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## **Moral Order and the Question of Change: Essay on Southeast Asian Thought**

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The final chapter of the book deals with cockfighting, an activity which functions in Hawaii as a Filipino assertion of ethnic identity, despite the hint of apology with which it is often discussed. It is an ideal last chapter, as the cockfights do indeed serve to showcase various sociological aspects of the community, from the ritual and natural kinship and alliance systems which come into play in the betting, to the generational and national gaps that divide interests. As social events, the cockfights provide chances for reciprocating relationships and awarding prestige, and, to a lesser extent provide ways of relating to the wider (white) Hawaiian environment – i.e., through the participation of union leaders in the activity, and the arrangements apparently amiably worked out with police squads out to enforce anti-gambling regulations.

All in all, then, despite the initial confusion the reader may experience because of the complexity of the contrasts and variables, and the choppi-ness with which the book moves from one subject and viewpoint to another, the book rewards the patient reader with a new understanding of the Filipino communities in Hawaii in a time of painful economic dislocation and social transition. Hopefully it also served to enlighten the government agencies charged with dealing with this transition period.

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THE WOMEN OF RURAL ASIA. By Robert Orr Whyte and Pauline Whyte. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982. 262 pages.

In the effort to review available information on the social and economic status of rural Asian women, Whyte and Whyte have compiled an incredibly readable mass of statistics. The authors' aim in this book is to provide important information for governments and other agencies in their plans for social and technical development that will benefit people in rural areas. They accomplish this objective by focusing on women's roles "in the processes involved in the production, harvesting, and processing of food and other commodities from the land" (p. 1).

This sociological view of women's lives in Asia describes their "standing and ascribed respect" (p. 17) or status, their living situations, their rights and responsibilities, and their daily activities. The book is divided into such categories as: status in different communities, quality in marital relations, number of children in the family, division of labour and decision making, and help for working women, among others. The "Asia" referred to is monsoonal and equatorial Asia, ranging from Korea to Pakistan and including Southeast

Asia. The authors rationalize the enormous scope by the common features shared by the region, i.e. the monsoons, the sharing of the great civilizations and religions of India and China, colonialism, and radically increasing populations.

Within each chapter, aspects of women's lives are illustrated with facts, statistics, attitudes and beliefs of and about women from all countries in the region. The information comes from a variety of over 600 sources ranging from national censuses, private research, and historical, religious, and mythological beliefs. Numerous graphs and charts and a ten-page section of photographs assist in digesting the mass of information. Thanks to these illustrations, the consistent organization, and the comic relief of illustrative folk beliefs and proverbs, the book is not only readable but enjoyable.

If this seems difficult to believe, consider a part of the chapter on residence after marriage. The introduction to the chapter mentions the attention anthropologists have paid to the exchange of wives, and the relationships between that exchange and other cultural structures like kinship, inheritance, position in social hierarchy, and wealth. But, the authors point out, the *wellbeing* of the wives has seldom been considered. According to Whyte and Whyte, "A major factor in the lives of Asian brides is the degree to which they are cut off from the security and affection of their natal homes" (p. 107). Jacobson (1977) is quoted describing the gentle "breaking-in" of brides in central India, where a young bride initially spends short periods of time with her husband and his family. In the patriarchal societies of the south Asian subcontinent, China, Korea (from the fourteenth century Yi dynasty) and Japan, marriage places the girl in a new household and family line. Broad overviews such as this are often included, if such patterns exist, with complementary details on each country or on ethnic groups within the countries.

This chapter also mentions residence patterns of matrilineal societies such as the Minangkabau of Sumatra and the Malays of Jelebu, Malaysia: going on to mention the Achehnese of Sumatra, Bali, the Philippines, central Thailand, Burma, Laos, Bangladesh, north central Sri Lanka, Korea, and the Limbus of Nepal. When information is available, even small groups such as the Temiar of Malaysia are mentioned: "Among the Temiar of peninsular Malaysia, the couple moves between the longhouses of both parents until they decide where they are the happiest" (p. 108). Each topic in every chapter is illustrated with facts and figures from studies and from histories all over the region. One gets the impression that the authors included every bit of information they could get their hands on.

By sweeping across monsoonal and equatorial Asia in a consistent direction, the authors accommodate readability. Where information is not available, the country is skipped over; if that void is especially obvious, the authors mention the problem. The authors are also careful to notice data that seems questionable due to the source or timeliness of the research.

