognition (though these languages are not mutually intelligible with Georgian). The Muslims of Adjara have been coming under pressure to 'rejoin' the original Orthodox Christian Church of their ancestors, a church which aspires to be a monopolistic 'state church'. The Adjarian case suggests that, although it may be possible to legislate new identity options in a unique historical conjuncture, such identities are likely to remain fragile and to fade when political circumstances change, if neither language nor religion is available to provide an effective basis for the assertion of difference.

This part of Georgia used to belong to the Ottoman Empire and must have shared at least some elements of 'Ottoman political culture' with the neighbouring districts of the eastern Black Sea coast studied by Meeker. However, it would seem that there was less continuity of political and cultural forms east of Sarp and Batumi, at least after the Russian conquest. Where the nationalist ideology of the Kemalist republic in a paradoxical way continued the pattern of the Ottoman *millet* system by downplaying ethnicity, the early Soviet Union celebrated ethnic differences. It contributed directly to the shaping of durable new identities by making 'nationality' an integral feature of the new administrative-political system. The socialists took their ethnicity seriously: it is rather as if the early Kemalists, instead of creating provinces called Rize and Artvin, each containing several distinct ethno-linguistic groups, had instead adapted the old Ottoman sub-province

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<sup>105</sup> Even the conflict which developed with the new Georgian leadership in 2004 was resolved quickly and without violence when the Adjarian leader, Aslan Abashidze, was allowed to flee to Russia.

name of Lazistan but, unlike the Ottomans, insisted that the administrative boundaries be tied to the linguistic boundaries.

Yet the case of Soviet Adjara is an unusual one, for this autonomous republic had, thanks to a particular conjuncture of religious and political circumstances at the time of its creation, no clearly formed 'titular nationality'. Pelkmans's analysis highlights the contingency of ethnicity, by showing how it can be emphasised or de-emphasised according to historical circumstances. The words themselves are unstable; our concept of ethnicity is historically specific, and scholars' preoccupation with this form of identity, closely linked to the study of nationalism, is still a fairly new development in the social sciences (Eriksen 1993). The disintegration of federal socialist states has contributed significantly to the salience of ethnicity in the contemporary world. Reassertions of ethnic minority distinctiveness in states which apparently had been following the path of homogenising modernisation for generations pose a challenge to the model of Ernest Gellner.

### Imposing Ethnicity

Turkey has not been immune to these general tendencies, although public discourses concerning ethnicity and minority rights have been hamstrung by nationalist ideology and key terms continue to bear the marks of the country's painful emergence from the Ottoman Empire. Thus the term *millet* has long shifted from its earlier religious connotations to become the standard approximation of nation (nationality). By contrast *azınlık*, minority, is applied only to the three religious communities singled out for protection in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, i.e. Jews and Greek and Armenian Christians. This protection does not include all Christians and the term *azınlık* has never been extended to cover non-Turkish Muslim minorities. Twenty years ago, when Bellér-Hann and I were just beginning our project in Rize, the term *etnik* was familiar perhaps only to a handful of intellectuals in Turkey. *Etnik grubu* is still not widely disseminated, but searching questions about collective identity have been posed in many parts of the country. The 'Kurdish question' has attracted most attention—and also the most violence—both inside and outside the country. There is a hardly less contentious 'Alevi question' This is arguably not the same sort of identity at all, but to some group members the sense of being excluded from the mainstream may be comparable, at least subjectively. These 'major' identities may intersect and spawn new groups. The 'constructed' nature of ethnic identity has been illustrated most visibly in recent years by the emergence of a distinct Zaza group, highly contingent upon the consciousness-raising and creative inputs of diaspora intellectuals in Germany who no longer wished to be considered Kurds (Kehl-Bodrogi 1998; Paul 2002). In the case of the Lazi, the principal force

behind the campaign to persuade these people that they form an ethnic group, an 'endangered people' whose legitimate demands for cultural autonomy should be addressed urgently, is the German scholar Wolfgang Feurstein (e.g. Feurstein and Berdsena 1987; see also Bellér-Hann and Hann 2000; chapter 9, this volume).

Ethnicity is, then, flexible, contingent, and constructed—not at all the essential, primordial identity which the activists make it out to be. Fredrik Barth approached ethnicity as a matter of the 'social organization of cultural difference' (1998 [1969]: 13). But how far can this influential understanding be applied to Turkey today? Bellér-Hann and I argue in our book, on the basis of fieldwork completed in 1999 (though the main period of data collection was 1992–1993), that the people of this region draw deep, 'basic' senses of identity from a variety of sources, including their families, hamlets, market centres, and religion. Barth was more interested in social interaction than in the subjectively experienced dimension of identity, but we found that ethnic identity as Lazi or Hemşinli was of minor significance in the social life of this region.<sup>106</sup> An ethnic identity is not inherently more important for social organisation than a regional or local geographical affiliation. Should villagers in the district (*ilçe*) of Hemşin (see map 2) be able to claim a special ethnic identity as Hemşinli while their neighbours over the mountains in the *ilçe* of Çayeli must accept that to be Çayelili is to possess merely a local variant of Turkish ethnicity? Does Çayeli have an 'ethnic' boundary to the east but only a 'district' boundary to the west, because the population in the western half of Rize county is overwhelmingly 'unmarked Turk'? Marriage patterns, so far as we could investigate them, provide no decisive evidence: intermarriage has increased as communications have improved, but it is not new. We knew Lazi families in Fındıklı who used a go-between (*görücü*) to negotiate brides from Çayeli. Ethnicity plays virtually no role in social contact in the towns and the marketplaces. There are few significant 'cultural' differences between any of these *ilçeler* today, apart from the persistence of the Lazuri language east of Pazar. Among Hemşinli, there is only the vague awareness that their ancestors probably spoke a different language until about 200 years ago, and they tend to react with embarrassment or irritation if they are, for this reason, considered today to be close relatives of Armenians.

We do not rule out the possibility that a new generation of cultural activists might change this situation, and we note that foreign researchers are

<sup>106</sup> Wolfgang Feurstein would probably challenge this diagnosis; alternatively, he might argue that, to the extent that our account of low ethnic consciousness was empirically valid, it should be attributed to generations of Kemalist repression. But the work of Michael Meeker suggests an alternative view.



contributing actively to this process. Another German-based scholar who has worked on ethnic minorities in Anatolia for many years is Peter Alford Andrews. His major publication, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (1989) is a meticulous documentation of the distribution of 47 ethnic minorities, based mostly on data collected privately by foreigners in the 1960s. His recent *Supplement* (2002) follows the same pattern, though this time the data were supplied largely by 'insiders'. Like the earlier volume, the new one includes commissioned essays on particular groups and topics. Both volumes were prepared in close cooperation with Rüdiger Benninghaus, who contributed an essay on the Lazi to the 1989 volume in which he argued, as we do, that Lazi see no contradiction between their identity as Lazi and their identity as Turks. Andrews himself calls for a flexible approach to ethnicity. He begins by suggesting that ethnicity is not the same thing as nationality and that ethnic groups are 'generally endogamous groups whose criteria for cultural self-definition are common traditions selected from the past' (1989: 17–18). He regrets that the absence of detailed anthropological research makes it impossible in many cases to provide the 'emic' understanding of the group's identity. This approach differs from that of Barth, who is concerned with the mutual attribution of ethnic identities rather than their internal self-understanding. In fact, however, much of Andrews's catalogue is compiled exactly as Barth would wish, according to 'self-ascription and ascription by others'.

Andrews is aware of the dangers of ethnic cartography, since 'boundaries are fluid, situational, and the criteria constantly shifting so that overall consistency is unattainable' (2002: 9). He notes that the first edition of his book was commonly received in Turkey with the 'mosaic' metaphor: 'Turkey is a mosaic' (*Türkiye bir mozaiktir*). He comments: 'The mosaic theory may be outmoded, so far as ethnologists are concerned (and I had *not* used the term myself), but the acceptance of this idea represents a distinct advance for the Turkish intelligentsia, until now, in my experience, the most reluctant to acknowledge the plurality of their state' (2002: 11). There is something troubling in this formulation, in which Turkish intellectuals are praised for progressing to a position from which their Western counterparts have already moved on. The problem would seem to be how to 'acknowledge ... plurality' without necessarily implying a world of bounded ethnicities, entirely remote from both Ottoman and Kemalist realities. Andrews cites the Barthian approach to ethnicity as 'a structuring of interaction'. He concludes, citing Erwin Orywal, that 'ethnicity is indeed the process of reciprocal identification: this must inevitably be the key to the situation in Turkey, with ethnea embedded in the matrix of the majority' (2002: 13).

But the question remains: what exactly *are* these *ethnea*? What do 'the Lazi' have in common with 'the Mhallami' (examined by Benninghaus in Andrews's latest volume), with Turkish Alevis (discussed by David Shankland), or with Zazaki-speaking Kurds (discussed by Ludwig Paul)? This is by no means merely a question of scholarly curiosity, of interest only to anthropologists. With the question of collective identity becoming of increasing interest to many people in Turkey, we have to consider the consequences of insisting on the 'ethnic group' paradigm. Turkish Alevis, for example, might use the term in connection with groups such as the Lazi but think it totally inappropriate to their own case. Ethnicisation could lead to practical problems for clubs and associations (*dernekler*) in major cities such as Ankara and Istanbul. These organisations have up until now have been open to all migrants from the same *ilçe*. In the case of mixed *ilçeler* such as Pazar and Fındıklı, should they have to split, with members going in different directions according to their genealogies as Lazi or Hemşinli? What will happen to the huge numbers of descendants of mixed couples if the social scene is ethnicised in this way?

This ethnicisation may be happening already, as a joint outcome of forces internal to Turkish cultural politics and of the internationalisation of concerns to protect minority rights. Contrary to some stereotypes held in western Europe, contemporary Turkey appears to offer relatively conducive conditions for ethnic identity construction, and many intellectuals are shaping these discussions through their activities and publications. The Lazi language (Lazuri) and Lazi music are increasingly visible in the public sphere. Despite these trends, the Gellnerian model of the nation-state still has considerable explanatory power for the Turkish north-east. The population of this region has been effectively integrated into the nation-state, and the new national identity is dominant. Thanks to Michael Meeker, we have seen that the foundations of this modern incorporation were established in the Ottoman period. Bellér-Hann and I (2000) do not claim that the Gellnerian model has the same explanatory power throughout the country. On the contrary, Gellner's own materialist assumptions would lead him to predict different outcomes and less cultural standardisation where population sizes were larger and economic development less successful. In any case these are empirical questions for further investigation. The Gellnerian model need not be rejected entirely as a device to think with, simply because some groups have held onto ethnic or tribal identities more tenaciously than others. This would be the opposite bias to that which Peter Andrews has experienced in reviews of his work by the Kemalist establishment. That some groups in some parts of Turkey, and elsewhere in the diaspora, are currently engaged in anguished debates over collective identity should not lead to the assump-

tion that *all* potential groups are asking such questions, that 'identity politics' is spreading like a contagion to become the prime principle of social interaction. The evidence does not support claims that the model of the indivisible republic has completely broken down, or that it was never more than a chimera in the first place.

Recognition of minority rights is high on the list of conditions which Turkey is expected to satisfy before it can be considered for membership in the EU. On the face of it, this can hardly be an insuperable problem. After all, France has an equally strong centralising tradition. If recent trends continue, the eastern Black Sea coast will increasingly be marketed to tourists as a region of extraordinary ethnic diversity. Trabzon will receive large grants to establish new museums to celebrate Pontic Greek traditions; a little further east, the Lazi, Hemşinli, and Georgians will probably have to make do with smaller sums. These institutional initiatives might well attract support from the local population, especially if there is a material payoff. But if the current intellectual stirrings and these hypothetical institutional changes were to generate a higher level of ethnic consciousness and an ethnicisation of social interaction, this would be something novel, a break not only with the history of the republican period but also with the preceding Ottoman centuries.

## Conclusion

Ethnicity has been an established concept in anthropology for some three decades and the collapse of socialist federal states helped to maintain its prominence in the 1990s. In spite of the recent criticism of 'multiculturalism' and the reification of culture it so often implies, the term *ethnicity* survives tenaciously. Although numerous anthropologists have issued warnings concerning the generalisation of the term (e.g. Banks 1996; Eriksen 1993), attempts to 'deconstruct' the very concept of ethnicity, and in particular to detach it from culture, have been less successful than deconstructions of particular ethnic identities (of which there have been many). For a while, the pendulum swung so far away from 'primordialism' that every cultural identity was presented as 'imagined' or 'invented'. As Günther Schlee has argued (2004), the metaphor of 'construction' is more appropriate. The raw materials used in the construction of ethnic identities often have long histories, which set limits to the role played by imagination or invention. I argue that the concept of ethnicity, too, needs to be seen as a construction. The root may be traced back to ancient Greek, but it is a relatively recent arrival in English, and it is useful to remember that it does not enjoy the same recognition everywhere, even in languages as close as French. Andrews's recent *Supplement* (2002) shows that the term is now being used to cover a very wide array of collective identities. This is potentially dangerous. Whatever



view one takes concerning the on-going claims of the First Nations of North America, or of the campaigns being waged by and on behalf of indigenous peoples in many other parts of the world, it makes little sense to assign the Lazi to this category. Before ethnicity is used further in scientific research in Anatolia, and before NGOs and EU politicians recommend or prescribe to the Ankara authorities the granting of new group-differentiated rights to ethnic minorities, we need to look again at this term.

The Barthian model pioneered the 'constructionist' approach and has proved extremely fertile in anthropology in recent decades. But perhaps we should remember that it developed out of specific fieldwork projects, above all Barth's own work among Pathans. The model may be appropriate to regions such as those studied by Schlee in north-east Africa, remote even in recent generations from the integrating pull of an effective centralised state, but it may not transfer so readily to Anatolia. The Barthian approach distinguishes concern with the content of an ethnic identity from the role of ethnicity in social organisation. The two may, however, be closely connected. In the cases considered here, the long-term history has been one of absorption into powerful state systems, bringing new principles of social interaction and an accelerating loss of cultural differentiation. Whatever one may think of these trends, it is not obvious that anthropologists should support efforts to reverse it and restore ethnicity as a prime principle of social organisation—especially if such a classification is now, in the present, rejected by many of the people concerned. As Barth himself noted in the preface to the 1998 reissue of his 1969 collection, the temptation to equate 'ethnic group' with 'society' or 'culture' has never been entirely banned ('similar ways of thinking are constantly being reintroduced to the social science literature, deriving either from the commonsense reifications of people's own discourse and experience or from the rhetoric of ethnic activists' [1998: 5]). A seductive essentialism is encouraged by the tacit assumption on the part of many external analysts, however well intentioned, that ethnicity is, in actual fact, a leading principle of social organisation. As we have seen, in Anatolia this is not always the case.

Barth was concerned with the *positive* social roles of ethnic groups in social life, not with *normative* goals such as preserving ethnic cultural diversity. It follows that, to the extent that interaction is *not* regulated in this way, ethnicity should not be the prime focus of students of social organisation. Barth did not provide a charter for anthropologists (or any other external analysts) to participate in restoring ethnicity to the more powerful social role it *might* have played in the distant past by supporting contemporary activists for the cultural revitalisation of ethnic groups. Rather than privilege ethnicity in this way, I suggest that no single concept is capable of providing a com-

prehensive framework for all the different kinds of groups which matter to actors and constitute social organisation in Anatolia today. It is an illusion of our nationalist age to assume that, beneath all the identities which a person espouses, there has to be a single fundament presumptively determined by descent.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Incongruent Identities in Polyphonic Polities**

In this chapter I continue the arguments of the previous one with reference to the same set of cases examined in chapter 5. The sample is arbitrary in the sense that I did not select these cases, the four locations where I began fieldwork projects between 1976 and 1986, with a view to comparative exploration of identity issues, any more than I selected them as a well-designed set for socio-economic comparisons. They are merely the cases I know best, and I shall use them to draw out a number of general arguments.

As in earlier chapters, I take some influential theoreticians as a foil. Ernest Gellner's model of the nation-state (e.g. Gellner 1983) forms a sharp contrast to Will Kymlicka's work on 'multicultural citizenship' (1995; see also Kymlicka 2001). These scholars have little in common, apart from their academic grounding in Western philosophy. Gellner is concerned to identify the forces and mechanisms which, under the conditions of modern industrial society, bring the cultural (which he identifies with the nation) into a correspondence with the political (the state), leading us to take for granted the nation-state as the most basic institution of modernity. Whereas states of the Agrarian Age such as the empires of the Ottomans or the Habsburgs had typically comprised a multiplicity of cultural groups, industrial society requires the nation-state in order to facilitate mobility and the education of 'generalists', who must all be literate in a single language. Closer inspection reveals that Gellner's 'congruence' of the cultural and the political has remained, almost everywhere, highly imperfect if not entirely illusory. Kymlicka addresses some blatant cases of incongruency in multinational and polyethnic states (which he is careful to distinguish). He argues that a liberal theory of the contemporary state should recognise not only the claims of individual citizens but also the collective rights of the members of minority 'ethnocultural groups', whose 'societal cultures' differ from that of the majority.

