

Exploring Ethnic Interaction and Culture Reinvention from Perspectives of Exchange: A study of Miaoli Atayal in the Early Japanese Colonial Period

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ABSTRACT

How “exchange” works as a mechanism to link social sub-systems has been discussed by many anthropologists. Mauss emphasized society as a totality: economy is not independent of kinship, religion and politics, but rather all of these four aspects are considered as a whole. He, however, neglected to consider how the same form of behavior may have different meanings according to local contexts, and what the dynamics of social change involve.

This paper investigates the transformation of capitalism from locals' viewpoints of exchange. The meaning of exchange in local contexts is firstly considered; especially, how exchange connects and transforms relationships among different levels. Further questions follow, including how the locals perceive the exchange process and measure the value of objects, and whether images of money synthesize several meanings and themselves embody history in Atayal society.

My previous research suggested that the Atayal have not become alienated from each other and from their products by changes. In deciding whether to become involved in growing new crops, they are not solely influenced by questions of market price and stability, but they also take into account how the new crops fit into their traditional understanding of work and

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the values they place on it. As my previous research focused on one community only, I try in this paper to further explore the transformation of capitalism in wider contexts. This research, therefore, combines the perspectives of historical and area studies to focus on issues such as various ways of exchange in different periods and areas, creation of social relationships and culture, and the agency of history.

Keywords: exchange, ethnic relation, reinvention of culture, Japanese colonization, Miaoli, the Atayal

