Property links the economic, the political and the jural dimensions of social life. Anthropologists have traditionally argued that property relations are not relations between people and things, but social relations between people. Building on this definition and extending it to take more account of cultural diversity, the contributors to this volume emphasize the political and economic embeddedness of property relations. The contents include accounts of sharing among hunter-gatherers in Africa and ecological knowledge among reindeer herders in Siberia; ‘inclusive’ versus ‘exclusive’ property relations and rights of disposal among Melanesians; legal concepts of property and its transmission in England and Japan, the two island pioneers of industrial society; land appropriation from native Americans; property redistribution following recent social and political upheaval in Cyprus and Romania; the ability of English civil law to ensure adequate protection of the environment; and the devolution of property in modern Britain, with particular reference to changing family structures and unsustainable demands on public welfare provision.

Criticizing both the dominant Western liberal paradigm of property relations and its Marxist-Leninist counterpart, Professor Hann argues that a broader idea of property should once again become an integrating concept in anthropology and the social sciences. The collection will be of particular interest to economic anthropologists, who have conducted many studies of exchange, production and consumption, but have rather neglected property. It will also appeal to wider audiences: the basic issues of ownership, control and power are central to the lives of all citizens in all forms of society.
Property relations
Property relations

Renewing the anthropological tradition

Edited by

C. M. Hann

University of Kent at Canterbury
Contents

List of contributors  ix
Acknowledgements  x

1 Introduction: the embeddedness of property  1
C. M. HANN

2 ‘Sharing is not a form of exchange’: an analysis of property-sharing in immediate-return hunter-gatherer societies  48
JAMES WOODBURN

3 Property as a way of knowing on Evenki lands in Arctic Siberia  64
DAVID G. ANDERSON

4 Property and social relations in Melanesian anthropology  85
JAMES G. CARRIER

5 The mystery of property: inheritance and industrialization in England and Japan  104
ALAN MACFARLANE

6 An unsettled frontier: property, blood and US federal policy  124
PAULA L. WAGONER

7 Property values: ownership, legitimacy and land markets in Northern Cyprus  142
JULIE SCOTT

8 Property and power in Transylvania’s decollectivization  160
KATHERINE VERDERY

9 Property rights, regulation and environmental protection: some Anglo-Romanian contrasts  181
WILLIAM HOWARTH

10 Dowry and the rights of women to property  201
JACK GOODY
Contents

11 Divisions of interest and languages of ownership

Marilyn Strathern

Notes 233
Bibliography 254
Index 271
Contributors

DAVID G. ANDERSON is Lecturer in Arctic Anthropology, University of Alberta.

JAMES G. CARRIER is Lecturer in Social Anthropology, University of Durham.

JACK GOODY is Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge.

C. M. HANN is Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Kent at Canterbury.

WILLIAM HOWARTH is Professor of Environmental Law, University of Kent at Canterbury.

ALAN MACFARLANE is Professor of Anthropological Science, University of Cambridge.

JULIE SCOTT is Lecturer in Social Anthropology, University of the Eastern Mediterranean, Famagusta.

Marilyn Strathern is William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge.

KATHERINE VERDERY is Eric R. Wolf Professor of Anthropology, University of Michigan.

PAULA L. WAGONER is a Doctoral Candidate, Department of Anthropology, Indiana University, and an Instructor at Juniata College.

JAMES WOODBURN is Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology, London School of Economics.
Acknowledgements

Most of the chapters in this book were originally read as seminar papers in Canterbury during the Lent Term 1995, and I am greatly indebted to all who participated in this series. I am also grateful to Chris Gregory and Keith Hart, Cambridge University Press’s readers, for several helpful suggestions. Above all I wish to thank my colleagues and the support staff in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the University of Kent who, somewhat against the odds, manage to maintain a truly excellent research environment. Special thanks to Yana Johnson for assistance in the preparation of the typescript.

CMH
Canterbury, February 1997