When Gellner and Kymlicka use the term *culture*, they do not mean groups specified by religion, or by sexual orientation, or musical tastes, or



other cultural features of this sort. Even language is not necessarily a decisive factor. They are concerned, rather, with people who consider themselves to belong to groups which, at least potentially, qualify as a nation or a nationality. National minority is one common term for such a group. Ethnic group is another, but I argued in the previous chapter that notions of ethnicity are often problematic. While some people resent being classified as members of an ethnic group because they do not wish to be distinguished in this way from the dominant national group, others may resent the label 'ethnic' for the opposite reason—because it implies that their separate identity is somehow less substantial and developed than that of the dominant group. In the contemporary world the issues seem to crystallise increasingly on the claim to be endowed with a unique group culture. A prime cause of global incivility is friction between groups which view themselves as deeply divided *culturally*. Given that culture is supposed to be a stock-in-trade of the anthropologist, this is surely a field in which the discipline ought to be able to make a contribution to policymaking and conflict resolution. If this does not happen very often, it is worth asking why, and whether, with some new thinking, we might do better in the future.

What is (a) culture? While most proclamations of human rights have been founded on the individual, Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, approved by the United Nations in 1966, guarantees the rights of vaguely specified 'minorities' to 'enjoy their own culture', including freedom of religious practice and language use. For critics, however, the assumption that a religious, linguistic or ethnic minority has its 'own culture' is inherently suspect; they allege that this mirrors the worldview of the nationalist. The anthropological debates in recent years have been lively and cannot be summarised in detail here. Adam Kuper (1999) has argued that a new division of labour with sociology, granting anthropologists prior rights over the concept of culture, provided it was understood in a certain idealist and relativist way, was negotiated in the 1950s. Verena Stolcke (1995) and others have suggested that reifications of culture have been pursued to such an extreme that culture is increasingly serving as the basis for new forms of racism. Gerd Baumann (1996) has drawn attention to the fact that policies of multiculturalism in countries such as Britain can facilitate and even stimulate the essentialising of identities in terms of culture. Kuper (2003) has recently seen similar dangers in the claims of indigenous peoples all over the world. Postsocialist societies are no exception to these trends (Tishkov 1997). While recognising such problems, some anthropologists respond by vigorously defending a concept of culture which is free of such reifying or essentialising tendencies. Those in this camp argue that the discipline cannot afford to dispense with such a central concept: how

else can we characterise all the human knowledge which is transmitted by non-genetic means? Richard Fox and Barbara King (2002) provide a good sample of the recent literature and argue pragmatically that the decision to apply a concept of culture, and which one, should be determined by the particular problem at hand.

I shall return to these issues at the end of the chapter. Let me begin by mentioning my own place of origin for an indication of the complex problems encountered on the ground, the tangled terminology which dogs the field, and the distance which separates the Gellnerian model from empirical reality. I was born in the British Isles, where the terms *ethnicity* and *ethnic group* are applied uncontroversially to immigrant groups such as Chinese and Pakistanis, irrespective of their internal diversity. It is still less common, I think, to speak of Welsh ethnicity. To be Welsh is to have a minority national identity within the United Kingdom, where the English are the dominant nation. There is the further complication of British identity, often thought to be gaining strength in recent years (see Kumar 2003).

I am a Welshman by virtue of being born in the capital, Cardiff, which was also the birthplace of both of my parents. I grew up in Pontnewydd and went to school across the valley in Croesyceiliog, two components of a new town called Cwmbran. All of these names are unmistakably Welsh. My maternal grandfather spoke Welsh as his native tongue. However, he married a woman from Ireland. Using today's DNA technologies it might conceivably be possible to prove that they shared a common Celtic ancestry, but the fact is that they could communicate with each other only in English. The English language was dominant in South Wales, and the Welsh language was not taught at all in schools in the border county of Monmouthshire (this changed only in the 1970s; even now I hear that many teachers and parents are unsympathetic to the presence of Welsh in the curriculum, on the grounds that pupils would draw greater benefit from exposure to 'more important' foreign languages). But I and most of my friends nonetheless considered ourselves to be Welsh, and when our history teachers organised debates about whether Monmouthshire belonged to England or to Wales, the Welsh viewpoint always prevailed.

This sort of border experience is surely not uncommon. The popular understanding, supported by the history books, is that we are dealing here with two entirely separate peoples: the Celts were the original inhabitants, but over the centuries the English pushed them back into the hills. The Celtic language too retreated, though place names lingered. Of course the friction along Offa's Dyke was not a conflict between nations in the modern sense, and I am not sure to what extent it can be described as inter-ethnic conflict. In any case, the Welsh history which we were taught at school began only in

the nineteenth century, when South Wales was rapidly industrialising and a national movement emerged for the first time. Yet English, not Welsh, became the dominant language of the industrial belt. Ernest Gellner might have attempted to explain this in terms of the functional advantages of integration into the wider British polity. But his model cannot explain the survival and later revival of the Welsh language or the persistence of a strong subjective identity among so many citizens. This 'national revival' was crowned in 1999 with the foundation of a new National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff. The policies implemented towards this minority by the contemporary British state, with substantial devolved powers in fields such as education and culture, are broadly consistent with Kymlicka's call for minority recognition. This has been accomplished after centuries of Anglicisation, in conditions in which virtually all citizens have full cultural competence in the English language.

But what exactly is 'Welsh culture' nowadays? To a large majority of Welshmen, including myself, the Celtic language remains alien. Despite policies to encourage Welsh, a fundamental asymmetry remains: all Welsh speakers are fluent in English, but the same is not even minimally true in reverse. My own family, most of whom still live in the Cardiff area, voted against the proposal to establish a Welsh Assembly, on the grounds that this additional level of governance would lead only to wasteful additional bureaucracy. As for me, I have not lived in Wales for any length of time since my school days and my sense of national identity has waned since those exciting debates about the true national affiliation of Monmouthshire. In any case I do not think that my personal background is the main reason behind my interest in issues of identity and citizenship; but no doubt it has left some traces on my interpretations of 'identity politics' in the places where I have done fieldwork. Scholarly activity in this field has increased greatly in recent decades, but minority issues were emphatically not one of my priorities when I started fieldwork in Tázlár in 1975. I shall begin with this case, not because it was my first fieldwork but because the very fact that I could ignore minority questions when studying this village was also a consequence of the particular development path followed by this part of central Europe. This path exemplifies the homogenisation specified by the Gellnerian model.

### **Hungary: Diversity, Assimilation, and a Modest Revival**

Tázlár (the village name is of Turkic origin) was for me an entirely Hungarian (Magyar) community. I do not recall hearing any other language spoken there in the 1970s. I learned that many families (including close kin of my landlady) had changed their Slovak or German surnames for Hungarian names in the 1940s, but this had changed nothing else of significance. Some



of the place names in the environs betrayed their *sváb* (i.e. German) origins, but the immigrants to Tázlár had generally abandoned their older languages. The picture was somewhat different in the nearby market centres of Soltvadkert and Kiskőrös, where resettlement following Ottoman withdrawal had begun much earlier. The greater concentrations of Slovaks in Kiskőrös and of Germans in Soltvadkert enabled a degree of group distinctiveness to persist. In the later nineteenth century, however, even compact areas of minority settlement began to experience pressures to assimilate, to show that they were patriotic Magyars. This was the era in which the Greek Catholic Church, whose members within the Hungarian state were primarily Ruthenians (Rusyns) and Romanians, was thoroughly magyarised. Jews, too, were prominent among those who followed, or attempted to follow, the path of assimilation in the last decades of the Habsburg monarchy, both by changing their names and converting to Christianity (Karády 1998).

Why did Magyar elites initiate and encourage these trends, for example by insisting on the use of the Hungarian language in the education system and at all levels of state administration? The national movement had peaked in the anti-Habsburg revolution of 1848–9, but the sentiment remained strong. The Magyar element was for a long time a minority in the territory governed by Budapest following the ‘Compromise’ negotiated with Vienna in 1867. Gellner’s model, emphasising that a nation-state needed a common ‘high culture’ to facilitate communication and meet the organisational requirements of an industrial economy and an increasingly mobile society, is surely relevant here. The Hungarian state had historically included a great diversity of groups. Post-Ottoman resettlement continued that diversity on the Great Plain. From the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the emergence of a more homogenised, Magyar-dominated society approximated the Gellnerian model rather well.

Gellner’s ideal type is less useful in accounting for more recent developments. At the end of the Second World War (which brought catastrophe for Hungary’s Jews, as elsewhere in Central Europe), plenty of villages by the Danube and in other parts of Hungary still had a strong sense of German identity. Those who owned up to this identity after 1945 found themselves deported—or worse. Socialist Hungary did not encourage assertions of minority identity. Limited rights and protections were extended to the main groups, but in practice the acceleration of industrialisation and high rates of rural-urban migration were conducive to a continuation of the trend towards functional integration, as predicted by the Gellnerian model. On the other hand, Magyar national sentiment flourished in unexpected ways under socialism. One of the most interesting, which I witnessed during my fieldwork in the 1970s, was the Dancehouse (*Táncház*) movement, which infused

a new generation of young people with an enthusiasm for traditions of music and dancing. This movement had sensitive political overtones, mainly because so many of the most significant traditions were rooted in Transylvania, which now belonged to Romania.

Minorities began to become more salient in public discussion in the last decade of socialism. The trend increased dramatically after 1990 and a new law was passed in 1993 which recognised 13 minorities. This concern has been largely fuelled not by the demands of non-Magyar minorities but by the predicament of the significantly larger groups of Magyars resident in neighbouring states. The generous provisions made for minorities today in Hungary (e.g. in terms of minority schools) are to be understood as an effort to improve the conditions of these Magyars. Nonetheless the 'liberal' policies probably contributed to a significant rise in the number of Hungarians who declared a minority identity at the most recent national census (2001). The three largest minorities according to the latest statistics are the Gypsies (Rom), Germans and Slovaks. Their total remains very low, with more than 98 per cent of the population declaring Hungarian to be their mother tongue.<sup>107</sup>

The major difficulty in implementing policies along the lines recommended by Will Kymlicka concerns the Gypsies, who form by far the largest minority in the country. Scholars have disagreed in their analysis of the group's predicament. Some have classified them as a new 'underclass', more marginalised than in the socialist era (Ladányi 2001, Ladányi and Szelényi 2004). Michael Stewart (2001, 2002) argued that the application of a term developed for the case of blacks in North America was inappropriate, because the social hierarchy in Hungary was not racialised—at any rate not to the same degree. Stewart suggested that some Gypsies have been upwardly mobile in the more open economic system of postsocialist years. However, in spite of a plethora of government measures and the proliferation of NGOs, negative stereotypes towards Gypsies have remained strong throughout mainstream Magyar society. This is noticeable even in Tázlár, which in the

<sup>107</sup> The census takers separate the question of mother tongue from that of national (ethnic) identity (*nemzetiség*); in 2001 they supplemented these questions with additional enquiries concerning attachments to 'cultural values and traditions' and active use of a minority language. Respondents were allowed to declare an allegiance to up to three minority identities, and 117,147 took advantage of this possibility (of whom 115,886 gave two answers). The number of Germans rose from 31,000 in 1990 to 62,000 in 2001, while 88,000 declared that they felt attached to cultural values and traditions and 58,000 that they used the minority language with family and friends. The equivalent figures for Slovaks were 10,000, 18,000, 27,000 and 18,000; and for Gypsies (Rom) 143,000, 190,000, 129,000 and 53,000. All these figures are based on voluntary declarations: German and Slovak activists claim substantially larger communities, while more realistic estimates of Hungary's Gypsy population start at around 500,000.

1970s had only three Gypsy families. They lived quietly and attracted little attention. The number has risen in recent years due to immigration, triggered by the fact that building plots are cheaper in Tázlár than in most neighbouring settlements. This trend is a source of concern to some villagers, including councillors and the mayor; they allege that the newcomers often have no regular jobs and are bound to indulge in petty crime to support their (often large) families

Gellner would probably view Hungary's current minority rights provision as a marginal phenomenon, which does little to counter the basic homogenising power of Magyar nationalism as it has developed since the late nineteenth century. Yet the Gellnerian model cannot explain why some people seem nowadays to be taking a much more active interest in their group's history than was ever shown by their parents or grandparents. That some young people of *sváb* descent are nowadays keen to learn German would not puzzle a materialist such as Gellner, who would suspect (correctly) that at least some of them see a payoff in terms of job opportunities in the tourist sector or employment in Germany. Many *sváb* settlements have developed 'twin' links with wealthier settlements in Germany. But why should some younger people in Kiskőrös take similar pains to learn Slovak, a linguistic investment which hardly offers comparable benefits?<sup>108</sup> Why should long-assimilated Jews in Budapest, whose Jewish background is perhaps unknown even to close friends, start to take an interest in their personal and collective history? Why should some of these people start to consider themselves as being in some sense *really* Slovak or Jewish and only secondarily Hungarian?

The significance of this lacuna in the Gellnerian approach to national identity should not be exaggerated. In Tázlár people take little or no interest in these matters. Even neighbouring Soltvadkert, with its strong *sváb* traditions and two partner towns in eastern and western Germany, has no active German cultural association.<sup>109</sup> Even where such associations have come into existence, they do little to modify the domination of the majority. The non-Hungarian culture cultivated by enthusiasts is not a 'societal culture' in Kymlicka's sense. It is more like a hobby or an identity tag. Those who choose to wear it continue to live out their lives in the much 'thicker' Hun-

<sup>108</sup> Kiskőrös has links to settlements in Slovakia and organises an annual Festival which highlights Slovak cultural themes (e.g. musical or gastronomic); the bulk of the programme, however, inevitably reflects mainstream Magyar popular culture.

<sup>109</sup> German influence may, however, be growing in new ways. During a recent visit I realised that significant numbers of Germans have recently bought property here, generally as retirement homes. In addition to the classes in German and English that have long been available, the local culture house now offers classes in elementary Hungarian for these newcomers.



garian culture which determines the conditions and meanings of their everyday lives.

This interpretation is born out in recent debates over the so-called Status Law, that is, the proposal to confer upon Hungarians living in neighbouring countries certain benefits unavailable to other citizens of those states. This generated much ire among European Union states as well as the neighbouring states most directly affected (Stewart 2003). The main scheme eventually collapsed when insufficient numbers of Hungarian citizens turned out to vote in a referendum in 2004, and almost half of those who did take the trouble to vote did not approve of this opening-up to 'co-ethnics'. This is consistent with the opinions I have heard expressed in Tázlár, where 'the Romanians' might refer to migrant workers who speak only Romanian, but might in some contexts refer to Magyars from Transylvania.

I conclude that contemporary Hungary continues to provide a good illustration of Gellnerian homogenisation processes. Issues of descent lines, national identity, minority rights, and citizenship privileges for co-ethnic foreigners are of little or no interest to the great majority of residents in villages such as Tázlár. There is, however, a growing concern that something needs to be done to address the social problems caused by the Gypsies. For Will Kymlicka the position is clear: the Rom are an ethnocultural minority, and they are entitled to the same treatment as any other such minority, including language promotion and special educational provisions. Such prescriptions are welcomed by those Magyars who would be happy to have Gypsy children removed from the classes attended by their own children. It is reported from some historically *sváb* communities in the vicinity of Budapest that Magyar parents may choose to send their children to schools set up for the German minority, and even initiate the creation of such schools, as a way to avoid intermingling with Gypsies (Váradi 2004). In this way, policies based on the general recognition of group rights can have harmful, exclusionary effects.<sup>110</sup>

### **Poland: Ethnic Cleansing and the Fragmentation of a Minority**

Like Hungarian statehood, Polish statehood is more than a thousand years old. As in the Carpathian basin, the territories to the north of the mountains belonging to Poland were home to many linguistic and religious groups, and as in Hungary, this diversity was not radically eroded until the twentieth

<sup>110</sup> Kymlicka points out repeatedly that different types of minorities warrant different policies. But the point is that drawing up special policies to promote the integration of Gypsies will not help if the provision of separate schooling for Germans, Slovaks etc. has the effect of accentuating the isolation of the country's most stigmatised people, many of whom still have little sense of belonging to a unified 'Gypsy' group.

century. The People's Republic of Poland, which existed between 1944 and 1990, appeared to be one of Europe's most homogeneous states. The processes which led to this result were significantly different, however, from those in the Hungarian case; these differences have shaped debates over minority citizenship in the postsocialist years.

