

## BOOK REVIEWS

the book's debate concerning interdisciplinary programs and comparative courses such as world history and world literature. These lead to different types of questions, insights, and careful analysis. For all of us who want to step back and reflect on curricular decisions, this is a timely, provocative, and informative book. ■

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## Market Cultures

### *Society and Morality in the New Asian Capitalisms*

Robert W. Hefner, Editor

BOULDER, COLORADO: WESTVIEW PRESS, 1998

328 PAGES

In an excursion across Southeast Asia and to Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, this book examines how economic activities are woven within the fabric of life in particular communities. It also addresses the perplexing question of why "Chinese" entrepreneurs have apparently been dominant in a number of Southeast Asian economies. A remarkable consistency of quality and unity of theme make this collection of contributions, mainly by anthropologists, stand out as more than the sum of its parts. As well as useful to graduate students and thought provoking for advanced scholars, the book appears well suited to serve as a reading assignment for undergraduates in Anthropology, History, and Asian Studies.

For courses on "The Chinese in Southeast Asia" it will be ideal. *Market Cultures* aims to show that, throughout the region it visits, both small and large-scale money-making activities are conducted as "embedded" parts of many distinctive ways of life, and that the activities are supported by a wide variety of local accommodations between profit making and inherited conceptions of morality.

The volume's eleven contributors show that particular local circumstances have either encouraged or held back the emergence of successful forms of capitalism in the region. These "capitalisms" have not been determined by religious and cultural predispositions. Entrepreneurs from many backgrounds, including Roman Catholic Filipinos, Muslims in the People's Republic of China (PRC), women in Java and Vietnam, the Chinese of Singapore, and the Minangkabau of Sumatra, have been economically successful in ways that social theorists have not expected.

Robert W. Hefner, editor of the volume, argues that the "capitalisms" born in particular Asian settings do not appear to be changing in the direction of greater uniformity. In his chapter on "Markets and Justice for Muslim Indonesians," Hefner observes that "global capitalism is not likely to eliminate local cultural variation any time soon." Validated rather than outdated by the economic and political turbulence occurring in Indonesia and other parts of the region since publication, the book's approach is a refreshing antidote to current certainties that "globalization" is the main event of our era.

Coherence is the outstanding feature of *Market Cultures*. By linking the chapters together with frequent cross-references, Robert Hefner has skillfully highlighted connections between the findings of the contributors and kept the aims of the enquiry clearly in sight throughout the volume. In their case studies and discussion, each of his collaborators helps to show that economic activity remains securely "embedded" in cultures rather than reducible to a universal pattern. Another notable strength of the book is that it provides an excellent balance of description and discussion. Readers familiar with more sweeping treatments of economic change in Asia will welcome reports on closer observation of human activity. They will also appreciate the sophistication of Robert Hefner's introductory chapter, where he reviews and critiques social scientific understanding of "culture" and "economy" and connections between the two. Moreover, instructors reluctant to assign *Market Cultures* in its entirety might find Hefner's introduction useful to familiarize students with a name such as Karl Polanyi and a theory such as Mark Granovetter's concept of the "embeddedness" of economies.

Also noteworthy is the inclusion of a subsection on "Natives and Chinese in Southeast Asia" in the introductory chapter, suggesting that the geographic and intellectual scope of the volume is largely determined by engagement with the issue of economic success among Southeast Asian Chinese, despite the fact that the editor does not state this explicitly.

The eleven chapters that follow the editor's introduction to *Market Cultures* are divided into three sections. "Chinese Capitalisms and Cultural Pluralisms" is the first section, and begins with a contribution by Gary Hamilton. Hamilton's chapter describes and explains the success and continuing importance of private credit systems along with small-scale enterprise in Taiwan during the 1990s, at a stage of capitalist development when conventional analysts would expect both phenomena to have been outgrown.

Next, in a stimulating and wide-ranging discussion combining a survey of anthropological understanding of China with detailed observation of recent developments in Taiwan, Robert Weller illuminates how the Chinese, women in particular, have tended to blend economic activities with personal relationships, including their interactions with superhuman forces. Hamilton and Weller both demonstrate that culturally distinct responses to market opportunities do not inevitably fade away with capitalist success. Indeed, they show that because the achievement of material success does not banish uncertainty, success combined with continuing uncertainties may actually cause the perpetuation and even the expansion

of practices that fail to fit a Weberian model of capitalist development. Such practices may include reliance on private credit arrangements, rituals of communication with ghosts, and the recruitment of millions of new members to certain Buddhist sects.

In his discussion, Weller also makes the intriguing point that “divided market cultures” may be a common feature of the expansion of market-oriented activity around the world. Dru Gladney’s contribution to Part I supports Weller’s observation with a description of one set of the multitudinous local responses to new opportunities that have occurred in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) during the past twenty years. In his chapter on how the Muslims of one township in Fujian province, a locality in which they account for one-seventh of the population, have been earning one-third of the township’s total income, Gladney argues that Muslims in the PRC respond to markets with greater alacrity than the Han majority population because Muslims were less constrained in the early PRC period by socialist strictures against individual profit seeking. His findings prove the difficulty of attempts to distinguish between “Islamic” and “Confucian” values in reference to their compatibility with capitalism.

