

Winter 2002 Newsletter

Note From the Editor

Each year the Society for Economic Anthropology awards Schneider Prizes to student papers. There are separate prizes for undergraduates and graduate students. Information about the prizes and this year's winners can be found on p. 2.

This issue includes a brief commentary by SEA President Richard Wilk about some recent books and articles (pp. 12-13). I continue to be interested in short pieces such as this for future Newsletters. Please contact me (michael-chibnik@uiowa.edu) if you would like to contribute an article, commentary or book review.

The volumes resulting from SEA meetings are now published by AltaMira Press. As Deborah Winslow reports (p. 13), we are looking for volunteers to help review these volumes. Deborah has also provided (pp. 14-15) some useful guidelines for volume editors and authors.

SEA Elections

Members of the SEA will soon receive ballots for elections for positions on the Board. The terms of Frances Berdan, Katherine Browne, and Thomas Hakkansson end in spring 2002. The candidates are:

Slate 1

Christina Garsten (Stockholm University) Guadalupe Montes de Oca (Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey)

Slate 2

Jeffrey Cohen (Pennsylvania State)
Donna Perry (Western Oregon)

Slate 3

Georgia Fox (California State - Chico)
Deborah Nichols (Dartmouth)

2001 Schneider Prize Winners

The Harold K. Schneider Prize Competition is a student paper competition established by the Society for Economic Anthropology to honor its first president and to encourage new scholars in the field of economic anthropology. Harold Schneider, Professor of Anthropology at Indiana University, was known for both his path breaking research and his dedication as a teacher. Each year, the Society for Economic Anthropology invites both undergraduate and graduate students to submit papers on any aspect of economic anthropology or economic archaeology. Papers should contain a central thesis or

argument, and should be neither wholly descriptive nor wholly theoretical but, ideally, both.

Manuscripts should be no longer than 10,000 words, including footnotes and in American Anthropologist style. The winners in both the undergraduate and graduate categories will each receive a cash prize, a certificate of achievement, a year's membership in the SEA, and the most recent volume in the SEA's Monographs in Economic Anthropology series. They will be invited to present their papers at the annual spring meeting of the SEA in 2002. The winners' sponsors will receive an SEA volume along with a certificate recognising their excellence in teaching. All students who submit papers will receive a year's membership in the SEA.

If submitting a hard copy, please send four copies. Electronic submissions must be sent as a single file attachment in Microsoft Word format. Please do not include your name in any headers or footers. All submissions must be accompanied by a supporting letter from a faculty sponsor.

The submission deadline for the 2002 competition is June 15, 2002. Send papers to Laura Finsten, Chair, Schneider Prize Committee, Department of Anthropology, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, CANADA L8S 4L9. For additional information, please contact Laura Finsten at 905 (525-9140 ext. 23916 or by email at finsten@mcmaster.ca.

The 2001 Schneider Prize for graduate students has been awarded to Ntish Jha of Brandeis University (faculty sponsor Robert Hunt) for "Gender and Decision-Making in Balinese Agriculture." Honorable mention was given to Jim Schechter of the University of Colorado, Boulder (faculty sponsor Elizabeth Dunn) for "Morality in the Eye of the Beholder: 'Moral Peril' in the Sudanese 'Slave' Trade and Contemporary Abolition." The undergraduate prize was awarded to Peter Halpin, Jessica Hegel and Chris Molnar of the University of Calgary (faculty adviser Josephine Smart) for "Flowers and St. Valentine's Day: Economic Practices in Broader Perspectives." Honorable mention was given to Helene Goldberg of Queens College (faculty sponsor Ronald Waterbury) for "Social Mobility in a Peasant Community in Oaxaca, Mexico."

A Letter From President Richard Wilk

I've just returned from the AAA meetings where we had a very productive board meeting and a well-attended business meeting. I was really encouraged and gratified by the enthusiasm shown by the membership at both venues, and by an excellent set of papers put together by Paul Durrenberger and Judith Marti for the SEA sponsored session. The SEA publications series is flourishing in Deborah Winslow's editorial hands, and is poised to expand in new directions. All of these activities and the exciting program for the upcoming meetings in Toronto give me high hopes for the continuing vitality of our organization.