As ever, my perspective on the national level is coloured by the location of my fieldwork. Settlement of the upland districts which now form the south-eastern corner of Poland dates back to the Middle Ages. The upper Wisłok valley was populated by East Slavs, who belonged to the eastern tradition of Christianity. This Rus, or Ruthenian, peasant population dominated in the hills, but the villages on the flatter land farther north were mostly occupied by West Slavs whose religion was Roman Catholicism. In the towns, Roman Catholics and Jews were more prominent than the East Slav element. In short, this region was a borderland between East and West. As I noted in chapter 7, Przemyśl (in Ukrainian, Peremyshl) was the episcopal centre for both a Roman Catholic diocese and an Orthodox (later Greek Catholic) eparchy, as well as home to a substantial Jewish community. Comparable diversity characterised many other parts of the Polish state in the pre-modern period, notably during the centuries when it formed a vast commonwealth with the Duchy of Lithuania.<sup>111</sup>

This state disappeared in two phases of 'partition' at the end of the eighteenth century. The southern territories passed to the Habsburgs and were henceforth popularly known as the province of Galicia (Galizien). The rest of the old commonwealth was divided between Prussia and Russia. Polish national sentiment intensified in the nineteenth century, and nowhere more strongly than in Galicia. The Austrian rulers of the province could hardly aspire to transform its population into Austrians, given the paucity of German speakers and the great distance from Vienna. Instead of pursuing policies of assimilation along the lines followed in Budapest, the Austrians therefore tolerated the emerging nationalisms of their eastern and western Slavic subjects, while attempting to play them off against each other. The western, or Polish, national movement developed more rapidly, and Poles succeeded in winning a considerable degree of autonomy from Vienna in 1867. The consolidation of the Ruthenian national movement was hampered by internal divisions; those factions which favoured alliance with Russia were harshly repressed by Austria.

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<sup>111</sup> There was a long-standing tendency for East Slavs to adopt the language and religion of the higher-status group, that is, the Polish language and the Roman Catholic religion. This assimilation was largely restricted to upwardly mobile elites and did not affect the mass of the peasantry.

In contrast to late Habsburg Hungary, then, Habsburg rule in Galicia had the effect of strengthening two national movements rather than one. By 1918 many, perhaps most of the East Slavs of Galicia had a new sense of national identity, which they called Ukrainian. When the empire collapsed, violent conflict erupted between Poles and Ukrainians. It was particularly severe in central parts of the province where the two newly self-conscious national communities had overlapped for centuries. L'viv (in Polish Lwów) was the major city of eastern Galicia, but although Ukrainians were the dominant group in its rural hinterland, Poles were more numerous in the city. It was a similar story in the smaller city of Przemyśl. After 1919 the Polish army proceeded to impose Warsaw's authority over large areas of the east. The revived Polish state therefore resembled its forerunners in the extent to which it was characterised by linguistic and religious diversity. However, research by ethnographers in the inter-war decades indicated that by no means all citizens of the new Polish state had a clear sense of national identity in the modern sense. Some preferred to declare themselves 'a person of this place' (*tutejszy*). Governments attempted to remedy this deficiency by fostering consciousness of belonging to Poland. In the Carpathian region this meant promoting specific interpretations of the history and traditions of the East Slavs living there, who were distinguished from the main body of Ukrainians to the east and classified instead as forming a regional group, the Lemkos. The hamlets of Wisłok Wielki fell into this classification. It seems clear, however, that its inhabitants were not persuaded; at least in this part of the mountains, a sense of Ukrainian identity was well established by 1918–1919 at the latest, when the parish priest was the rallying figure for the Ukrainian independence movement (Hann 1985a: 28).

This conviction—of having a national identity which was not Polish—was coercively confirmed in the aftermath of the Second World War for all the East Slavs within the borders of the new, much smaller Polish state. Most of former eastern Galicia now passed to the Soviet Republic of Ukraine. Many East Slavs were transferred in 1945 from the Lemko districts (which remained Polish territory) to Ukraine. Following several years of unrest in the region, during which Ukrainians—terrorists or freedom fighters, depending on one's point of view—committed many acts of violence in skirmishes with the Polish army, the new authorities responded with draconian action. In the course of Operation Vistula (*Akcja Wisła*), launched in April 1947, almost the entire remaining East Slav population of south-eastern Poland was deported from the homeland and resettled on land in the far north and west, primarily in districts which had been emptied through the deportations of their former German residents. The effect was to disperse the major compact bloc of non-Polish population within the boundaries of the new



socialist republic. Return to the homeland was impossible for many years. During this period new Polish settlers moved into Wisłok, and many smaller settlements vanished altogether. Many of those expelled, or more commonly their descendants, have assimilated into the Polish mainstream. This was not always easy, however, for many Poles had come to harbour strong antagonisms towards East Slavs, Ukrainians and Russians alike.

I paid little attention to these matters during the fieldwork which I began in Wisłok in 1979. By this time a number of indigenous families had returned to the village, but they added up to only 8 households, in comparison with over 50 Polish households. I collected some life histories, including accounts of how lives were lost when Polish soldiers attacked the village in 1946, and I recorded strongly negative stereotypes towards Ukrainians among some of the newcomer Poles. The returnees were concentrated in the upper hamlet and had little interaction with the majority of their Polish neighbours. I lived at different times with families in both groups. During my fieldwork I also visited the district centre, Sanok, and the centre of the eparchy in Przemyśl, where I studied the parish records. I was informed of the existence since 1956 of a Ukrainian socio-cultural association and of the fact that it had been possible since that year for the Greek Catholics, suppressed in 1946, to hold Eastern rite services under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church (see chapter 7). Evidently, significant numbers of East Slavs had either been able to avoid deportation or had moved (back) to this city in the more relaxed climate of the later socialist period. I was assured by the local intellectuals I met at the archives that none of this had had any significant effect on the public sphere. In any case, this was not the subject of my project, and I did not enquire further.

The postsocialist years have shown that official representations of the People's Republic as a society almost entirely homogenised in the Gellnerian sense were exaggerated. Minorities are now much more visible in the public sphere and, in line with the country's international commitments, they have benefited from measures to allow languages other than Polish to be taught in schools and to be used by local organs of the state. However, the official numbers remain low: fewer than half a million, 1.5 per cent of the Polish population, declared a minority identity in the census of 2002. It proved very difficult to draw up legislation to recognise and protect minorities, partly because there was no agreement on the nature of the targeted groups. The legislation that was finally passed in 2005 distinguished between national minorities and ethnic minorities: the latter consist of groups such as Gypsies (Roma) who are not endowed with their own state. In addition, Kashubian is recognised as a regional language. However, there is not at present any official recognition of a Silesian identity, even though in the

2002 census more than 170,000 Polish citizens declared themselves to be Silesian (as compared with just over 150,000 who declared themselves German). All other minorities were considerably smaller. It is obvious that the propensity to own up to a minority identity, and even consciously to adopt an affiliation not previously internalised, depends on how this identity is perceived and what advantages it may confer. Thus the numbers of Germans have remained relatively high (though still much lower than claimed by activists) while the number of those declaring themselves Belarus is likely to be a more serious underestimate: this neighbouring state has a highly negative image in Poland and can do little to promote the cause of the Belarus minority (Fleming 2002). Whereas the Hungarian census of 2001 allowed respondents to profess more than one minority identity, this Polish census did not permit respondents to say that they were, for example, both German *and* Silesian, or Ukrainian *and* Lemko.

The 2002 figures for both Ukrainians (30,957) and Lemkos (5,863) were disappointingly low in the eyes of activists. They attribute this to the continued prejudice of mainstream Polish society towards East Slavs in general. Developments since 1989 have been complicated. Activists had begun to organise large-scale events in the public sphere in the 1980s, well before the end of socialism. Thus those who wished to promote a Lemko identity were able to launch the highly successful Watra festivals, held regularly in the central Lemko zone since 1983 and in the west of Poland since 1981. The latter emphasised links to other Rusyn groups in the Carpathians rather than to the Ukrainian nation. In April 1989 they organized a separate association, the Stowarzyszenie Łemków, based in Legnica.<sup>112</sup> In December of the same year those of a pro-Ukrainian orientation founded their own association, the Zjednoczenie Łemków. The relaxation of border controls in the 1990s facilitated closer contacts with Ukraine, including the rebuilding of family ties shattered by the deportations of the 1940s. Nonetheless the Rusyn orientation has remained strong and in June 2005 the World Rusyn Congress was convened by the Stowarzyszenie Łemków in the Lemko homeland, with delegates from the established communities in Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, and the North American diaspora. Most Lemkos who acknowledge Rusyn identity see it as an alternative to Ukrainian at the highest level of 'nationality', but some continue to argue that it should be possible to embrace all the identities—Lemko, (Carpatho-)Rusyn, and Ukrainian—in an ascending hierarchy. The latter deplore the way post-socialist freedoms have accentuated internal divisions and tend to view the separate classification of Lemkos in the national census as a Polish plot.

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<sup>112</sup> Legnica, located in the far west of the country, is a former German town where many Lemkos were resettled. Few have moved back permanently to the homeland.

Some argue that the interests of the East Slav minority were better protected under a weak socialist government than under a 'free' government which in practice is manipulated by Polish national sentiment, aided and abetted by the dominant Church. While virtually everyone attaches a high value to the Watra Festivals, some complain that the programme of the major event in the homeland has tended to lose its local and regional character. Others welcome the presence of Ukrainian flags and other national symbols, in order to remind Poles that they too belong to a proud nation and should not to be treated as an exotic accessory to the catalogue of Polish folklore.

Although the centre of the main association for the Ukrainian minority remains in Warsaw, in the early 1990s Przemyśl emerged quickly as a kind of unofficial capital. This development was closely related to the official revival of the Greek Catholic Church and the decision of Pope John Paul II to confirm Przemyśl as the centre of that church for the entire country. Przemyśl was also a border city, and in the 1990s it attracted huge numbers of petty traders from Ukraine. It was also the most obvious location in which to hold cultural events for the Ukrainian minority. The combined effect of all these developments—ecclesiastical, economic, and cultural—was to give the minority a new salience in the life of the city. This salience was further institutionalised with the establishment in 1993 of a Ukrainian language school. Unfortunately, as I described in chapter 7, all this proved to be too much for some elements of the Roman Catholic population. The history of antagonistic inter-group relations was manipulated on both sides, and contests over churches were only the most conspicuous of the conflicts which were at their most passionate in the mid-1990s.

Although these tensions attracted a lot of coverage in the national media, it would be a mistake to conclude that Polish-Ukrainian relations in this region have been permanently soured. There has been no friction at all in the settlement of Wisłok (nowadays overwhelmingly Polish). In the larger, neighbouring village of Komańcza the Ukrainians have built an impressive new Greek Catholic church and thereby resolved the problem posed by the transfer under the socialists of their old building for use by the Orthodox Church (see chapter 7, p. 191). Tensions between Greek Catholics and Orthodox, as well as between Ukrainian patriots and those who uphold strong versions of a Lemko or Rusyn identity, continue to divide the minority. Of course there are many shades of opinion within the majority community as well. It seems that the strongest anti-Ukrainian sentiments are often expressed by Poles who grew up in the eastern territories and were obliged to leave their homelands when new borders were decreed in 1944. Among most younger Poles, including city officials in Przemyśl, more pragmatic and pluralist views seem to be growing in strength. In the sphere of religion,



the heads of the 'sister' Catholic churches preach tolerance and mutual respect, but such ecumenical appeals may go unheard among more junior members of the clergy on both sides (see chapter 7).

This region of Poland has been directly affected by the country's admission to the EU and the associated commitment to implementing border controls in accordance with the Schengen agreements. Local people in Przemyśl have generally supported efforts by the authorities in Warsaw to make the movement of goods and people across the border as easy as possible. No issues of citizenship have arisen comparable to those raised by the Status Law debates in Hungary. Although the nature of the ethnic cleansing of the 1940s was quite different in Poland and these differences had a close bearing on the conflicts which emerged here in the aftermath of socialism, the picture today is not so different from that of the Hungarian case. Minority groups are able to organise more freely than they could under socialism, but the situation can hardly be compared to the plurality which prevailed before the twentieth century. For most members of the Ukrainian minority in Przemyśl, the largest concentration in the country, Polish media and Polish-speaking networks are more significant in their everyday lives. Even in the Ukrainian school, a high proportion of the teaching takes place in Polish—contrary to the hopes of the activists when it was established, but consistent with the predictions of Ernest Gellner's model.

### **Turkey: Long-run Integration and Scale Differences**

Although each can lay claim to a long history of statehood, modern Hungary and Poland only emerged as nation-states after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire at the end of the First World War. In both countries, processes of homogenisation culminated in the era of socialism. Although the postsocialist period has created more scope for the expression of minority identities, I have argued that the dominance of a single national culture has not been seriously challenged. With the possible exception of the Gypsies, minorities now have access to all the general substantive entitlements of citizenship as well as to a number of specific entitlements in domains such as education, language recognition and the conservation of traditions and folklore.

The modern Turkish state, too, emerged from the ruins of empire at the end of the First World War, but its structural relation to the imperial polity was quite different. The late Ottoman consolidation of the *millet* system made religion the primary basis of group difference. Muslims who spoke languages other than Turkish were unlikely to follow the examples of European nationalisms. In the case of the eastern Black Sea coast, Michael Meeker (2002) has argued persuasively that 'ethnic' relations were politi-

cally unimportant. Groups such as the Lazi had a clearly defined membership and yet they were fully incorporated into the imperial polity.

In comparison with adjacent regions of the Caucasus, from which many Muslims, including significant numbers of Lazi, were resettled to western Anatolia in the late nineteenth century, the population of Turkey's eastern Black Sea coast shows great continuity. The sub-province of Lazistan was briefly occupied by Russia during the First World War, but with few lasting consequences. Nor was this region caught up in the Armenian catastrophe (although the Hemşinli, immediate neighbours of the Lazi in several districts, are linguistically closely related to Armenians). In the early republican years this region was poor but stable and, with the demise of the small Greek communities which had persisted to the east of Trabzon, overwhelmingly Muslim. The diversity represented by the Hemşinli, the Lazi, and a few Georgians in the districts between Pazar and the new state border with the Soviet Union posed no threat to new powerholders in the new capital of Ankara. The integration achieved in the Ottoman period was carried over into the republic, and as I argued in the previous chapter, ethnicity has had little salience down to the present day. During our most recent visit in 2003, when Bellér-Hann and I distributed copies of the Turkish translation of our monograph *Turkish Region* to friends and officials, some of the latter again criticised us for mentioning Lazi and Hemşinli at all.

That, of course, is precisely the problem in the eyes of other critics. Wolfgang Feurstein is a scholar of this region who, in addition to his many scientific publications, has published and disseminated a pamphlet which aims to promote literacy in the Lazi language through the use of a new alphabet based upon that of modern Turkish (Feurstein 1984). He passionately condemns what he believes to be the Turkish government's concerted policies of assimilation. He also alleges that Bellér-Hann and I are serving the cause of this homogenising state by failing to draw attention to its repressive policies (see Feurstein 2003 for the fullest catalogue of his complaints). In fact, we do in our work point to the distortions perpetrated by modern Turkish nationalism. The record of the Ankara authorities is in some ways comparable to that of the aggressively assimilationist late Habsburg state in Budapest and to that of the Warsaw authorities who tried hard during the inter-war decades to persuade Lemkos and other Greek Catholics that they were really Poles. Rather than view the Ankara authorities as uniquely repressive, it is important to recall the Gellnerian explanations for why modern states require a large degree of homogenisation, achieved notably through language and a unified education system, in order to function at all. Most Lazi attach great importance to their ability to participate in the national labour market—indeed as I noted in chapter 8 they have been excep-

tionally mobile over many centuries—and this is possible only on the basis of competence in Turkish.

It is also relevant to point out that during most of our joint fieldwork in Turkey, in contrast to my earlier eastern European work, the political situation was unstable. We had to be cautious in our enquiries into the force of identities such as Laz and Hemşinli, because not only state officials but also many 'ordinary people' were extremely condemnatory of any propositions which, in their view, threatened to undermine the stability and indivisibility of the republic. Fortunately, the partial resolution of the Kurdish crisis in south-eastern Anatolia has brought a substantial improvement in recent years. The Kurdish language now enjoys a degree of official recognition, even if this still falls well short of what activists would wish to see.

Lazuri, the language of the Lazi, is spoken by a much smaller number of people. It has at present no official standing, though it can regularly be heard in the media, and songs in Lazuri and Mingrelian have been commercially successful in recent years. Bilal Toprakoğlu has pioneered the collection of Lazi folk music in the homeland. At present, however, it seems that there is considerably greater interest in this music in the western cities, above all in Istanbul, and that residents of the homeland have been slow to show interest in what the enthusiasts are increasingly calling their *etnik grubu* or their *kimlik* (identity). If this is so, then explanations in terms of brainwashing by generations of Turkish nationalists may be insufficient. Rather, I suggest that the heritage of Ottoman integration has enabled the Lazi to feel proud of their integration into the dominant group of contemporary Anatolia without giving up their identity as Lazi. This is the 'dual identity' acutely diagnosed by Rüdiger Benninghaus (1989). It contradicts the expectations of those brought up in thrall to nationalist ideologies, for whom ultimately a people can have only one such identity or *Volksgeist*. But the incongruity is exactly the point: perhaps the Lazi do not want to be viewed as a people according to this particular European mould?