“Indigenes and Chinese in Southeast Asia” is the title of Part Two of the book. The first of the three chapters here is an expert examination by James Mackie of the issue of “Chinese” success in business in Southeast Asia since 1945. Mackie’s discussion is the only contribution to the volume that is not based on fieldwork. It is also the only one to note the problem of identifying and defining the heterogeneous “Chinese” of Southeast Asia. This chapter functions like a supplementary introduction to the question of whether cultural predispositions or historical circumstances have caused the Southeast Asian Chinese to become entrepreneurial faster than other groups. Mackie states that he “would argue . . . that the local

context has nearly always been all important” in determining business success for a social group. He also offers, nonetheless, fragments of a general explanation of the blossoming of Chinese entrepreneurial talent in Southeast Asia, and is reluctant to dispose entirely of “Chinese” values such as patriarchal family management as possible advantages in business.

The other chapters in Part Two show that the varying responses of particular Southeast Asian groups to business opportunities are frequently the result of a prolonged regime of official policies discriminating between the groups in allocation of material benefits. Tania Murray Li’s excellent chapter on the experiences of Singapore’s Malay population argues persuasively that the economic marginalization of the Malays has been caused by the succession of British colonial policies and official Singaporean decisions.

In the following chapter, Michael Peletz reports on fieldwork conducted in Malaysia. He studies entrepreneurial attitudes by comparing the Malays of Negeri Sembilan with two other groups, namely the ethnically related Minangkabau of Sumatra, and with the Chinese of Negeri Sembilan. Peletz provides a fascinating comparison of family organization in the first two groups, a comparison seeking causes of stronger entrepreneurialism among the Minangkabau than the peninsular Malays, and finds an explanation of differences between the two groups by tracing the divergent effects of Dutch Colonial rule in Sumatra and British colonial rule in peninsular Malaysia. Peletz also reports in the course of his discussion that the Malays of Negeri Sembilan often prefer to do business with local Chinese traders rather than with their fellow Malays, who might, they feel, talk about a transaction as though it were a matter of friendly mutual assistance while taking greater advantage of their counterparts than Chinese dealers would.

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The contributors to Part Three have analyzed business cultures in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Jennifer Alexander explores the culture of small-scale business in Java, preponderantly conducted by women traders, and finds no shortage of vigorously entrepreneurial attitudes.

Next, in an account completed before the resignation of President Suharto, Robert Hefner describes varying definitions of Muslim values by political leaders in Indonesia, comparing the views on expanding the economic role of Muslims expressed by B. J. Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid. Non-Indonesianists will benefit from Hefner's illumination of Indonesian ideological controversies. Readers are also likely to find the great changes occurring in Indonesia since the completion of Hefner's account easier to understand in light of his discussion.

In the next chapter, David Szanton describes the organization of commercial and fishing enterprises in a small coastal town in the Visayan region of the Philippines. His discussion shows that sensible decision making pervades the activities of both Filipinos and Chinese, and that their different occupations may largely be explained by the fact that the Chinese shopkeepers are considered outsiders in the town. The Chinese residents appear to share commercial inclinations with other residents such as Protestant Filipinos and migrants who are not bound by the obligations of reciprocity and respect functioning within the culture of the majority population.


The contributions of two anthropologists working on Vietnam complete the volume. Shaun Malarney's chapter explores a subtle mixture of precolonial, colonial, and socialist era strains of anti-entrepreneurial attitudes, describing what he calls "changing structures of stigma" against commerce. Malarney perhaps exaggerates

the authority of Vietnam's precolonial Emperors claiming control of trade and commerce, yet his discussion strengthens *Market Cultures* with a reminder that Confucianism perhaps retards the emergence of capitalism in an agrarian, bureaucratically administered empire.

In the stimulating final chapter on "Engendered Entrepreneurship," Hy Van Luong focuses on Vietnamese women in ceramics production in a village near Hanoi. He explains how the entrepreneurial energies of women in Vietnam have been suppressed by political and social sanctions only quite recently, under socialist as well as French colonial rule. He points out that a concern with bureaucratic rationality and control is an important element of both capitalist and socialist conceptions of how productive activities should be managed.

Although the research findings and discussion contained in *Market Cultures* predate the recent economic difficulties in Asia, its strengths protect the book from obsolescence. The volume may be recommended as a reading assignment for undergraduates and graduate students in anthropology and other disciplines. For students lacking familiarity with Asian history and culture, the volume may perhaps be complemented by a text such as *East and Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Survey* edited by Colin Mackerras (Lynne Rienner, 1995). ■

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