

# Abstracts

Volker Stamm

*On Economic Anthropology*

The paper outlines a methodological approach often used when inquiring into peasant societies, namely that of economic anthropology. It sketches out some of its main assumptions before demonstrating the approach's relevance for studying basic features of rural economies, such as the access to, and use of land resources. The author aims to show that, characteristically, this method takes into account the close interrelations between economic activities, religious and moral beliefs, and social structures. This enables a better understanding of economic phenomena in rural societies, such as factors influencing the formation of prices for land and other goods or commodities. Hence, the author maintains that economic anthropology, combined with a historical perspective, opens up new vistas onto a large variety of social formations, including up to the present day.

Massimo Della Misericordia

*“Good company”. Confraternities between community and parish in Valtellina in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

The aim of this paper is to consider the confraternity's role as a social and identity-forming group in small and medium-sized rural communities. The author examines this phenomenon from a number of perspectives, such as institutional routines, personal relations, ritual and artistic representations, and the management of economic resources. The case of Valtellina in the later Middle Ages demonstrates that the confraternity was a community quite different from the territorial community. It followed its own rules. To a certain extent, it partially included foreigners, youths and females, who were otherwise excluded from public offices, and it also opened up opportunities for negotiation between common men and nobles when conflicts arose in the civic sphere. Furthermore, the confraternity promoted internal harmony through a deep symbolization of the values of peace. At the same time, the confraternity was not a closed body and it often had positive relationships with the local institutions of the parish and the commune. The commune encouraged and subsidized the brotherhood's members in order to ensure their participation in public ceremonies; in return, confraternities helped communities to restore churches, build new parish choirs, and so on. Finally, confraternities played an important role in other aspects of social solidarity. For example, they offered

their houses as a meeting-place where it was possible to reach agreements between people or social and political groups in dispute. They also lent money at low rates of interest to various individuals (either confraternity group members or people in need) and also to other communities.

Emanuele Curzel

*On the economic role of village churches in the late medieval era. Information from account books in Trentino*

Late medieval parish account books not only allow us to get to know the workings of the institutions that produced them, but also other aspects of communal life. In this period, village communities actually exercised strict control over their churches, above all regarding the goods that they possessed. Four late medieval account books from the parishes of Giovo, Sanzeno, Magras and Siror (all located today in the province and diocese of Trento) enable us to assess how ecclesiastical institutions at that time acted as motors for economic life. In particular, they distributed loans and encouraged the breeding of animals, which was either carried out directly or entrusted to village inhabitants.

Maria Hilber

*Reluctant Professionalisation? The Education of Midwives in the Tyrol and Vorarlberg between Norm and Negotiation*

On the basis of regional empirical sources drawn from the Tyrolean State Archive and the Innsbruck University Archive this paper examines the lengthy process of authoritarian attempts to implement rationalisation and regulation into the field of midwifery education. Although the standardisation of theoretical knowledge in form of an extra-occupational, university-based lecture for traditionally educated midwives was started as early as the mid-1750s, the response and acceptance by the population – potential candidates and rural authorities – was far from positive. The lack of financial security provided for future midwives discouraged many potential candidates and also rural officials were reluctant to meet the expenses of reformed midwifery education. For more than four decades all further authoritarian attempts were doomed to fail, which finally meant a partial return to pre-1750s regulations in 1790. Only after the turn of the century, reformed and centralised midwifery education was re-implemented and thoroughly supervised. Against the backdrop of the established scientific discourse on medical professionalisation and authority, the studied example of the Tyrol and Vorarlberg depicts clearly, how regional interests were able to delay and (re)structure official attempts of medical reform.

Walter Landi

*Encastellation in the face of feudal rights: The case of the Bishopric of Trento between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries*

The article deals with the relationship between the exercise of one of the public legal prerogatives *par excellence*, the *ius municionis*, and feudal law. On the basis of building licences granted by the bishopric of Trento between the mid-12<sup>th</sup> and early decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the author shows how the system of feudal vassalage constituted almost the sole form chosen by the Trentine bishops for regulating encastellation in the county, mark and duchy subject to them. Thanks to its adaptability, the practice found constant application, above all in the specific shape of the *feudum oblatum*. This instrument was not only used for the concession of building licences, but also for the condemnation of irregularly constructed castle complexes, as well as for remedying conflictual situations where the episcopal monopoly regarding the above-mentioned *ius* became controversial.