Double identities of this kind are asymmetrical and they may be fragile. It is possible to welcome signs that a new generation of activists in the cities is determined to prevent the disappearance of Lazuri, and yet to doubt that Lazi identity in Istanbul can become more meaningful than the identity of a Kiskőrös Slovak in Hungary or a Lemko-Rusyn-Ukrainian in Poland; in other words, enthusiasts will cultivate folk music and poetry and organise regular festivals, but even the largest Lazi diaspora will have difficulty in creating a 'thick' Lazi lifeworld.

Might it be possible to achieve more in their homeland? This question is urgent because Lazuri has been losing ground for decades. A concerted programme to teach it in schools in the region might succeed in stemming



this decline. But at present such an intervention by the authorities would almost certainly meet with some opposition from parents and teachers, many of whom believe that energies invested in learning Lazuri would be detrimental to their children's efforts to master Turkish and other 'more important' foreign languages, notably English.

Even if such programmes were introduced and the number of Lazuri speakers stabilised, it is doubtful that this would lead to far-reaching changes in the extent to which Turkish provided the basis of the societal culture. It is worth noting how the Lazi reacted to the sudden appearance of close ethnic kin from neighbouring Georgia after the re-opening of the main coastal road in 1988. During the last years of the USSR and following its collapse, most 'tourist-traders' conveyed a sad impression of the poverty and dislocation of their home regions. Local Lazi expressed some understanding for those experiencing this predicament but no special sympathy for those with whom they could just about conduct a basic conversation in Lazuri-Mingrelian. Rather than forge tighter links to 'co-ethnics', such as fellow Lazi in the border village of Sarp, it seems that the Lazi of modern Turkey were given fresh cause to take pride in their Turkish citizenship (Hann and Bellér-Hann 1998h). The number of Lazuri speakers is probably too small, even if the homeland and the diaspora are added together, to support the degree of societal culture which has become possible nowadays in Wales (in terms of television channels, educational provision, etc.).<sup>113</sup> In this respect their position is quite different from that of the Kurds, a group potentially (if all its various factions were to unite) large enough to warrant special citizenship entitlements such as rights to mother-tongue schooling in the whole range of subjects and perhaps the possibility to declare Kurdish as one's national *kimlik* in one's identity documents.<sup>114</sup>

It is therefore unwise to generalise from the case of the Lazi to that of other minorities in contemporary Turkey. Attitudes towards dual identity in the Kurdish case may be different. Like the Lazi, the Kurds have a more or less clear territory which can be designated as homeland; their numbers are much greater but decades of violent struggle have not resolved all the uncer-

<sup>113</sup> Feurstein (1992) gives the total number of Lazuri speakers as 250,000 but 100,000 is probably a more realistic estimate. Andrews (1989) provides figures from 1965, the last occasion when a question about language was posed in a Turkish census. The number of those who gave Lazuri as their mother tongue was 26,007; a further 59,101 people stated that it was their second language.

<sup>114</sup> I doubt that many Lazi would consider replacing Turkish with Lazi in their identity documents, if the opportunity were given them, but many might be ready to enter a hyphenated self-description, Türk-Lazi.

tainties about the nature of Kurdish identity itself.<sup>115</sup> In Gellner's model, the outcome of such a struggle is assumed to hinge on whether or not the elites of the potential secessionist group can be satisfactorily accommodated within the existing polity. In the Ottoman-Turkish case, opportunities to migrate to more prosperous regions such as the megacity of Istanbul have also strengthened homogenisation among non-elite groups: more Kurds now reside in the cities of western Turkey than in their predominantly rural homeland. The homeland in south-eastern Anatolia remains potentially unstable, if only because of the Kurdish groups in neighbouring states. Yet it would seem that, for the time being at least, granting Kurds a very modest degree of 'cultural' recognition has helped to bring about peace. Whether Turkish powerholders (perhaps under EU pressure) are prepared to deviate from Gellnerian homogenisation to allow a more substantive opening to minority cultural elements remains to be seen. In any case while many Kurds may be attracted to a new mode of 'multicultural citizenship', this is likely to lose its appeal very quickly if it excludes them in any way from the full participation in Turkey's societal culture which so many of them already enjoy.

### **China: The 'Thick' Minority Culture of the Uyghurs of Xinjiang**

My fourth and final case study is taken from Xinjiang, a region in which the anthropologist interested in the study of identity needs to be every bit as discreet as in Turkey. However, the size and position of the Uyghur minority makes this case quite different from the other cases considered so far. China resembles Turkey in that it is a unitary state which developed a strong national ideology in the course of the twentieth century. Unlike modern Turkey, China espouses a far-reaching form of minority recognition. This derives ultimately from the principles enunciated by Stalin and implemented in the early decades of the Soviet Union. The major difference is that China never opted for the terminology of republics and autonomous republics, which was decisive in shaping the break-up of the Soviet Union and the present structuring of the Russian Federation. In China the basic principles of minority recognition, which have hardly changed in the last half century, have never questioned the unitary character of the state. Both the principles and the practices diverge considerably from multiculturalism in Western societies.

The People's Republic of China recognises 56 nationalities (*minzu*). The Han comprise over 90 per cent of the population. There are, however,

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<sup>115</sup> For an introduction to the complexities of Kurdish identity, see Strohmeier and Yalçın-Heckmann 2000; see also Paul 2002 and the discussion in chapter 8, this volume.

huge differences within the remaining 55 minority groups, who are all presented as 'fraternal' components of the unified Chinese people. They include the Chinese Muslims (Hui), with approximately 10 million members, as well as other large peoples with a long history of high culture, such as Tibetans, Uyghurs and Mongols. At the other extreme are tiny groups of hunter-gatherers who lack a written history and whose language has not even been definitively classified.

In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), a vast territory, thinly populated in comparison with most of the rest of China, 13 *minzu* enjoy official recognition. The dominant indigenous group for centuries consisted of sedentary, Turkic-speaking Muslims. In the 1940s they constituted some four fifths of the population of the region (Toops 2004: 245) but at this time the ethnonym Uyghur was not yet generally acknowledged. Its dissemination, and the increased collective consciousness of group members, is to a very large extent a product of the socialist era (Gladney 2004b). According to the latest available figures, the Uyghurs number almost 9 million out of a total XUAR population approaching 20 million. The second largest group, with almost eight million, is the Han, who began to move into the region in large numbers in the 1950s.<sup>116</sup>

The heartland of Uyghur settlement is the southern part of the region, which is much hotter and drier than the north. The oases surrounding the Tarim basin were historically stations of the Silk Road. Most of my limited field experience to date has been in the capital, Ürümqi, which is located in the region's centre, and in the southern oasis of Kashgar. Chinese representations of the 'western regions' emphasise early (Han dynasty) links to the Middle Kingdom. Only from the latter part of the eighteenth century, however, was the region incorporated into the Chinese state and the name Xinjiang ('new dominion') has been in official use since 1884. This incorporation was sporadically disturbed, as during the rebellion of Yakub Beg around 1870. Instability and warlord rule were the norm rather than the exception in the decades preceding the socialist victory of 1949. Historical sources allow certain generalisations about social structure and group identities in this period (Bellér-Hann 2005). Beneath the overlay of Chinese domination, the indigenous population was highly stratified. Religion was the prime factor unifying this dispersed population, but it was an ambiguous marker because of the presence of significant numbers of Hui. No unifying secular identity

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<sup>116</sup> Some of these Han did not settle in Xinjiang but returned to their native provinces. Similar patterns of circular migration persist today. According to some estimates of the 'floating population' (unofficial migrants), the total number of Han in Xinjiang may be as great as the Uyghur total. The two dominant *minzu* are followed by Kazaks at 1.3 million, Hui at 800,000, and Kyrgyz at 200,000. The remaining 8 minorities are all very small.



was consolidated in the pre-socialist period. Justin Rudelson (1997) argued that Uyghurs (as they did not yet call themselves) had a strong sense of belonging to their oasis and only a weak sense of affiliation to any larger entity. Bellér-Hann sees their identities in this period as situationally variable and intrinsically multiple, ranging from the kin group and hamlet to the entire territory under Chinese influence. In contrast to the Lazi of north-eastern Anatolia, who acknowledged the name given to them by outsiders and were well integrated into wider social and economic systems, the Turkic speakers of Xinjiang were not yet incorporated. Few of them understood Chinese and they did not use the names given to their settlements in that language.

Gellnerian processes of homogenisation began in the socialist era when the settled Turkic-speaking population was taken to be one group, henceforth to be known as the Uyghurs, while other Turkic groups (Kazak and Kyrgyz) were given separate recognition. A standardised modern Uyghur was taught in schools throughout the region—initially using a modified Arabic script, later switching to a Latin-based alphabet, and from 1982 reverting to the Arabic script (Bellér-Hann 1991). Scholars played an important role in constructing the new collective identity—for example, by documenting the traditional folk culture (Hann 1991b). Many distinguished Chinese anthropologists, including Fei Xiaotong, have specialized in the cultures of the minorities. Foreign anthropologists have in recent years begun to deconstruct some of these developments, for example, by analysing minority policies as a ‘civilizing mission’ (Harrell 1994) or as a form of ‘internal colonialism’ (Gladney 1998). In his most recent book (2004a) Gladney has presented a fuller account of the ways in which the exoticisation of minority identities contributes to constituting the identity of the majority. It is of course difficult to devise and implement similar policies of minority recognition for groups that diverge so massively.<sup>117</sup>

The Xinjiang case is more complex than the other cases considered in this chapter, because the processes of standardisation and homogenisation

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<sup>117</sup> The new ethnic minorities theme park in Beijing finds a common denominator in folk dancing and traditional housing styles; but it is difficult to overlook the incongruities when, for example, a Tibetan monastery is juxtaposed in an exhibition complex with the artefacts of minorities whose religions are given as ‘ghost worship’, ‘primitive’, or ‘shamanism’. Nonetheless, criticisms of this kind of folklorisation, common in the recent western literature, may be exaggerated and misplaced. It is worth pointing out that similar elements play a positive role in the modern maintenance of Welsh identity, and I noted above how prominent these elements became in socialist Hungary. Should the Chinese authorities really be condemned for creating conditions in which new generations of Uyghurs can play old songs accompanied by traditional instruments, and dance old dances in traditional costumes, just because this is also attractive to the Han majority and to foreign tourists?

proceeded at two distinct levels: within the XUAR as well as within the boundaries of the state as a whole. Thus the school system in Xinjiang includes provision for Chinese, but the majority of rural Uyghurs do not master that language and are in any case hindered by registration regulations from becoming mobile 'generalists' in the sense specified by Gellner, even within Xinjiang. The picture is different in the rapidly expanding cities, especially in the capital Ürümqi. There it became possible for Uyghur parents to choose between Uyghur schools and schools in which their children were taught in Chinese. This was a difficult choice; those who opted for the latter in order to improve the career prospects of their offspring risked reproach from the Uyghur community (Bellér-Hann 2002). Parallel educational institutions were accompanied by separation and antagonism in many other fields. Chinese and Uyghurs were often concentrated in separate districts. They frequented different restaurants, stores, and markets. Intermarriage has always been rare. A further important difference in recent years is that the different communities have been subjected to different family planning norms. The minorities are treated more generously than the majority; in the countryside each couple is allowed to have three children, and in the cities, two (see Bellér-Hann 1999). Uyghur and Han do not come together in the army since military service, elsewhere a standard feature of modern citizenship, is not compulsory in China. All these features contradict the specifications of the Gellnerian model.

The XUAR will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in autumn 2005. The directions of policymaking have shifted significantly in this half century. The region has been profoundly affected by the reform process which began not long after Mao's death in 1976 and which gathered pace in the 1980s. Economic reforms have emphasised decentralisation and strengthened the market principle at the expense of central planning and political intervention. Although the numbers of state officials have not fallen greatly, and such jobs remain attractive because of their security and the perks attached to them, official salaries have remained low. This has on the one hand made corruption a serious problem at every level of the state. On the other it has led some cadres to give up their positions in order to pursue careers in the private sector. Such a move is easier to make if a spouse continues to provide a safety net by continuing to retain a secure cadre position. In the XUAR Uyghurs are represented at all levels, but it is generally accepted that power lies with the Han. Uyghurs may therefore have a greater incentive to move into the private sector, rather than remain in career paths where they know they will never reach the top. Moreover any job associated with the state entails restrictions, for example on one's religious practices, and inevitably affects how one is perceived in one's own community.

The reform era has, at least on the surface, been associated with an efflorescence of Uyghur cultural activities, but also with increased unrest. Gladney has diagnosed a general 'ethnisation' (2004b; see also Smith 2000) in recent decades. The authorities have launched vigorous campaigns against alleged 'splittists' and terrorist influences from the Islamic world.<sup>118</sup> They have also resolved to press ahead with educational reforms to ensure that all citizens are competent in the dominant language of the state. The earlier policies of cultural recognition have not officially been abandoned, but 'covertly' there seems to have been a shift away from multiculturalism and the limited bilingualism that has developed in recent decades (Dwyer 2005). It is not at all clear how these policies can be implemented in southern Xinjiang, where Han-speaking teachers are simply not available in sufficient numbers.<sup>119</sup> For a Gellnerian, the proposal to impose a more unified school system is only to be expected. Indeed it is desirable, if it increases the job prospects of members of the minority. Yet some Uyghur intellectuals doubt that this is the case; it is said that Uyghur university graduates have more difficulty than Han in finding appropriate jobs, while the numbers of Uyghurs admitted to higher education have fallen relative to Han.<sup>120</sup> As discussed in chapter 5, the prospects of the large rural population have not improved significantly. Especially in the south, villagers have hardly benefited from the consumer revolution that has taken place in the cities.

The continued immigration of Han Chinese, particularly of poor labourers from heavily populated provinces such as Sichuan, is another factor adding to the present uncertainty. Even though some of these migrants stay for only one or two years before returning to their regions of origin, their presence is a reminder that the relation between Han and Uyghur is not a simple one of domination in all domains. Han immigrants commonly undertake menial, demanding jobs that are unattractive to Uyghurs—in brick factories, road-building gangs etc. Differences also exist within the Uyghur: while some intellectuals tend to romanticise the peasant as the embodiment

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<sup>118</sup> The global effects of the events of 11 September 2001 played into the hands of those powerholders who favoured more repressive policies. The activities of numerous radical diaspora groups, including their visibility on the internet, are reinforcing escalation (Gladney 2004c).

<sup>119</sup> Summoning Uyghur teachers to the capital for short periods of intensive training makes little difference if, at home, the majority of their pupils have little or no exposure to Chinese (e.g. they watch only the Uyghur television channel).

<sup>120</sup> One reason is the rising cost of education at all levels. Han urban families with only one child are much more likely to be able to afford to put that child through higher education. It is increasingly difficult for Uyghurs from remoter districts to meet the standards required for enrolment.



of the national culture, others are much more ambivalent and some criticise the Uyghur rural population for a reluctance to modernise.

In short, it is even more difficult to explore questions of ethnicity through fieldwork in China than it is in Turkey. Uyghurs are likely to be fearful of discussing sensitive issues with foreigners, especially in the presence of Chinese co-researchers. Bellér-Hann and I have therefore steered clear of such issues in our research. There is no doubt that Uyghurs are proud of their traditions and their language, and even those who acquire a good knowledge of the 'state language' do not attribute to it the same emotional significance they attribute to their mother tongue. It is commonly claimed that Chinese incomers could never feel the same emotional attachment to Xinjiang which Uyghurs feel. Only the latter could be fully 'at home' there. The Uyghurs who articulate such ideas seem to feel that in their everyday lives they participate in a full and satisfying societal culture which is largely separate from the world of the majority in their state. The consolidation of Uyghur *minzu* identity under socialism has accentuated a consciousness of difference which developed over many centuries of Turkic-Han interaction. Even before the ethnonym was generally adopted, Uyghurness was much more than a hobby or a tag: whether or not they reflected upon it (and it would seem that more and more do so, in villages as well as in towns), it pervaded their whole existence.

It is the 'depth' of this case which distinguishes it from the three considered previously. Although Gellner's model may be of use in understanding some of the processes taking place, the outcome is not the congruence of polity and unitary high culture but rather the uneasy persistence alongside each other of two such 'cultures'. Given these circumstances, Xinjiang seems to be a compelling case in which to consider applying alternative models, such as Will Kymlicka's 'multicultural citizenship' model, in the interests of consolidating pluralism and civility. Yet some of the policies implemented in recent years, e.g. in the key domain of education, seem to be pushing in the opposite direction.