I did have a few moments of discouragement. I ran into several people who have been very active in SEA over the years, but have now stopped attending meetings. I spoke with one person who had dropped out of the SEA because of a feeling that the organization was a closed "in crowd" who dominated all the meetings and kept others on the margins. But my biggest concern was that I saw and heard many papers at the meeting that were clearly economic anthropology, but were not identified that way. I kept running into people who were doing economic anthropology, but who had never thought of themselves as economic anthropologists, and had either not heard of the SEA or had never thought about joining. On one hand it's wonderful to see economic anthropology flourishing as a topic, and to find so many people doing economic anthropology in creative ways and unexpected places. But on the other hand, why don't these people recognize what they are doing, and join our association? I see a similarity to the way my students act when I talk to them about feminism - so many of them think and act as feminists, but they don't want to call themselves feminists!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could get some of these people to join the SEA? How can we re-legitimize and de-marginalize the label "economic anthropologist" so more people will admit that this is what they are doing? I hope that at the next SEA meeting we can have some open discussion of this issue, and some collective brainstorming on ways we can expand our membership and include more people in our intellectual conversation. If you have ideas that you would like to contribute at any time, please send them to me by email (wilkr@indiana.edu). We know that what we do is at the center of anthropology in this new century. We know how important and vital collaboration between different subfields of anthropology can be. We know that a focused and refereed conference that allows time for discussion is a vital intellectual experience. The question is, how can we let other people know?

One thing we can all do is to try to recruit a colleague. Surely you know another person who is already doing economic anthropology, but just hasn't come to recognize their own true identity yet. Help them! Explain that there is already a label for the kind of creative, interdisciplinary work they do. Offer to put them in touch with a receptive and supportive group that will accept and encourage them. Everyone needs an intellectual community! If all of us can recruit just one colleague, the future of the SEA will be assured. And of course, continue to remind your students of that SEA membership is a bargain and that the organization can be important for their careers!

To close, I am not going to thank the generous and diligent members of the SEA Board, nor am I going to express my appreciation to the officers who do the work that keeps the society afloat and moving. This is only because I have already praised their efforts in person and during the business meeting at the AAAs. I am sure they will just get bored if I keep thanking them. But I would like to thank all the members who participate in the SEA, even if it's just sending in your dues and reading our annual volumes. The fact is that we are all torn between so many obligations and demands on our time and money, it's hard to give anything to small academic organizations like the SEA any more. Groups like the SEA are an endangered species that is only kept alive by the efforts and contributions of the membership. Many thanks!

Why Haven't They Ever Heard of Economic Anthropology

Richard Wilk
Department of Anthropology
Indiana University

The good news is that many mainstream economists and political scientists have discovered culture, and have decided that culture makes a difference in economic behavior. The bad news is that they are re-inventing the wheel, and employing some very naive and uninformed concepts of culture that anthropology discarded long ago. What can we do to change this situation? Here are a few references to some of this work that you might want to take a look at.

Harrison, L. and S. Huntington, eds. 2001 *Culture Matters*. Basic Books.

In this book a large group of Harvard economists and political scientists, and a few anthropologists, debate the radical proposition that culture makes a difference in economic development. While it's nice to know the foreign policy elite are ready to think about culture as more than 'western civilization,' it turns out that this allows them to blame all poverty on the malformed and defective cultures of underdeveloped countries. It's as if the "culture of poverty" debate never took place. Most anthropologists will grind away several millimeters of tooth enamel while reading this.

Nelson, R., 2001 *Economics as Religion*. Penn State University Press.

Guess what. Economists themselves have culture! Do you believe it? And modern neoclassical economics actually incorporates a lot of Judeo-Christian morality! This book is an interesting look at the history of neoclassical and Keynesian economics, and the author is to be commended for actually reading some theology. But his ignorance of economic anthropology is profound - and Polanyi appears just once in the index. The idea that religion is as embedded in culture as economics never occurs to him. He reinvents enough wheels for a freight train.

