

ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
CONSIDERATIONS OF  
PRODUCTION, EXCHANGE,  
VENDING AND TOURISM

# RESEARCH IN ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY

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RESEARCH IN ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY VOLUME 37

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
CONSIDERATIONS OF  
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VENDING AND TOURISM**

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# INTRODUCTION: PRODUCTION, EXCHANGE, VENDING, AND TOURISM

Volume 37 of *Research in Economic Anthropology* consists of four different sections, each reflecting one thematic element of the volume's title: production, exchange, vending, and tourism. Eleven original articles, each of which passed a rigorous peer review, fill the pages of the volume. Indeed, without the generous assistance of many anonymous referees (busy researchers themselves) *REA* would not have been able to reach the age of 39. Nor would it have the reputation for quality articles in (and relating to) economic anthropology that it has today. Therefore, before introducing this volume I would like to thank the 81 researchers who kindly served as referees for volumes 34, 35, and 36.

In alphabetical order, they are: Dave Abler, Galit Ailon, Maria De Lourdes Alcantara, Stephen Aldrich, Aaron Ansell, Greg Bankoff, Peggy Barlett, Jessica Barnes, Christine Beil, Lucas Bessire, Caroline Brettell, Jorge Carrillo, Janice Chernela, Andrew Chesnut, Joon Nak Choi, Edward Chuma, Martha Angeles Constantino, Erin Coughlan, Michael Cusumano, Geert De Neve, Cheryl Doss, Malcolm Dow, Rohan D'Souza, Thomas Dunk, Gary Feinman, Edward Fischer, James Fisher, Wiebke Foerch, William Garriott, Kathryn Goldfarb, Andres Gramajo, David Groenfeldt, Michelle Hegmon, Stefanie Herrmann, Lee Hoffer, Carter Hunt, Jerry Jacka, Ulrich Jürgens, Alice Kehoe, Henry Kinnucan, Gina Koczberski, Peter Konijn, Rena Lederman, Carolyn Lesorogol, Jerome Levi, Claire Loussouarn, Sarah Mars, Robert Marzec, Hirokazu Miyazaki, Brian Moeran, Kim Møller, Daniel Murphy, Benjamin Orlove, Tommaso Pardi, Kyeyoung Park, Angus Phillips, Aaron Pitluck, Christine Quittkat, Annika Rabo, Anthony Rausch, Maureen Reed, John Renshaw, Susan Russell, Beken Saatçioğlu, Ikuya Sato, Bettina Schmidt, Mallika Shakya, Robert Shepherd, Brian Silverstein, Patricia Sloan-White, Alex Stewart, David Stoll, Amy Todd, Dan van der Horst, Soumhya Venkatesan, Casey Walsh, Travis Wendel, Bruce Whitehouse, Tanja Winther, Emily Yeh, and Christian Zlolniski.

Part I of this volume, which focuses on production, is comprised of three chapters. In the first, Edwins Gwako examines the (illegal) culture of homebrewing, and selling, of beer among Maragoli women (and its consumption by men) in western Kenya. Importantly, through a quantitative survey approach backed by ethnographic data, he looks beyond the many obvious negative facets of this deeply embedded practice in an attempt to better understand



women's incentives for engaging in the production of such homemade beverages (which often contain highly questionable ingredients). Although it might seem that women brewers are perpetuating their own persecution by creating substances that tend to promote acts of violence against them, they appear as rational actors who are actively working to escape from poverty while seeking empowerment and protection from persecution and violence for themselves and their children. Gwako's findings call for increased social and legal protection for the women of the society.

Next, Deborah Sick reports on some discoveries from her own long-term ethnographic research on smallholder farmers in a rural part of Costa Rica. She finds that, although such small-scale producers have often been considered "problematic" by planners and "destined for extinction" by many others, producers in her research area have demonstrated a surprising degree of resilience, achieved partly through diversification strategies. The main crop of concern here is coffee, which, like the homemade alcohol churned out by the women subjects of the previous chapter, has had a variety of effects on the producers' lives. Interestingly, the recent income diversification that Sick finds is marked not by an increase in migration but by a decrease. Overall, regional pull factors emerge as the primary forces behind the changes that Sick identifies here. Rounding out the first part of this volume is Serge Svizzero's analysis of the prehistoric transitions to agriculture that ultimately gave rise to the smallholder production (indeed, all farm production) that was the focus of the preceding chapter. Like Sick's chapter, the focus here is on pull factors — those that compelled people to start to settle down and grow their own food. Notably, Svizzero argues against a push–pull model dichotomy, and for his hypothesis that the transitions to agriculture that marked the Neolithic Revolution are most likely to have occurred among complex hunter–gatherer societies occupying fertile, plentiful terrains.