## Conclusion

Through four case studies (five including South Wales) I have traced a sequence of mounting deviation from Ernest Gellner's ideal type of the homogenised nation-state which, in his view, is needed to fulfil the functional requirements of a modern society. In my Hungarian field site, processes of assimilation were strong in the generations preceding socialism, and no significant minority traditions have survived. Elsewhere in Hungary more brutal processes were applied, notably in the policies applied to Jews and Germans in turn in the 1940s. The outcome was a state with a high degree of

homogenisation in Gellner's sense. The modest expansion of minority activities in the postsocialist years has been motivated largely by a concern to improve conditions for the Magyar diaspora. Individuals have greater scope than before to cultivate their old language and traditions, but this has done little to modify the basic ethno-national homogeneity of contemporary Hungary. The condition of some Gypsies is the most significant incongruence; but even this element exists for the most part inside a dominant Hungarian life-world and 'underclass' may be a misleading diagnosis. I suggested that the implementation of new forms of cultural recognition could have a negative impact on this particular group. For other groups it is bound to remain a somewhat artificial, 'top-down' exercise. A loose analogy may be made with postsocialist property reprivatisation: past injustice, in this case the pressures of magyarisation policies over several generations, cannot always be remedied; and the costs of attempting to do so must be carefully evaluated.

The Polish case has had a similar outcome, but in this case the catastrophe of ethnic cleansing on the eve of the socialist era affected my field site directly. For complex historical reasons, suspicion and prejudice have continued to characterise relations between Poles and East Slav minorities, especially those who see themselves as Ukrainian. Others, however, especially those known as Lemkos or Carpatho-Rusyns, are not perceived as a threat but rather tend to be exoticised on the basis of their colourful folklore. Those who were driven out of their homelands during the ethnic cleansing of the 1940s have generally remained in the diaspora. Lemko identity is preserved in civil society associations in Legnica in much the same way that Silesian identity is preserved among those Germans who were forced to leave at the same time for Germany. Polish-Ukrainian tensions were repressed under socialism but burst into the public sphere in the 1990s, notably in the city of Przemyśl, as discussed in chapter 7. Recently the situation has improved, even in this flashpoint. This small city has a self-conscious, committed Ukrainian minority. Yet even the committed must accept the dominance of a highly homogenised Polish life-world; there is no possibility of reviving the pluralism which characterised the city and its hinterland in pre-modern times. Like it or not, Gellner's model is again uncomfortably close to the reality.

My third case, continued from chapter 8, was that of the Lazi of north-eastern Turkey, many of whom continue to speak a language related to those spoken in adjacent parts of the Caucasus and unrelated to Turkish. The distinctiveness of these people has been repressed by the nationalist ideology of the modern republic. Closer inspection reveals, however, that they were highly integrated into the Ottoman state and have continued to value their

attachment to the dominant life-world of the modern society. Most seem to acknowledge a dual Lazi-Turkish identity and to reject a singular, 'totalising' model which opposes these identities to each other and requires that either the one or the other be chosen. Many Lazi have assimilated fully and lost their language. An active policy of recognition might prevent its complete disappearance, but given their small numbers, it is unlikely that Lazi could be any more successful in creating a satisfying societal culture for group members than can the small minority groups of Poland and Hungary. On the evidence of this case the Turkish republic provides further confirmation of the Gellnerian model, though this judgement may need qualification as far as the Kurdish minority is concerned.

My final example was taken from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. The Uyghurs still outnumber the Han in Xinjiang. The two groups differ in religion, language, script, and a range of practices and institutions. Socialist minority policies have combined with diffuse modernising trends to strengthen the Uyghurs' self-consciousness as a nationality (as distinct from oasis-specific affiliations and other identities). High rates of in-migration and initiatives to consolidate a unitary education system can be understood as attempts on the part of powerholders to promote Gellnerian homogenisation. On an optimistic view, the Chinese language could become as fully dominant in Xinjiang as English is in Wales, but without hindering the persistence of a vigorous Uyghur culture alongside that of the dominant group. The alternative view currently taken by many foreign observers is bleak: cultural assimilation, with no improvement in social mobility. Han elites emphasise that the territory has belonged to the Chinese state for thousands of years. Even the more thoughtful, those who monitor developments in the new Central Asian republics, and who see that, in principle, if peoples such as Kyrgyz and Tadjiks can have their own states, then the significantly larger Uyghur group may well develop similar aspirations, think not in terms of more significant measures of political devolution real autonomy but in terms of more skilful 'management' of minorities. While many Uyghur have been at least partially co-opted in these management processes, some elements are increasingly dissatisfied and their grievances cannot be assuaged by proliferating forms of exoticisation.

The differences between the two major groups of the XUAR, rooted in histories which have foregrounded segregation rather than integration, complicate the task of Uyghur incorporation. In a situation such as this, models of multicultural citizenship, as advocated by Kymlicka, may be helpful steps in defusing tensions and promoting civility. Their drawback is their monadic character, which derives from an understanding of culture and 'membership of a culture' which mirrors the world view of the nationalist. In



contrast to the Lazi case, few Uyghur seem to consider it possible to be both Uyghur *and* Chinese, to participate fully both in the rich life-world of one's 'own people' and in the wider national society. There is no sign at present that either the authorities in Beijing and Ürümchi or Uyghur activists have any idea how such an incongruous combination might be realised. And in any case, a strengthening of the position of the Uyghurs would not necessarily be welcomed by members of the remaining 11 national minorities which currently enjoy official recognition in Xinjiang.<sup>121</sup>

The anthropologist who studies cases such as these has to move through minefields. Every route is dangerous. The foreign researcher must respect state law, since it cannot be our job to question existing political boundaries. Where minority-majority relations are sensitive, permission for fieldwork is likely to be refused. In each of the cases I have discussed I had other research goals and the minority issue was secondary. This proved helpful in practical terms. It is often politic to disclaim any interest in the theme, because people may then feel more at ease to elaborate their opinions. This does not of course obviate the need to protect the identities of persons and communities when publishing sensitive material, since the prime commitment of the anthropologist is to the objects of the study. Most anthropologists have an in-built tendency to empathise with minorities rather than majorities (cf. Gladney 1998). Ideally the researcher should talk to people on both sides, but this may be impossible, for linguistic or other reasons of access. Even when it is possible, coverage can seldom be fully balanced. Anthropologists are unlikely to be surprised by the disappearance of groups through assimilation, with the loss of a distinctive dialect or language. But they may feel especially disappointed when local people themselves devalue their old language and appear instead to welcome the Gellnerian bulldozers which destroy the bases of their distinctiveness.

It is legitimate for researchers to probe behind such local statements and to point out, for example, that the prevailing political boundaries are the products of specific historical circumstances, which *might* have taken a different path, or that the majority's version of history is false by the standards of international historians, even if it has been sincerely internalised by local people. Such analyses should not, however, lead to hasty conclusions of duping or brainwashing. The foreign researcher who insists on classifying the Lazi into the new category of 'national minority' is operating with the same exclusive paradigm as that of the nationalist who insists that the Lazi are really Turks. In this case the local preference is instructive because it

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<sup>121</sup> This applies both to large groups such as the Kazaks, who currently have their own schools, and to smaller minorities such as the Tadjik, who enjoy official recognition but have no opportunity to become literate in their mother tongue and generally attend Uyghur schools.

calls into question the most basic principle for classifying people(s) in the contemporary world. This is different from the models of both Kymlicka and Gellner, which retain the assumption that the great majority of persons belong to groups which have just *one* source of cultural identity; in other words they are members of 'one culture'.

I conclude that the Gellnerian model is helpful in understanding the logic which has produced nationalism and the nation-state. Yet real world paths have been highly diverse, and the model offers no explanation for long-term ethnic persistence or revival inside established nation-states (nor does it help in understanding another type of polyphony not dealt with here, namely the polyethnic states which have resulted from the increase in international migration). In macro-sociological terms, small numbers imply irrelevance for the Gellnerian. Such groups may offer meaningful sources of identification to their members, but they cannot form what Kymlicka terms a 'viable' societal culture and even the enthusiasts cannot opt out of the dominant national frame. The 'incongruent' identities might be thought of as separate melodic lines, but they are marginal to the main theme, which is given by citizenship in the nation-state and participation in a basically unitary society. Kymlicka nonetheless recommends bestowing formal recognition on all ethnocultural groups, so that in addition to the general entitlements of citizenship their members should enjoy additional entitlements on the basis of their distinct culture. However, the application of such policies may hinder policies of integration (notably in the case of Gypsies) and they may not be welcomed by the members of such minorities themselves (as among the Lazi).

The situation is different where the minority numbers are large, Gellnerian state-building less advanced, and the prospects of social mobility for the minority distinctly limited. This appears to be the case for some Kurds and Uyghurs. In these cases there is an urgent need to explore ways to accommodate more than one 'high culture', each offering a 'deep', satisfying life-world to group members, within a single polity. Evidently the very term *culture* is part of the problem, and it will remain so until we succeed in detaching it once and for all from terms such as ethnicity, nation and nationality. The challenge to create a genuine polyphony of identities without reifying cultures is already being faced at another level by the European Union. Kymlicka's agenda of group-differentiated rights, questionable at the level of nation-states such as Hungary and Poland which have followed Gellnerian paths to reach a high degree of homogeneity, has great relevance for the entire world as it slowly develops more supra-national forms of governance and citizenship.





## ***Chapter 10***

### **Conclusion: Anthropological Approaches to Eurasia**

In this book I have examined materials from both socialist and postsocialist societies and juxtaposed them with each other and with a non-socialist case. It makes little sense to restrict the focus to the postsocialist world when addressing problems such as exploitation and multiculturalism. The term postsocialism has been a useful label for the early projects in my department at MPISA, but it does not designate a distinct type of society, let alone a new academic paradigm. We need to recognise the diversity of postsocialist experiences, and for many questions it will be desirable to bring countries that were never socialist into the comparative framework.

I hope to have shown in Part One that similar trends in political economy can be identified in very different kinds of state. The power of the state to intervene and control the economy has declined significantly in all four of the countries where I have undertaken fieldwork. The principles of the free market and private ownership have gained ground in Turkey just as they have in Poland. In Hungary these same trends began well before the collapse of socialism. They have also transformed the Maoist variant of socialism, even though China remains formally socialist and there are still certain constraints on private property, notably with regard to agricultural land. The overall pattern is clear and can only be accounted for in a global context. I have refrained from a blanket evaluation of this neoliberalism. The spread of these principles is typically—and correctly—associated with insecure labour markets and intensified exploitation. Postsocialist changes have been generally deleterious for the rural populations of those countries. On the other hand, the strengthening of international market forces weakens the power of states to redistribute—and this may be good news for those who have had to pay a high price to support state transfers to other groups, not to mention the costs of the state itself.

In Part Two I considered further manifestations of neoliberalism in spheres not directly bound up with the economy. The end of the Cold War has also been marked by a revival of the concept of civil society, together

with an emphasis on citizenship and on multiple discourses of rights. The implicit, sometimes explicit universalism of this face of the liberal Janus certainly has its attractions, but I argued that it is inadequate to theorise civil society only in terms of individuals, voluntary associations, and NGOs. The real world is full of religious conflict and other forms of 'identity politics'; they have no place in classical liberal theories but their salience increases with the domination of neoliberal political economy. I presented examples from the regions where I have worked, and considered some of the difficulties with proposed communitarian and multiculturalist solutions. In the present phase of the consolidation of neoliberalism, the concept of culture has come to occupy the central position in social science analysis that was previously occupied by the concept of class.

That the sphere we designate 'culture' has itself been thoroughly colonised by market forces is a good example of the intimate links between the themes of Part One and those of Part Two. Cultures are increasingly approached as the property of their members; anthropologists have joined campaigns to ensure that the creativity of native artists is not only recognised but remunerated through appropriate royalty mechanisms (Brown 2003, Kasten 2004). Anthropologists tend to be sympathetic to state policies which expand the scope to use minority languages, and to be less than sympathetic to policies which prohibit a religious minority from wearing certain headgear and from fasting in the holy month. Yet the most influential advocates of multiculturalism in the neoliberal era have not come from anthropology. It is not hard to see the reasons for this: we are too well aware of the difficulties which arise as soon as one attempts to bestow rights on the basis of culture. The 'cultures' of liberal multiculturalism are not easily reconciled with the anthropological notion of the cultural.

Disabled by the use that others make of the central concept of our discipline, anthropologists have been unable to intervene effectively in public debates. They have continued to undertake ethnographic projects, but they have found it increasingly difficult to make the connection to the broader picture. Of course there are exceptions. I turned frequently in the later chapters to Ernest Gellner, who professed what he termed a 'trinitarian' philosophy of history. He wrote little about the first stage, the era of hunting and gathering, but the contrast between the organisational needs of the next two, agriculture and industry, was fundamental to his theory of nationalism. According to Gellner (1983), the fusion of culture (the nation) and politics (the state) in the form of the nation-state was essential for communication and mobility in the modern world. It is an elegant ideal type with considerable explanatory power in socialist and non-socialist cases alike. It may be increasingly inadequate for analysing 'postmodern' conditions but, although

many have commented on cultural and economic dimensions of globalisation, the neoliberal order has not yet found an anthropological modeller to rival Gellner.

In any case to grasp the big picture in the contemporary world a vision of the past is also necessary. Anthropologists have written some fine studies of both socialist and postsocialist societies. Thanks to this work we have a much better understanding of their functioning, and of the diversity within both categories. But no one has yet addressed the unity of socialism in the light of its world-historical significance. It is hardly possible to undertake such a task on the basis of case studies such as those which have dominated this volume, each based primarily on synchronic fieldwork in small communities. In the remaining sections of this final chapter I set those micro-studies aside in order to sketch the macro-framework to which I have become increasingly attached in recent years, which is premised on the *longue durée* unity of Eurasia. First I need to define what I mean by Eurasia.

### Definition and Caveats

In my experience, the term Eurasia is puzzling and confusing to many, including fellow anthropologists. Some take Eurasia to denote an indistinct zone where Europe and Asia interact—roughly speaking the steppe between Mongolia and eastern Europe (Kaiser 2004). This usage is established in some academic nomenclature, especially in the United States, where there are several departments and centres for the study of Eurasia; especially since 1990 it has been perceived as a region of strategic importance and research has been supported accordingly. From my perspective these researchers are investigating *central* Eurasia.

In Russia, by contrast, the term *Eurasia* is associated not so much with obscure branches of academia but with a highly political ideology, one which legitimates Russian hegemony in Siberia and Central Asia and which, under postsocialist conditions, has come to stand opposed to 'Europe' and 'the West'. Eurasianism in this sense is a 'crisis ideology' (Khazanov 2003: 82), and it has spawned fantastic nationalist 'imaginaries' among smaller peoples of the Russian Federation as well as among Russians (Humphrey 2002c).

My use of Eurasia differs from both of these. Following Jack Goody (e.g. 1976) I take Eurasia to be the entire landmass between the eastern Atlantic and the western Pacific and between the Indian Ocean and the Arctic. The definition cannot be formulated solely in geographical terms: for historical reasons (to which I shall turn in a moment), North Africa must also be considered part of Eurasia. Eurasia is the original 'Old World' of agrarian empires. It later initiated the decisive shift away from these social forms, but



it still contains a vast range of economic and political forms. Eurasia is also 'home base' for anthropology, in the sense that the modern discipline developed there, primarily as the study of humans on continents which had different long-term histories. To correct the distortions which arose as a consequence of European imperialism, which have troubled anthropologists in postcolonial times, I argue that it is useful to focus on Eurasia, rather than the distinctiveness of Europe. For example, in spite of their different histories, in the era of neoliberalism it is increasingly evident that Eurasian societies are meeting comparable challenges in similar ways. The passing of property from state and collective hands into the ownership and control of individuals and enterprises is ubiquitous: China's privatisation of housing makes the sale of council houses in Thatcher's Britain look insignificant by comparison. As a result of the one child policy, China's population too is now ageing. In consequence, despite the enormous differences with the ageing populations of western Europe, some structural problems in labour markets and the provision of social security are increasingly similar.

Of course Eurasia cannot be the limit of our cosmopolitan ambitions. Again it is worth noting Goody's recent work. Although many of his earlier contributions emphasised the gulf between Eurasia and sub-Saharan Africa, he has also drawn attention (e.g. 1998) to universal cognitive capacities, identifying the same basic tensions in all human societies irrespective of their means of production and communication. He has been particularly impressed by the rapid changes which have taken place in recent years almost everywhere in the world in the domain of 'demographic transition'. Previously, Goody has confessed (2003: 52), he had not expected births to be widely restricted in Africa, where land was generally abundant and virtually a 'free good'; but thanks primarily to the twin forces of migration and education, a transformation has occurred.