Henrich, J., R. Boyd, S. Bowles, C. Camerer, E. Fehr, H. Gintis, and R. McElreath, 2001 "In Search of Homo Economicus: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Small-Scale Societies." *American Economic Review*, 91(2)73-78. This article is summarized and popularized in the January 2002 issue of *Scientific American*. Experimental economics is producing some really fascinating and important results, but it usually generalizes from a small sample of Americans to human beings in general. In this article some experimental economists make a huge discovery - people in other cultures are not as selfish as economic theory predicts! They have proved it by reinventing cross-cultural methodology. Of course this leads them to reject one untenable reductionism for another - evolutionary psychology. You see, evolution has hard-wired all of us to be generous with each other. No alternative hypotheses occur to them. The lack of any genetic evidence does not seem to bother them, nor does their ignorance of the debates over group selection in evolutionary biology.

I am sure these are just the tip of the iceberg. Clearly, anthropology is being willfully ignored here, which suggests that the SEA needs to step in and assert some leadership here. I would be happy to hear suggestions either by email, or at the business meeting at the SEA meetings in Toronto this spring.

Reviewers Needed

Deborah Winslow, the SEA General Editor, notes a need for reviewers of SEA volumes: Deborah can be reached c/o Dept. of Sociology, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824 or Deb.Winslow@unh.edu

Would you be willing to help SEA out by doing one careful and detailed review of a volume manuscript? After our annual meetings, the meeting organizers work with the presenters to prepare a book manuscript. I then send this to two or three anonymous reviewers. I ask the reviewers to comment on each paper, the editor's introduction, and the coherence and quality of the volume as a whole. This is not pro forma. Even though we know ahead of time that the volume is "accepted for publication," good, detailed reviews are essential to maintaining the quality of our series. This is particularly important now that we have moved to a new press, AltaMira, which we hope will make us more visible and increase our sales. I expect to receive the reviews within 8 weeks of sending out the ms. There is no compensation, other than a free copy of the volume when it is published and the satisfaction of knowing you have made a real contribution to SEA's mission of furthering economic anthropology. If you think you would be willing to do this once, I would love to hear from you. A CV would also be helpful in matching reviewers with volumes. Thanks very much.

Possible New SEA Publication Project

Robert C. Hunt (for the Editorial Board, SEA)
Department of Anthropology
Brandeis University
MS006
Waltham MA 02454-9110
E-Mail: Hunt@Brandeis.edu

The Editorial Board of the Society for Economic Anthropology, with the encouragement of Rosalie Robertson, Senior Editor at Alta Mira, is looking for ways to expand the publication activities of our Society. One of the possible projects is a series of case studies which would be useful for our teaching.

For some years I have taught a course entitled Economic Anthropology: Production and Distribution. It is designed for juniors, seniors, and graduate students. The prerequisites for undergraduates are to have taken an anthropology course, or an economics course (normally the standard introductions). Enrollments range from 10 to 30. Writing assignments are two short papers where the topic is decided by me, and a longer research

paper on a topic of their choice. I assign the Plattner volume (Economic Anthropology) as the recommended text.

I design the course so that students read on 1) concepts (labor, technology, capital, surplus, foraging, savage affluence, property, money, exchange, labor productivity, agriculture, market, price, etc.), 2) ethnographic accounts (case studies), and 3) what happens when one applies a concept to ethnographic accounts.

For the concepts I assign readings from the literature (most are article or chapter length). Given a reasonably decent library this has not been a problem. Crucial to the enterprise, clearly, is case studies to which the concepts can be applied. I have often tried to have students read on a foraging society, on a horticultural one, and on "peasants". I want the case studies to present information on non-economic aspects of the society, such as household organization, gender relations, settlements, political structure, ritual structure, etc. The case studies need to be short enough so that they can be re-read, they need to be cheap enough so that students can afford to buy several of them, and there needs to be a good deal of data included in them. I have used the Tiwi, the Dobe !Ju, and the Trobriand books in the Holt series. They are short, they are reasonably cheap, and they stay in print.

I have had problems finding case studies of "peasants". Tax's Penny Capitalism, for example, has long been out of print. So is Moerman's Thai study.

For my purposes I would love to have choices among case studies. I would like several areas of the world to choose among. I would want them to be between 100 and 150 pages, reasonably well written, and to have data on some aspects of production and/or allocation. They need to be cheap enough so that students can buy them, probably in the neighborhood of \$20.00, although less would be an advantage. (I have found that if one uses a book several years running a market in used copies quickly arises.)

The Editorial Board would like to know what your experiences have been in this regard, as part of our project to expand the publications in our field.