The second part of this volume concentrates on exchange — a theme that actually applies in one way or another to most of the chapters in the collection. However, exchange is at the center of consideration for the authors of the four chapters here. Like the chapter that served to close Part I, the first chapter is an archaeological study. In it, Kathryn Hudson and John Henderson examine relationships between long-distance trade and centralized political organization in pre-Columbian American societies, arguing that the former was able to thrive in the absence of the latter in multiple instances over a very large span of time and distance. Theirs is, in part, an effort to move research on ancient American societies further away from lingering influences of Karl Polanyi and his associates on the field — specifically, from a focus on states and related institutions and toward greater illumination of the peculiar features of individual economies.

The next two chapters of this part of the volume share a concern with the elucidation of a specific market. The first, authored by Laurel Zwissler and grounded in ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Toronto and Pennsylvania,

takes a critical look at fair-trade retailer Ten Thousand Villages and seeks to understand a clash of value systems which would seem to be inherent in any business that is built upon concepts of benevolence, assistance, and mutual aid. The chapter brings to mind volume 28 of *REA*, which was very much concerned with fair trade. Here, Zwissler explores a “middle ground” between producers and buyers – the shop floor, where employees struggle to sell goods in a “fair” manner. Dilemmas (i.e., fairness vs. profits) abound, and call for constant negotiation (and re-negotiation). Next, Lisa Beiswenger and Jeff Cohen take a close look at a more bounded, more easily-defined market – one that occupies a specific physical space: North Market in Columbus, Ohio. Combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, they explore the functions of this marketplace, which of course include provisioning. However, there is so much more. Beiswenger and Cohen’s chapter shows one example of how public markets in the United States are adapting to suit the times and survive amidst the expansion of national chains by going far beyond the limitations of their original purpose.

In the final chapter of Part II, Rodolfo Maggio explores balancing acts in a suburb of Honiara, Solomon Islands – not circus tricks or street performances, but individual navigations between social relations and market transactions amidst conditions of scarcity. These transactions, as Maggio shows, are not only capable of damaging social (including kin) ties, but also can create new ties and relationships. What happens in Honiara household trade stores, especially regarding *kaon*, seems worthy of much greater attention.

Part III focuses on vendors and their activities – a topic that has been taken up in the pages of *REA* a number of times in the past. First, Shuru Zhong and Hongyang Di take a close look at street vendors in the city of Sanya, southern China (on Hainan Island). Despite Sanya’s geographic distance from China’s capital, the impacts of government policy are unmistakable here – vendors were unwelcome during the socialist era because of the capitalist undertones of their activities, and they are still persecuted today because of social stigmas and the idea that they are not “modern.” Yet, they persist for a variety of reasons. Zhong and Di’s research helps us to understand why this is true. Policymakers would be wise to pay more attention to their findings if they truly want to improve life for all residents of Sanya and so many other such cities of the world. The second chapter here, by Tamar Wilson, focuses on different vendors in a very different environment – Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, at the southern tip of Baja California. Once again, we meet vendors who have been very much at the mercy of state policy; many of the actors in Wilson’s study were pushed out of agriculture due to Mexico’s involvement in international trade agreements such as NAFTA, environmental degradation (that might have been prevented by better regulation), and a general lack of public support for peasants. The resilience of these vendors, most of whom apparently wanted to return to farming if possible, is another common theme between this and the preceding

chapter. Again, policymakers are advised to pay more attention to Wilson's research, and to others like it.

Part IV wraps up this volume with two investigations of tourism situations. First, Riddhi Bhandari looks at tourism in Agra, India, which feeds voraciously on cash brought in by millions of people who flock there annually to view the Taj Mahal. She traces commercial relationships between capitalists and tour guides which also envelop tourists and which are full of risk but loaded with opportunity at the same time. Debt is managed in ways that are designed to keep the guides under control, but this is hard to achieve. A fine line – one between securing tourists' business and angering them – must be walked in this complicated network of relationships. Next, Lauren Johnson investigates the impacts of female sex tourism in Jamaica, a country marked by high levels of economic dependence on tourism and of unemployment. This, added to Jamaica's proximity to the United States and several other wealthy countries, makes for a situation loaded with opportunities but also with considerable risk. Men involved in this relatively un-stigmatized trade can earn much through their resilience, but they take the chance of viral (and other) infections – including HIV. It goes without saying that the state has tried to address these problems, but at the same time Jamaica needs tourism, and so it cannot risk hampering the industry. It is hoped that Johnson's ethnographic exploration of the situation will at least help guide local initiatives to improve the situation.

In sum, volume 37 of *REA* continues the series' nearly four-decade-long quest to shed light on the intersections of culture/society and economy – simply put, to better understand, anthropologically, human economic behavior – through investigations of the four key themes of production, exchange, vending, and tourism. The next two volumes of *REA*, which are intended to focus on morality in price-setting and on vulnerability, will likely both be published during its 40th anniversary year. Looking beyond, the series will continue seeking new ground for anthropological exploration. As editor, I would like to once again thank all the busy researchers who gave their precious time to serve as anonymous referees, and also those who have contributed articles to the series, for *REA* would not be what it is today without their efforts.

Donald C. Wood  
*Editor*