Globalisation is, then, promoting remarkable processes of convergence world-wide, such that the historical distinctiveness of Eurasia may be rapidly losing its significance. Drawing attention to the unity of Eurasia 15 years after the collapse of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) socialism is not meant to detract from the necessity for a planetary perspective in addressing many questions of historical and contemporary import; comparisons must be extended to include other parts of the world whenever pragmatically warranted. The relatively recent consolidation of entities such as Francophonie and the British Commonwealth, not to mention Chinese and Iberian diasporas of greater antiquity, illustrate how the strictly spatial limits of Eurasia have long been transcended.

## A Negative Motivation

I readily concede that my emphasis on Eurasia is in part a negative reaction to the privileging of Europe, which, to my mind, has been pushed to obsessive extremes in the political rhetoric of this part of the landmass in the postsocialist years and shows no sign of abating. The pursuit of an 'anthropology of Europe' has a somewhat older history, and much of the work carried out by such 'Europeanists' has been entirely laudable. It has, for example, helped some traditions, such as the British, to modify imperialist legacies by showing how the discipline can be applied 'at home'. At the same time the emphasis upon Europe has, for other research traditions, implied a step 'up' from the national level, which previously defined the scope of the discipline, as in the case of German *Volkskunde* and the pursuit of 'national ethnography' in most countries of eastern Europe.

But however valid and overdue it is to turn the anthropological gaze to European societies, there is an implicit danger in the phrase 'anthropology of Europe'. It risks implying that this place called Europe has some sort of cultural or civilisational unity and that there is some anthropological rationale for specifying boundaries of this type. The practical difficulties in reaching agreement over these boundaries highlight their deeply problematical character. To the extent that countries within the expanding European Union are increasingly subject to the same legislation and controls, it becomes possible to conduct a comparative 'anthropology of Europe' with reference to contemporary institutions. For earlier periods many are inclined to invoke Christianity as a source of the 'ultimate' boundaries for comparative analysis. But those currently constructing European identity in this way, emphasising cultural contacts *within* the 'European heritage zone', forget that this religion itself originated outside it, in the Hebraic culture of the Middle East.

My argument is simply that it makes little sense to view European history in isolation from the rest of the Eurasian landmass. We do so because of the deep bias of European scholarship, which an anthropological perspective on history should enable us to overcome. This Europeanism is most nauseating when it takes the form of self-congratulatory proclamations about the alleged uniqueness of 'European values'. Is it not remarkable that scholars and politicians in a country such as Germany, with its recent history of genocidal aggression, can now, a mere two generations later, complain about countries such as Japan and Turkey, which have allegedly failed to come to terms with their problematic pasts? The moral high ground is now being packaged as *europäische Erinnerungskultur* (European culture of remembering). More attention to the 'big history' of the landmass should help us to see the parochialism of such claims and to expose the hubris behind them.

## Positive Arguments: Spatial and Temporal

Turning to the positive aspects of the programme I should like to sketch, let me begin with the spatial aspect. Most studies in sociocultural anthropology over the last century have focused on intensive case studies. Following Eric Wolf in his book *Europe and the People without History* (1982), I think it is essential to pursue global connections. The 'face-to-face community' of classical anthropology has given way to 'multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus 1995). However, those who ritually cite this phrase do not always succeed in connecting their case studies to the immediate regional environment, let alone follow through the global implications. To focus ethnographic attention on mobility, not only of people but also of goods and ideas, may lead to the exaggeration of fracture and fragmentation. In any case, to emphasise Eurasia as a spatial unity is to counter the trend which leads other social scientists to dismiss us as the purveyors of unrepresentative case studies. This is not to argue against the case study at the micro level. As I have stressed throughout this book, close-up, micro-level ethnography remains indispensable. But this must not be ethnographic description for its own sake: more effort must be made to connect the local details to the broader picture.

The question remains: Why, in the age of neoliberalism and intensifying intercontinental entanglements, should Eurasia be the privileged spatial framework for that broader picture? At this point my approach diverges from Wolf's. Concentrating his analysis on the period after 1400, Wolf presented a magisterial global vision which reinforced a basic dichotomy of Europe (or 'the West') versus the rest. He pointed briefly to the interconnections which united the Eurasian landmass in earlier centuries, but in the framework of a dominant narrative focused on the rise of Europe, the empires which formed in India and China merge into the residual category 'non-European'. We need to take better account of the years which preceded the 'great divergence' (Pomeranz 2000). Following scholars such as Goody (e.g. 2004), Andre Gunder Frank (1998) and John Hobson (2004), we must shed our Eurocentrism and pay more attention to the long-term similarities of East and West and the contacts and continuities which have existed for thousands of years.

This perspective has a contemporary facet, as I shall explain, but it also invokes a much longer time frame than recent generations of anthropologists have usually embraced. The emphasis upon fieldwork has led to a neglect of the kinds of historical and evolutionary questions which were the preoccupations of most pre-modern anthropologists. Bronislaw Malinowski did not oppose historical research when sources were available, but his 'synchronic functionalism' had the effect of leading generations of followers



to privilege the present—that is, observations which could be made in the field—and all too often to suppress historical time altogether. This danger has been widely recognised. Many later anthropologists have reached back into the past, collecting oral histories, charting collective or social memory, and turning to many types of written sources. However, critiques and explicit attempts to divert the Malinowskian stream into more historical directions, from Evans-Pritchard (1950) through Ioan Lewis (1968) to Nicholas Thomas (1989), have done little to modify the course of the main current. An emphasis upon participant observation still dominates in the professional formation of sociocultural anthropologists, at any rate in the Anglo-American world. This has inevitably restricted the attention given to history. The majority engage with only as much history as is essential to make sense of what they hear and observe in the present; they often rely heavily on secondary literature focused on the particular nation-state, instead of questioning nationalist historiography and seeking out alternative perspectives.

The twentieth century neglect of history in sociocultural anthropology had compensatory benefits. The close-up observations of anthropologists able to carry out fieldwork in socialist societies may not have yielded insights comparable to those of Malinowski and the late colonial researchers of 'tribal' societies whom he inspired, but they do have enormous documentary value. They have cast light not only on remote regions and marginal peoples but also on core aspects of social transformation in the major cities. Yet collections such as those edited by Berdahl, Bunzl, and Lampland (2000), Bridger and Pine (1998), and Burawoy and Verdery (1999) show that, these days, anthropologists are not the only ones to deploy ethnographic methods. If we are to develop a distinctive focus, we need to move beyond a preoccupation with contemporary cultural meanings. Let me, somewhat arbitrarily, starting from the postsocialist present and working backwards, distinguish five time horizons for a renewed engagement with history in the postsocialist societies of Eurasia. The aim is to enable a more careful appraisal of the issues of change and continuity which have arisen throughout this book. And by taking history seriously in this manner, we shall reduce the temptation to resort to reductionist explanations in terms of 'it's their culture'.

Contemporary history is fixed by the end of the socialist era. As I argued in chapter 1, MLM socialism was the dominant social movement in twentieth-century Eurasia. Its effects were felt everywhere, including those parts of the landmass which never formally embraced any variant of the ideology. For those who did experience it directly, socialism still tends to be the key marker of 'then' as opposed to 'now'. To understand postsocialist transformations we must therefore study how that past continues to shape and inform the present. Ethnographic studies of turbulence pose special

challenges: many old institutions and structures have vanished, and new ones have not yet emerged. But even the documentation of phenomena that turn out to be transient, such as the Christian food aid programme in Moscow studied by Melissa Caldwell (2004), may shed light on persisting values and continuities in the organisation of social relations. The ingenuity with which people adapt in times of instability and crisis is often grounded in their traditional ways of viewing the world; and in most of Eurasia these traditional ways now include several generations of socialism.

Ethnographies of the postsocialist present must do more than pay close attention to socialist legacies. Driven both 'from below', above all in the form of massive labour migration, and 'from above', through the actions of corporations and states, new forms of political and economic integration are developing rapidly throughout Eurasia. They include many which were unthinkable in the not-too-distant past, such as the flow of natural resources from Russia to new markets in western Europe and the beginnings of a comparable flow of energy from Central Asia to China. The managers of Volkswagen and Siemens have long been aware of China's economic significance, both as producer and consumer; yet many academics still seem blind to the intensifying integration of Eurasian markets. These developments have enormous implications for local populations. If anthropologists are to make their voices heard they need to address the wider political economy as well as the specific local contexts of their ethnographic research.<sup>122</sup>

MLM socialism becomes the main focus of enquiry in its own right when we shift to the second time horizon. The documentary materials available are abundant but few have been intensively exploited to date by anthropologists. In addition to the archives, richer and more easily accessible than anyone would have predicted in 1989, researchers now have ample opportunity to collect personal testimonies. Anthropologists have worked alongside oral historians and others to explore collective and social memories (Pine, Kaneff, and Haukanes 2004). Our explorations of memory and of rupture or persistence in micro-level patterns of social relations should complement the approaches of other social sciences. They could help to test the ideas of those in sociology and political science who have emphasised 'path dependency' in their explanations of differing paths of transformation, both within and between countries. We can expect difficult discussions when it turns out that the social memory which we uncover through fieldwork diverges both from what we glean from the archival sources and from nation-centred history books.

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<sup>122</sup> See Stammer 2005 for a study addressing the effects of new markets on Siberian reindeer herders.

Those anthropologists who can themselves draw on field experiences in the socialist period are well placed to refute some of the more simplistic notions in circulation in recent years. For example, it has been argued that socialism was 'totalitarian' and by definition incompatible with 'civil society'. Even if one adopts a restrictive definition of civil society in terms of autonomous formal associations, the claim is difficult to sustain. In chapter 6 I gave examples of associational life in Poland, some of them linked to the dominant Roman Catholic Church rather than the state. The Scouting movement, suppressed in other socialist countries, was conspicuous in Poland. I could also have described the early development of the 'Dancehouse' movement in 1970s Hungary. During the years I spent in Budapest I was a member of a sports club, officially the association of the Postal Workers' Trade Union but in practice open to a wide array of sports enthusiasts regardless of their background or employment. Clearly the forms of associational life in eastern Europe varied, and almost all were subject to constraints not found in the west. Yet to conclude that civil society was simply absent in the east seems inadequate. One can insist on a Western definition that rules out any association which has a link to the state authorities, which in socialist Hungary would disqualify sports clubs run by trades unions. But instead of quibbling over definitions, the more challenging task is to explore the concrete ways in which diverse institutions and informal networks operated under socialism, and the influence some of them continue to exert in the postsocialist years.

Many of the expressions of sociality which anthropologists have documented under socialism have pre-socialist roots. The moment anthropologists shift to this third time horizon, they are obliged to engage in new forms of dialogue with historians—not only those who study political and intellectual elites but also those whose primary endeavour is to recover as much as possible of the everyday life-worlds of larger social groups. Historical anthropology, as it has developed in recent decades in Germany and elsewhere, depends of course on the availability of source materials. The analysis of those materials can be enriched by the theories and methods which other anthropologists have developed through fieldwork. Equally, anthropologists of postsocialism cannot afford to ignore the work of historians such as Esther Kingston-Mann, who has written about Russian peasants before, during, and after socialism (1999). Of course this opening to history has a wider relevance, by no means restricted to the themes prominent in the postsocialist literature. To name just one influential bridge-builder, Carlo Ginzburg (1991) has shown that techniques of ecstasy, which he studied in local contexts in Italy, need to be placed in a wider context which is Eurasian rather than merely European.



A few anthropologists have shown how it is possible to engage with history at more rarefied levels, independently of ethnographic projects. Keith Hart, a pupil of Jack Goody, has argued that the institutions of domination set up to maintain the inequalities established under agrarian conditions continue to frustrate the emancipatory potential of new technologies in our present, post-industrial society (2000). The works of Hart and Goody point us towards a fourth anthropological time horizon, located in an imprecise zone where the disciplines of history and archaeology overlap. The challenge here is to locate the socialist century in the context of the long-term dynamics of Eurasian politics and social relations. Opening in the Neolithic with the discovery and consolidation of agriculture, this period continues with the development of urban civilisation in the later Bronze Age (Childe 1942). The social organisation and political forms associated with these innovations differ from the forms which emerged later and more ephemerally in the Americas and in sub-Saharan Africa. Only in Eurasia is there a long-term dynamic between multiple centres of agricultural production (originally the Middle East and China) and other forms of economy, notably mobile pastoralism; between city and countryside; and between 'world religions' and folk practices. The Mediterranean was one of the principal centres and communications arteries for this dynamic evolution, which is why this historical Eurasia must include North Africa. We are only just beginning to appreciate the contributions made by black Africans to the civilisations of the ancient Mediterranean (Bernal 1987). Owen Lattimore (1940) and more recently Thomas Barfield (1989) have shown that the distinctive forms of both the Chinese empires and the nomadic empires of Central Asia were shaped in their interaction. Meanwhile the sea routes of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea were as important as the Silk Road in facilitating the flows of goods, people, and ideas (McPherson 1993).

Assessing this history Patricia Crone, like Goody, finds the question of how Europe rose to its dominant position rather less significant than the long prior history of agrarian civilisations in Eurasia as a whole (2003). She may be right to suggest that some peripheral regions, notably Siberia, were barely integrated into the macro-continental developments; but even in such regions, historical anthropological research has uncovered centuries of more or less tight links to states and metropolitan centres seeking to extract their tribute. Wherever one looks in Eurasia, the romantic anthropological goal of uncovering pristine socio-cultural forms in the course of contemporary fieldwork in apparently remote places has to be abandoned as illusory.

Historical research within this time horizon has many sub-branches, from William McNeill's 'world history' (1963) to Johan Árnason's 'civilisational analysis' (2003). The comparative analysis of civilisations does not

have to entail the apocalyptic metahistory of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, nor the value-laden accounts of Samuel Huntington in recent years. Some traditions in German anthropology, including the more restrained models of diffusionist *Kulturgeschichte*, might be worth revisiting in this context.<sup>123</sup> Anthropologists working in the spirit of Goody might also be able to contribute fruitfully to the continuing debates concerning the 'Axial Age' (Árnason, Eisenstadt and Wittrock 2005). In short, an historical 'anthropology of Eurasia' has substantially more to offer than the 'anthropology of Europe'.

This is not, however, the last of the time horizons I put forward for consideration. There is a fifth, which is more adventurous and likely to be viewed with even greater suspicion by the majority of contemporary socio-cultural anthropologists. The fact is, however, that to begin in the Neolithic is to exclude by far the greater period of human life on earth (Christian 2004). Tim Ingold (2004a, b) has argued that there can be no intellectual grounds for maintaining a categorical distinction between questions of long-term history and questions of evolution. If this horizon is to be taken seriously, anthropologists need to engage at least with evolutionary biologists, and perhaps ultimately with astronomers. This evidently far exceeds their competence, and so even scholars such as Goody draw a clear line. Thus, when Jared Diamond (1998) published an account pushing world history back into the Palaeolithic, Goody (1998), rather than recognising elements in Diamond's account which supported his own view of Eurasian history, referred dismissively to geographical determinism. Sociocultural anthropologists have been similarly suspicious of other determinisms, notably the biological. They have denigrated theoreticians outside the discipline such as E. O. Wilson (1998), while materialist evolutionists within the subject, such as Leslie White, have hardly any contemporary following.

Whatever one's views about this fifth horizon and precisely how far back one should push it, it clearly precedes the revolutions which, I have argued, have given the Eurasian landmass a substantive measure of unity in recent millennia. From this fifth perspective, then, we no longer have any particular reason to prioritise Eurasia—except that the sources available for this landmass probably present better opportunities for the necessary interdisciplinary collaboration than those of any other part of the world.

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<sup>123</sup> Historical work grounded in diffusionism remained strong in anthropology in the German-speaking countries long after it was displaced elsewhere. Particularly influential was the concept of 'cultural circles', initiated by Fritz Graebner and Bernhard Ankermann and later adapted by Pater Wilhelm Schmidt and his 'Vienna school'. Some adherents of *Kulturgeschichte* were openly racist in the Nazi period, and the legacy of this school has been largely disavowed or ignored in more recent German anthropology. However, Zwernemann 1983 provides a well-reasoned defence of such approaches. See also Gingrich 2005.