Many times countries are referred to in general, causing a reader to wonder whether the fact applies to all ethnic groups within the country. This is sometimes clarified by the nature of the study, such as information coming from a national census. It seems that this occurs especially frequently with the Philippines. Could it be because the Philippines carries out more national research than some other countries?

In order to investigate the roles and contributions of women, the authors had to seriously consider what to look at. The chapter topics listed above exemplify their choices, but there is a critical factor that must be clearly defined. Whyte and Whyte do not attempt to explain *why* the status of women is the way it is (although they do review the theories of how status, social stratification, and female subordination evolved), but rather, they define and illustrate how that status is manifested in their lives. The problem of evaluating the rights and responsibilities of women depends upon a clear understanding of what status is and how to measure it. The authors quote Sanday's (1974) definition: "Status is held to signify the degree to which women have authority or power in the domestic and/or public domain" (p. 17), an indication of their focus on aspects of women's lives which reflect a woman's power or influence over her own life and the lives of those around her.

The authors succeed in describing a good range of culture through histories and literature and sociological studies that reflect women's lives. Since women perceive themselves in terms of their own culture, and their own culture defines their behavior, the interpretation of numbers and statistics depends on the understanding of cultural attitudes and beliefs. Attitudes toward women are often illustrated in folklore; Whyte and Whyte use this resource productively. The numerous folk beliefs and proverbs included in this volume add color, and improve understanding of cultural attitudes. For example, they cite Nash explaining that the Burmese word for sister-in-law means "stirrer-upper" (p. 111). The status of a woman married to a younger brother in Bengal is illustrated by the proverb, "Not to be head of one's household is to be a nose-pierced cow" indicating that such a woman always moves at the will of another" (p. 111).

Although they do not attempt to explain why woman's status is the way it is, the authors refer to Boserup, who attributes the status of woman to environmental conditions and the forms of agriculture that these permit (p. 203). Swidden groups are said to be the most egalitarian, with women's equal status declining through centuries of settled agriculture, male ownership of land, patrilineal kinship, and female subservience. The patterns found by Whyte and Whyte confirm this theory. In fact, this volume is an excellent source for testing the theory, with state societies and swidden peoples being examined side by side.

The scope of this book goes beyond a comparison of status of women in

different types of societies. As stated earlier, the authors have no intention of explaining the why's of status. They only wish to present the facts for individuals and organizations interested in the quality of women's lives. Of course, evaluating the quality of life can be a subjective endeavor. The variety of information collected here reinforces the need for objectivity. For example, literacy is often used as a measure of improvement in women's lives, but this book cites a study done in Thailand, where only 9 percent of women in Thailand feel literacy is important. If there is a general conclusion to this book, it is that the women of rural Asia are more concerned with feeding their families than with learning how to read.

In this land women are influenced by such beliefs as: "If she be chaste, it is because she has not found a proper man, place or opportunity" (from the *Laws of Manu*; p. 23), and by the Confucian belief that a woman is owned first by her father, then by her husband, and then by her son. The thing is that women perpetuate such attitudes because they are conditioned to accept inequality as the norm. Kapadia says: "Woman is an advocate of traditional behavior, even at her own cost" (p. 95).

By compiling this volume of information the authors have shown not only to women themselves, but also to development organizations with the capacity to help, that women are a valuable natural resource, and should be considered in development plans and recognized for their contribution.

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IN TIME OF HESITATION, AMERICAN ANTI-IMPERIALISTS AND THE PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN WAR. By Roger J. Bresnahan. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1981. vi, 206 pages.

*In Time of Hesitation* is based on Roger J. Bresnahan's doctoral dissertation, and is an anthology of anti-imperialist writings denouncing the U. S. government's imperialist policies at the end of the nineteenth century, with the advantages and shortcomings of this kind of publication. While it offers between two covers a fairly good sampling of the existing works on the subject, it also runs the risk of being a highly subjective selection which may not always please the reader.

Twenty-six authors are included in this collection (more if we count the anonymous writers of the newspaper editorial excerpted on pages 164-68), classified into nine categories according to the writer's social class, profession, or the literary *genre* used. The choice of a principle of classification is, of course, a matter of judgment. I would have classified them according to their