It would be fanciful to link the statement concerning horses which I collected in Tázlár in time horizon one, which I interpret as a sardonic diagnosis of the postsocialist condition, to an analysis from time horizon five of the role of the horse in the history of Eurasia (Diamond 1998). But data collected by fieldworkers interested primarily in present-day changes in one location may sometimes be useful to historical anthropologists concerned to explain the evolution of social systems. The evidence found by the MPISA 'Property Relations' group in documenting the failure of attempts to privatise land in the Russian countryside, such as the tendency to envy those perceived to be rejecting the solidarity of the community by withdrawing their land from the successor to the *kolkhoz*, can also be brought to bear on cognitive investigations of a human disposition towards 'reciprocity' or fairness. Decollectivisation can be viewed as a natural experiment, the results of which offer little support for the neoliberal conception of human nature. This conclusion, unambiguous in most parts of the Russian Federation, may, however, need qualification in those parts of the socialist world where private property was historically more developed. In general, observations that privatising land and issuing title documents do not suffice to induce rural citizens to invest more and to work harder may be useful at one level if they enable improved specification of the institutional conditions for the desired outcomes; they can also contribute insights at a more fundamental level to debates about the moral underpinnings of different types of human community.

### **Eurasia and the Maturing of Anthropology**

What are the practical implications of the above argument for students of sociocultural anthropology? The dual message is that they should consider the insights of present-focused ethnography when addressing questions in other time periods; and equally, they should be ready to draw on the results of analyses carried out in earlier periods when interpreting the data that they collect in the present.

This Eurasian perspective would be a big step towards a renewed engagement with world history. It is not an alternative theoretical paradigm. Anthropologists who adopt this approach will still need to grapple with all the theoretical debates of the discipline. They will need to understand the language of rational choice as well as that of moral economy, and be ready to answer the challenges of reflexivity as well as those of political economy. The locations of their field sites may continue to show some bias towards the remote, and not only because few other scholars show much interest in such places; but anthropologists may increasingly study mainstream groups in developed countries. The discipline has become as polyphonic as the world



it studies. Students should be encouraged to pursue the best connections they can find, in time as well as space, for the task at hand.

Contrary to some prophets of gloom, I am optimistic for the future of sociocultural anthropology. Almost ever since the discipline's inception, worries have been expressed that its subject matter was on the brink of disappearing. Malinowski's Foreword to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* began as follows: 'Ethnology is in the sadly ludicrous, not to say tragic, position, that at the very moment when it begins to put its workshop in order, to forge its proper tools, to start ready for work on its appointed task, the material of its study melts away with hopeless rapidity' (1922: xv). Yet later in his career Malinowski supported projects in 'complex' societies (e.g. the work of Fei Xiaotong (1939) in China). The challenge of understanding socialist societies aided a further maturing of the discipline in the sense that it forced Western scholars to come to terms with an 'other' that had little in common with the 'savage', exotic other that was the established object of anthropology in the past. I was fortunate in being able to carry out fieldwork in socialist societies before they 'melted away', and in being able to follow up some of the paths I explored then in the era of postsocialism. The modern discipline which Malinowski helped to establish has the 'tools' to illuminate all types of society and the full range of human experience.

I have argued that this new perspective on Eurasia can facilitate the maturation of sociocultural anthropology into a globally comparative social science. But I have also argued, contrary to the synchronicism emphasised by the Malinowskians, that the discipline needs close ties to history as well as to sociology and other kindred disciplines. Anthropologists may join other scholars in the search for general laws, but they would be ill advised to abandon ties to those working under the rubric of Area Studies. It seems preferable to revive the conversations with archaeology, linguistics and the biological sciences, i.e. the traditional 'four fields', than to vie with cultural studies in the generation of abstruse, self-referential theories and the depiction of ethnographic marginalia.

Without neglecting ideas and the very real sense in which social reality is shaped and constituted by rhetoric and discourses, I have in this book suggested that it is time to tilt the pendulum back towards a greater concern with *material* causes and constraints. The study of socialist and postsocialist societies gives insight into the power of ideas and emotive tropes such as 'class struggle' or 'civil society' to shape history. Yet to understand the outcomes on the ground it is crucial to analyse the material 'base'. This base needs to be viewed more broadly than is usual in the Marxist tradition, with its emphasis on production technologies (recent multidisciplinary work under the rubric of 'cultural political economy' offers hopeful signs for the

future). Changes in consumer tastes and aspirations may shed fresh light on changes in social structure. There can be no doubt that the failure to meet consumer expectations played a key role in the implosion of MLM socialism. But it is not just a matter of aesthetics. To understand postsocialist disillusionment and new processes of identity formation, we need to begin by recognising that economic dislocation has reduced living standards and increased economic uncertainty for very large population groups, both rural and urban. Materialist explanations alone are insufficient, however, if we wish to understand the values and 'social imaginaries' which also inspire social action. This deficiency is not peculiar to the Marxist tradition; as I showed in the previous chapter, it is also a weakness in Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism.

Note that I am not arguing for a radical change of paradigm. The experiences of socialist and postsocialist ruptures, both marked by continuities in so many fields, should in any case make us wary of pursuing paradigm shifts in our theoretical approaches. The tensions between materialists and idealists will no doubt persist, along with other perennial debates in the human sciences. We can recognise their reflection at more parochial levels, as in the differing emphases of cultural anthropology and social anthropology. Recent years have, however, witnessed a significant convergence here. Both are cosmopolitan, comparative traditions, unlike the nation-centred disciplines that were strong in many socialist countries (Stocking 1982). Rather than say 'this is anthropology and that is something else', I favour an inclusive definition which encourages theoretical pluralism at all levels and in all sub-fields. The label anthropology is thus an umbrella under which many different styles of academic enquiry may co-exist.<sup>124</sup>

My fundamental call to place close attention to history at the core of anthropology has plenty of precedents in the post-Malinowskian discipline, from Evans-Pritchard to Goody. But why should a focus on *Eurasian* history be especially instructive? Apart from its centrality to world history, the fact is that anthropological knowledge of this landmass is uneven and often inadequate as a result of the distortions of the discipline's own history, skewed on the one hand by imperialism and on the other by nationalism. Neither of the two main tendencies of anthropology, as the field took shape from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, was in a position to do justice to Eurasia. One trend—*Völkerkunde*—was towards work overseas, in the far-flung colonies of European powers, among exotic *Naturvölker*. It produced valuable work, including that of the British school established in

<sup>124</sup> See Hann 2005d. For me anthropology is simply the best cover term currently available for a very wide field which includes ethnology, ethnography, folklore, and museum studies, as well as social, cultural and biological anthropology.

the inter-war decades of the twentieth century by Malinowski, but it also perpetuated biases. Later decades have seen much high-quality work in Europe; distinctively new anthropological schools, generally specialising in their own countries, have emerged in India, China and elsewhere. Nonetheless, Eurasia remains underrepresented in most English-language anthropology textbooks. The bias would be modified if western European and North American scholars had better access to the research results of Russians in the Siberian territories which came under tsarist and later Soviet control. But the basic point remains: the legacy of various colonialisms has distorted anthropology in general and the anthropological analysis of Eurasia in particular.

The second main prong of the anthropological-ethnological sciences was weak in Britain, somewhat stronger in the French-speaking countries, very strong in the German-speaking countries, and dominant in most neighbouring countries of central and eastern Europe. I refer to *Volkskunde*, the documentation of one's own culture in all its glory to serve the cause of nation-building. This tradition has produced fine work in many parts of Eurasia. In Germany it was severely weakened but not eliminated by the catastrophe of National Socialism. Despite commitments to internationalism and a universalist theory of social evolution which the founders of Marxism derived from Lewis Henry Morgan (Engels 1972 [1884]), this national orientation remained dominant in the anthropological establishments of most countries of the Soviet bloc (Hann, Sárkány and Skalník 2005). Even within the Soviet Union, the celebrated *ethnos* theories of Yulian Bromley tended to sustain at their core an approach to ethnic and national identity which most Western scholars would as 'primordialist'.

Scholars in postsocialist countries who wish to switch away from the traditions of folklore and 'national ethnography' or to supplement them with new comparative approaches drawing on Western traditions of social and cultural anthropology usually face many practical difficulties. In the current fluid situation a historical focus on Eurasia, especially of backed up by fieldwork outside one's home country, might offer a way forward. Ideally one would wish for balanced cooperation and cross-fertilisation between all the various strands of the discipline. In reality, the postsocialist era is also generating competition. Some scholars see insuperable differences between the familiar nation-centred discourses and the newer approaches associated with the West, which tend to be favoured by those who have managed to acquire a good knowledge of English. In some places the newer kind of sociocultural anthropology has already been separately institutionalised, sometimes in a different faculty from the older ethnology/ethnography. One can only hope that this does not degenerate into a neoliberal marketplace (see Skalník 2002).



In short, increased attention to both the unity and the diversity of Eurasia would, at the current moment in the history of anthropology, be a correction to long-term sources of bias, above all the twin distortions arising out of colonialism and nationalism. Taking this focus seriously means adopting a more critical approach to the fieldwork-dominated projects of most twentieth-century anglophone sociocultural anthropology. Without abandoning the virtues of ethnography and our on-going conversations with the social sciences, it is worth resuming older conversations and looking again at the legacy of the discipline's historicist schools.

I have argued that, for several millennia at least, it makes sense to treat the Eurasian landmass as a single entity. A focus on postsocialism and on the nature of MLM socialist societies reflects the great degree of homogeneity which socialist institutions established across most of the landmass in the twentieth century. But this is incomplete and insufficient. We need to adopt a long-term historical perspective, based on the ultimate unity of Eurasia's historical development since the Neolithic. As Jack Goody has argued, over the *longue durée* centres of material and intellectual creativity in the Far East were more than a match for centres in the Far West. Even scholars of the calibre of Max Weber failed, because of their Eurocentric bias, to appreciate the significance of common patterns of development (Goody 1996). East and West did not evolve in splendid isolation. They were the extremes of a belt of continuous interaction. Diffusion occurred in all spheres, but it is also important to recognise the development of similar structures, similar patterns of social organisation, in response to similar conditions. By attempting to disentangle these processes in Eurasia, sociocultural anthropologists could make important contributions not only to world history but also to contemporary interdisciplinary debates over the nature of evolution and cognition.

This perspective is unfamiliar, and few citizens of Eurasia have perceived the unity I am emphasising. The intellectuals have tended to celebrate differences, at every level right up to the level at which Europe is pitched against Asia. Sociocultural anthropology, which developed as an academic discipline in Europe, could not begin to address the underlying problem so long as its agendas were skewed by the geographies of European colonial empires. But that age is over. Recognition of the unity of Eurasia, leaving behind parochialisms such as Europe and the Middle Kingdom, is long overdue. It would be a sign that this anthropology is able to transcend the handicaps of its birth and youth and to begin to function as a cosmopolitan science.

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# Index

- Adjara 196, 204-6  
Africa 19, 93, 108, 110, 140, 154, 211, 243-4, 250  
agrarian empires 4, 200, 243  
agriculture 13, 23-4, 52, 66, 70, 79n, 87, 98n, 123n, 126-7, 129, 132, 134, 148, 250  
aid, mutual 73, 75, 83, 146  
alienation 16, 92, 96-7, 102-3, 106-7, 111-2  
Anglicanism 169n, 172, 176  
Anglican Church 169-71, 173, 176  
anthropology 6, 13, 19, 41n, 107, 113n, 117-8, 124n, 151-2, 191, 195-8, 200, 210-1, 242-56 *passim*; British school in 151, 197; cultural 254-5; economic 8, 21, 24, 92n, 106; social 1, 2n, 5, 170, 247, 254-5; sociocultural 4, 6, 246, 252-3, 255-6  
archaeology 250, 253  
Asia 140, 168, 243, 256; Central 159-62, 237, 243, 248, 250; East 27, 94; South 136  
assimilation 202, 216-22 *passim*, 227, 235-7 *see also* integration  
Austria 88, 110, 119, 123, 179, 221 *see also* Habsburg Empire  
  
Barth, F. 152, 195, 201, 207-8, 211  
Becker, G. 110-1  
Bellah, R. 164-5  
Bellér-Hann, I. 12, 123-4, 127, 135-6n 142, 156, 159, 195-6, 206-7, 209, 227, 229, 231-3  
Benda-Beckmann, F. and K. von 18, 19n, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30, 43n, 86  
Buchowski, M. 1-2  
Bulgaria 24, 26, 34, 36-7, 171  
  
Caldwell, M. 248  
*cerkiew* (Pol.) 180-1, 187, 192-3  
Chayanov, A. V. 116-7, 129, 137, 144-5, 148  
Childe, V. G. 250  
  
China 1, 5, 8-10, 25-7, 35, 40, 115-6, 123-35 *passim*, 152, 156, 161-2, 230-7 *passim*, 241, 244-55 *passim*  
*chłop* (Pol.) 127 *see also* peasant  
citizenship 21, 44, 57, 83, 151-2, 163, 166-9, 171, 216, 220-1, 226, 229, 233, 239, 242; European 151; multicultural 175, 213, 230, 235, 237  
civilisation 3, 151, 171, 189-91, 194, 197, 245, 250  
civil religion 151, 153-4, 163-6, 169-70, 173, 175-6  
civil society 1, 151, 153-66, 169n, 171-6, 199, 236, 241-2, 249, 253  
Cold War 19, 189, 241  
collectivisation 15, 27-32, 34, 40, 43, 50, 52, 58, 74, 79, 87-8, 98, 99n, 115, 117, 119-20, 128-9, 143  
communism 113, 118 *see also* socialism  
Communist Party 8, 10-1, 54, 57, 62, 68, 120, 160  
consumption 9-10, 35, 45n, 56n, 57, 72, 95, 106-7, 113, 122, 132-3, 145; theory 110; mass 106; private 8; wine 45, 73  
cooperative 10, 34, 37, 39-41, 44, 50-86 *passim*, 97, 100, 129-30, 132-3, 203; agricultural 33, 48, 50, 54; postsocialist 40, 130; specialist 43-4, 50, 52, 55, 72, 78-80, 129, 132 *see also* *szakszövetkezet*  
Croatia 24, 32-3, 171  
Crone, P. 250  
culture 1, 3, 11, 78, 170-1, 189-90, 194-5, 199-200, 210-1, 216, 219, 239, 245, 247, 255; concept of 152, 199, 213-5, 237, 239, 242; folk 232; 'high' 197, 217, 231, 235, 239; minority 152, 230, 232; national 220, 226, 235; political 164-5, 201-2, 205; popular 9, 127, 219n; societal 213, 219, 229-30,

- 235, 237, 239; traditional 1, 45, 231; *see also* multiculturalism
- Dalton, G. 118-9, 148
- Davie, G. 166, 170
- decollectivisation 15, 18, 24, 26, 28-30, 34, 40-1, 44, 252
- De Soto, H. 17
- dikhan* (Uygh.) 116, 127 *see also* peasant
- distribution 7, 24, 26, 29, 37, 56, 59, 61, 79-80, 117, 130, 208
- Douglas, M. 190
- economics 2, 41n, 94, 117-8
- education 10, 38, 179, 199, 213, 216-7, 227, 234-5, 237, 244
- Elster, J. 29-31
- embeddedness 22n, 95, 99, 110, 113
- embourgeoisement 43n, 44, 48, 57, 67, 73-4, 80, 86-8 *see also* *pol-gárosodás*
- England 9, 20, 29, 99, 169-71, 176, 215
- Enlightenment 12, 110, 153-4, 156, 163-5, 167, 175
- entrepreneurship 7, 12, 28, 34, 56, 67, 71-4, 79, 82n, 87, 112n, 121, 125n, 130-1, 133, 140, 163
- Erdei, F. 48, 50, 57
- Eschment, B. 160-1
- ethnic cleansing 119, 157, 220, 226, 236
- ethnicity 38, 79n, 151-2, 158, 195-215 *passim*, 227, 235, 239
- ethnography 246, 252, 254n, 256; multi-sited 115, 246; national 245, 255
- Eurasia 3-4, 6, 8-9, 11-3, 20, 24-5, 37, 117, 148, 156-7, 161, 167, 191, 241-56 *passim*; old 6, 13; postsocialist 17-8, 40
- Europe 4, 12-3, 16, 88, 92-3, 104, 110, 112, 151, 154-5, 160-8 *passim*, 171, 175, 189-91, 194, 221, 243-6, 250, 254, 256; Central 24, 98, 128, 177-8, 184, 189-91, 216-7; Central and Eastern (CEE) 26-7, 29-31, 42; Eastern 1, 6, 109, 116, 119, 153, 155, 168, 173, 228, 243, 245, 249, 255; old 6, 9; Western 27, 57, 87n, 153, 155, 169, 209, 244, 248, 255
- European Union (EU) 18, 27, 72, 74, 88, 99, 103, 116, 122, 135, 152, 166, 171, 189-90, 195, 220, 226, 230, 239, 245
- evolution 4, 40, 173-4, 246, 250-2, 255-6
- exploitation 15-6, 23, 36, 96, 115-35 *passim*, 139, 143-4, 147-9, 241; self- 117, 119, 122-3, 131, 144, 146
- fermer* (Rus.) 34, 41 *see also* peasant
- Feurstein, W. 207, 227, 229n
- Firth, R. 19, 92n, 95-6, 118, 149
- forest 24, 36-7, 45n, 50, 67, 87, 93, 120, 122-3, 134, 147
- France 9, 31, 165, 168, 210; French Revolution 29
- Galicia (Galizien) 119, 123, 179, 183, 185, 189, 193, 221-2
- Geertz, C. 7, 192
- Gellner, E. 152, 155, 159, 162, 197-209 *passim*, 213-239 *passim*, 242-3, 254
- Great Transformation 8, 92, 99, 101, 113
- German Democratic Republic (GDR) *see* Germany, East
- Germany 9-12, 82, 99, 137, 155, 165, 177, 179, 206, 219, 236, 245, 249, 255; East 5, 10-1, 24, 39, 91, 111-2; German minority in Hungary 220; West 111
- Gierek, E. 121
- globalisation 6-7, 140-1, 144, 168, 243-4
- Gluckman, M. 19



- Goody, J. 20, 156, 243-4, 250-1, 254, 256
- Greece 171, 201
- Greek Catholic(s) 177-80, 183-5, 187-94, 223, 225, 227; Church 120, 158, 183-6, 188, 191, 217, 221, 225; minority 151, 187, 189; history 179, 184, 187, 192
- Gypsies 80, 103-5, 111, 218-220, 223, 226, 236, 239
- Habsburg Empire 44-5, 62, 179, 183, 185, 189-90, 213, 217, 221-2, 226-7
- Hardin, G. 17-8, 20, 22
- Hart, K. 108-9, 154, 250
- Hayden, R. 191
- history 1, 3, 15, 18, 33-44 *passim*, 91-2, 94, 119, 126, 151, 155, 174, 179, 183-4, 187, 191-204 *passim*, 209-10, 215, 219, 222, 225-6, 231, 238, 242, 245-54; Eurasian 251-2, 254; and anthropology 151, 254-5; pre-socialist 44, 129, 180; world 3-4, 7, 12-3, 19, 130, 250-2, 256
- Hofer, T. 1, 31, 98-100, 103n
- Homokhátság 44-58 *passim*, 70-2, 74, 79, 87-8, 128, 133
- houses (as property) 32, 38, 50, 53-4, 57, 78, 87, 121, 134, 140, 180-1
- house-building 53, 81, 83, 100
- Howe, L. 111, 113
- Humphrey, C. 2n, 5, 19-20, 167, 242
- Hungary 2, 8, 10, 15-6, 24, 26-9, 31, 33, 43-5, 52, 56n, 58, 66, 72-3, 87-91, 98-100, 103-5, 111, 115-6, 128-32, 134, 147-50, 152, 156, 179, 216-22, 224, 226, 228, 232n, 235-7, 239, 249; Great Hungarian Plain 18, 44, 147; postsocialist 146; pre-socialist 48; socialist 35, 39, 100, 217, 249
- hunter-gatherers 15, 20, 32, 93-4, 105, 111, 174, 231
- Huntington, S. 151, 171, 189-90, 251
- identification 16, 58, 92, 96-8, 106-7, 110, 112, 208
- identity 11, 13, 105, 111-2, 149, 167, 171, 187, 195, 199, 205-6, 212-8 *passim*, 228-39 *passim*, 254; collective 113, 151, 168, 206, 209-10, 232; ethnic 136, 177, 181, 195n, 200-11, 222-37 *passim*; minority 152, 217-9, 223-6, 232; national 164, 168-9, 171, 176, 200, 209, 215-22 *passim*, 255; politics of 151, 210, 216, 242; religious 166, 176, 194; social 110-1, 198
- industrial workers 1, 16, 105-6
- inequality 7, 9, 18, 28, 107, 118, 128, 130-1, 135
- integration 16, 43n, 80, 142, 154, 200n, 202, 216-7, 220n, 226-228, 237, 239, 248 *see also* assimilation
- Jews 120, 158n, 170, 172, 184, 188, 190, 206, 217, 219, 221, 235
- justice 17, 19, 21, 27, 29-31, 119, 198, 254; social 11, 21; historical 15, 29, 31, 40
- Kádár, J. 8, 10, 50, 52, 57, 78, 88, 130
- Khazanov, A. 4, 243
- Kingston-Mann, E. 249
- kolkhoz 38, 43, 50, 52n, 252
- kościół (Pol.) 181, 192-3
- kulak 10, 48, 67, 69, 100, 129
- Kurds 206, 209, 228-30, 237, 239
- Kymlicka, W. 152, 155, 213, 216, 218-220, 235, 237, 239
- Kyrgyzstan 160, 231-2, 237
- labour 1, 11, 48, 70, 73-5, 79n, 81, 95-113 *passim*, 116-8, 125-149, 202, 214; family- 53, 72, 79, 81, 117, 130, 136-9, 143-6; costs 74, 112, 140; labourers 49-50, 79, 131-2, 137, 146, 234; -intensive techniques 55, 73, 117, 131, 133;

- market 11, 79, 91, 107-8, 112-3, 227, 241, 244; migration 122n, 137, 197, 202, 248; migrants 70, 82, 99, 132, 146, 234; time 16, 96, 102, 119, 122, 138-40, 145, 148; wage- 16, 83, 91, 95, 97, 103, 105, 109-13, 131, 137-8
- labour theory of value 16, 95-6, 118, 147
- Ladányi, J. 105n, 218
- Lampland, M. 10, 99-100, 247
- land 15, 19-20, 23-42, 45, 48, 50, 52-3, 55, 57-68, 70-1, 74, 86, 120, 128-9, 131, 179, 222, 241, 244; agricultural 24, 37, 62, 179, 241; collectively owned (cooperative) 28, 53, 70; market 23, 131; ownership 23, 27-8, 31, 33-7, 40, 48, 61-7, 70, 83, 124, 128-9, 136; privatisation 30, 63n, 252; redistribution 33, 64-5, 90, 125; reform 31, 129; tenure 19, 36, 38; use 24, 61, 66-7
- Land Reorganisation Committee (*Földrendező Bizottság*) 62, 65, 70, 86, 90
- language 1, 3, 9, 95, 115, 155, 159, 163, 181, 189, 197-217 *passim*, 220-38 *passim*, 242, 252, 255
- Lazi 200, 204-11, 227-9, 232, 236-9
- Lazistan 136, 206, 227
- Leach, E. 20, 91
- legitimacy 8, 32, 37, 43-4, 53, 57, 86, 88-9
- Lenin, V. I. 13, 117, 145
- liberalisation 7, 52, 161
- liberalism 6-8, 13, 15
- Luhmann, N. 89
- Malinowski, B. 4, 19, 94, 97, 187, 198, 200, 202, 246-7, 253-4
- Mao 13, 25, 124-8, 233, 241
- marginality 15, 44, 105
- Marienthal 110-1
- market socialism, *see* socialism
- Marx, K. 16, 92, 95-108 *passim*, 113
- Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPISA) 2, 4-6, 9, 15, 17-8, 20, 24, 31, 39-40, 43n, 153n, 169n, 175n, 195n, 241, 250
- Meeker, M. 152, 195, 201-5, 207n, 209, 226
- memory 4, 49, 104, 124, 200, 247-8
- migration 11, 15, 25, 136-7, 141, 144, 146, 217, 231n, 237, 239, 244
- Mill, J. S. 29-30
- millet system 201, 205-6, 226
- minority 100, 105, 121, 125n, 139, 152, 158, 179, 184-5, 198, 206, 209-10, 213-21, 223-6, 230-39, 242; religious 151, 165-6, 170, 172, 175, 187-9, 193, 225
- mobility, social 10, 198, 213, 237, 239
- moral economy 9, 11, 13, 15-6, 27, 32-9 *passim*, 42, 138n, 146, 149, 252
- multiculturalism 169, 188, 191, 210, 214, 230, 234, 241-2
- nationalism 32, 148, 158, 171-2, 184-5, 197-9, 201, 204-5, 211, 219, 221, 226-7, 236, 239, 242, 245, 254-5
- National Socialism 5, 255
- neoliberalism 6-9, 13, 15-7, 21, 40-1, 118, 147-8, 150, 163, 165, 174-5, 241-2, 244, 246
- NGOs 151-62 *passim*, 173-5, 211, 218, 242
- obshchina* (Rus.) 31, 37-8
- Orokaiva 97
- 'otherness' 1, 4
- Ottoman Empire 44-5, 128, 136, 171, 195-7, 200-206, 208-10, 213, 217, 226-8, 230, 236
- paraszt* (Hung.) 132 *see also* peasant
- participant observation 3-4, 160, 247
- path dependency 2, 144, 248

- peasant(s) 15, 25, 31, 45, 113, 115-7, 120-1, 123-9, 136-8, 143-5, 148, 161, 221, 234, 249; economy 48, 53, 56, 73-4, 87, 122-3, 125, 132, 137; proper 91, 98-100, 103-4, 110; tradition 73, 133 *see also* *paraszt, dikhan, chłop*
- peasantry 45, 50, 87, 98-9, 119-21, 123, 125, 128, 130, 143, 145, 221n
- Pelkmans, M. 195n, 204-6
- planning, central 5, 11, 125n, 233
- Poland 2, 9, 27, 115-34 *passim*, 147, 151-2, 156-8, 166-7, 172-3, 177-94 *passim*, 220-6, 228, 237, 239, 241, 249
- Polanyi, K. 8-9, 13, 92, 98-9, 113
- polgárosodás* (Hung.) 44, 48, 57, 89 *see also* *embourgeoisement*
- political economy 5, 11, 13, 15-6, 27, 115, 136n, 149, 154, 196, 241-2, 248, 252, 254
- postsocialism 2n, 4-7, 13, 21, 44, 67-8, 73, 83, 89, 135, 167-9, 176, 194, 241, 249, 253, 256
- privatisation 10, 15, 17-8, 21-3, 26, 30, 37, 41, 43, 54, 57-8, 60, 70-1, 81, 86, 89, 135, 236, 244
- property 5-7, 9, 15-42, 43-4, 48, 57-9, 67, 83, 94, 111, 236, 241, 252; as an analytical model 15-9, 21-4, 40-2; and anthropology 19-21, 24-7, 31-40; intellectual 20, 242; reforms 18, 23, 31, 122, 129, 244
- Przemyśl 151, 158-9, 183-7, 189-90, 193-4, 221-3, 225-6, 236
- public sphere 5, 35, 38, 100, 107, 153, 156, 158, 162-5, 169, 185, 194, 205, 209, 223-4, 236
- rationality 16, 31, 39-40, 44, 51, 58, 66, 87-8, 94, 97, 101-2, 110, 117, 121, 134, 140, 144-5, 147-50, 163, 252
- reciprocity 29, 32, 49, 70, 142n, 146, 252
- religion 2, 19, 22, 97, 151-76 *passim*, 188-91, 197-201, 204-6, 213, 221, 225-6, 231, 237, 245, 250
- resistance 16, 54, 137-8, 146
- rolnik* (Pol.) 127 *see also* *peasant*
- Rom(a) *see* *Gypsies*
- Roman Catholic Church 156, 158, 168, 171-3, 187, 223, 249
- Rozelle, S. 18, 25-6
- Rousseau, J.-J. 163-5, 167n
- Rural Solidarity movement 121, 180n
- Russia 5, 8, 12, 26-7, 30-1, 34, 37-8, 41-2, 116, 141, 151, 168, 204-5, 221, 223, 227, 230, 243, 248-9, 252, 255
- Sahlins, M. 93, 116
- Sárkány, M. 6, 26, 33, 43n, 255
- Schwimmer, E. 16, 96-8, 106
- Shanin, T. 116-7, 143-5, 148
- Siberia 23, 32, 37-8, 243, 248n, 250, 255
- Slovakia 24, 33, 119, 177, 219n, 224
- Slovaks 45, 216-9, 228
- socialism 1-4, 6, 9n, 11-3, 21, 31, 36, 41, 50, 55, 78, 100, 105, 124, 126-7, 163, 174, 241, 246-7; fall of 10, 26, 58, 86, 132, 172, 184, 224; Hungarian 43, 130; market 36, 43, 52, 57, 128, 130-1; Marxist-Leninist-Maoist 1-5, 7-8, 12, 21, 117-8, 145, 166-8, 243, 246, 251, 253
- solidarity 11, 13, 29, 34, 41, 64n, 86, 102, 104-5, 140, 165, 252
- Solidarity movement 157-8
- Soltvadkert 48, 58-9, 74-5, 78-80, 86-8, 130, 132-3, 217, 219
- Soviet Union 8-9, 11-2, 21, 34, 42, 56, 101, 141, 159, 161, 199, 204-5, 227, 230, 255
- Stakhanovites 91, 101-3, 109
- Stępień, S. 177n, 184n, 186-7
- Stewart, M. 103-4, 218, 220
- Stirling, P. 116-7, 197-8, 200, 203



- sváb* (Hung.) 45, 64n, 78-9, 217, 219-20  
 Swinnen, J. 18, 25-6  
*szakszövetkezet* (Hung.) 43, 52-9  
*passim*, 74  
 Szelényi, I. 48, 67, 79, 105n, 218
- tanya* (Hung.) 45-6, 50, 62-5, 74, 76, 80, 83  
 Tázlár 10, 15, 18, 33, 43-90, 100, 115, 128-35, 145, 147, 216-20, 252  
 Thompson, E. P. 9  
 time 15, 27-30, 91-102, 105-7, 110-1, 113, 131, 138-40, 143, 145, 176, 194, 247-52; socially necessary labour 16, 96, 118, 122, 144, 148; and work 91-114 *passim*  
 tolerance 151, 155n, 161, 163-4, 167, 170-3, 176, 185n, 188, 190, 226  
 transaction costs 28, 31  
 transformation 1-6 *passim*, 18, 21, 30, 58, 91, 99, 111, 117, 135-6, 145, 148, 154, 157, 244, 247-8  
 transition 2, 10, 23, 27, 31, 66n, 86, 100n, 113, 159, 203, 244  
 trust 11, 33-5, 39, 53n  
 Turkey 11-2, 115-7, 135-6, 140, 146-52, 156, 159, 171, 195-7, 199, 203-4, 206-10, 226-30, 235-6, 241, 245
- Ukraine 34, 177, 179, 183, 189, 193-4, 222, 224-5; Ukrainian minority in Poland 119-20, 123, 151, 158-9, 177, 181, 183, 187-8, 192, 221, 223-6, 228, 236  
 underclass 218, 236  
 unemployment 11, 22, 82, 92-3, 103, 111-2  
 Uniates *see* Greek Catholics  
 Uyghurs 123-5, 127-8, 230-5, 237-9
- value *see* labour theory of value  
 Verdery, K. 2, 20, 167, 247  
 Völkerkunde 254  
 Volkskunde 245, 255
- Wales 169n, 215-6, 229, 235, 237  
 Weber, M. 89, 151, 189, 256  
 Wiber, M. 18-20, 22, 24, 27, 86  
 wine 43n, 44-5, 50, 55-6, 58, 66, 70-5, 79-80, 87-8, 130-4, 144, 146-9  
 Wisłok Wielki 119-24, 127-8, 134-5, 145, 179-84, 192-3, 221-3, 225  
 Wolf, E. R. 116-7, 145, 148, 246  
 Woodburn, J. 20, 94, 111  
 work 11, 15-6, 91-114, 142, 149; wage labour *see* labour
- Xinjiang 115-6, 123-8, 131, 145, 147-8, 230-8  
 Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 115, 123, 231, 237
- Zhang, L. 25, 162

# Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

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*"... anthropology needs a broader vision. It needs to shake off its strong association with the primitive and the exotic and become genuinely global in its comparisons. From this perspective, more sustained attention to Eurasia and a renewed focus on its underlying unity might launch the transformation of our parochial scholarly traditions into a mature cosmopolitan science."*

*– Chris Hann, in his Preface to this series*

## **"Not the Horse We Wanted!" Postsocialism, Neoliberalism, and Eurasia**

The title of this volume was supplied by a Hungarian villager, who made use of a popular idiom to express his disillusionment with the results of rural privatisation. Hann draws on his own ethnographic materials from Hungary and elsewhere to explore a wide range of topics, from political economy to questions of ethnic and religious identity and minority rights. Applying a broad definition of 'property relations', he argues that private ownership, multi-party politics and the proliferation of NGOs are poor compensation for a decline in the substantive material and moral conditions of citizenship. The spread of neoliberal economic principles, identity politics and new 'rights' agendas is not restricted to the postsocialist countries and the volume therefore employs a wider comparative framework. Underlying all the chapters (none of them previously published in this form in English) is an inclusive, eclectic approach to contemporary anthropology. Hann concludes by arguing that anthropologists of all traditions and theoretical persuasions need to renew their engagement with world history. To recognise the enduring unity of Eurasia is an important step towards overcoming the distortions of Eurocentrism.

Chris Hann is a director of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale.

