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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Confucian World Observed: A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia* by Tu Weiming, Milan Hejtmanek and Alan Wachman

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analysis: exploring the political context of the writing and reading of texts; establishing a correspondence between what is contained in texts and other social explanations; and establishing a parallel with general anthropological practice, where the authors of texts are taken as expert informants or exegetes. The analysis is a successful one and turns out to be less post-modernist than its introduction might lead one to expect. It is an example of how post-modernist approaches may be appropriated productively into an anthropological position which remains recognizably positivist. But, this only serves to indicate the strength of established modes of anthropological analysis which have frequently if not always employed interpretive strategies and methods in the first place.

This is an important and much needed volume and it would be churlish to criticize the contributors in this volume for not considering several other issues or themes of relevance and importance. Rather, let me say in conclusion that the value of the studies in the volume lie not only in what is contained in them but also in further lines of investigation or re-examination that they suggest, some of which I have already alluded to with regard to Ellen's introduction.

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Tu Weiming, Milan Hejtmanek, and Alan Wachman (eds.), *The Confucian World Observed: A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia*. Honolulu: East-West Center, 1992.

Based on a workshop on "Confucian Humanism" in 1989, the objective of which was "to explore Confucian ethics as a common intellectual discourse in East Asia from a multidisciplinary and cross-cultural perspective" (p. vii), this volume offers a summary of the three-day event. If one were looking for "essays" on Confucian ethics, one would not find them here. With one exception where a participant sent in a written clarification, the report is based on recordings of the wide-ranging discussions that transpired at the workshop. What one will find are serious and often provocative reflections on a complex phenomenon by a group of eminent scholars from both the Humanities and Social Sciences. While there are few sustained arguments or even dialogues, it is instructive to see how different scholars approach issues of common concern from vastly different perspectives. There are marvellous insights scattered throughout the book which would handsomely repay careful reading.

A short report of the workshop as a whole is given in Chapter 1, "The Confucian Problematique: An Overview". Here, three sets of issues are singled out as binding the various presentations and discussions together. First, there is the question whether contemporary East Asia — more specifically, China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore — can be described as "Confucian". Second, if key institutions in these countries were influenced by Confucianism, what roles do they then play in

society, the economy, and other arenas? Third, since recent research on the relationship between Confucianism and the rise of East Asia as an economic power owes much to the ground-breaking work of Max Weber, considerable attention was given to assessing the Confucian tradition in the light of the Weberian thesis. In the words of Alan Wachman, one of the rapporteurs for the workshop, "The conferees debated whether Confucian values have impeded or accelerated the processes of modernization and development [in East Asia] and discussed the potential benefits and hazards of those values to further growth" (pp. 1–2).

These concerns were addressed in nine sessions at the workshop, now chapters in the present book. Each session/chapter focuses on a broad topic, such as "Cultural Identity and Social Implications", "Gender and Family", "Community and Education", "Political Culture and Economic Ethics", and "Popular Thought and Religion". Although the titles may give an indication of the main threads of discussion, they do not impose rigid boundaries on the exchange. Questions raised in a previous session may find their way into a later discussion, and the major theoretical issues appear virtually in all. The last chapter, "Summary", is a misnomer; rather than a summary of the proceedings, it allowed various speakers to clarify their positions, to share concluding reflections and to raise further questions before the workshop was brought to a close.

As the editors themselves recognize, there is little consensus regarding any of the major issues identified as crucial to an understanding of contemporary East Asia. Not only did the claim of a "Confucian East Asia" prove problematic, there is little agreement on the nature of "Confucianism" itself. Is it a "political ideology" (p. 17), a set of "behavioral patterns" (Gilbert Rozman, p. 40), a "religion" or "spiritual tradition" (Tu Weiming, pp. 10, 17, 102, 107; George De Vos, pp. 115–117)? Indeed, even when there appears to be agreement on certain issues, nuances of interpretation often render the debate more complex. For example, although a number of participants share the view that there is a religious dimension to Confucianism, they do not mean the same thing by it: De Vos' "Durkheimian" account of Confucian spirituality is quite different from Benjamin Schwartz's contention that the "sacred" in the Confucian case "is essentially secular" (p. 118), or what Tu Weiming describes as the "anthropocosmic" orientation of Confucianism (p. 18).

Part of the problem in defining Confucianism, and by extension in locating its place in Chinese culture, has to do with the apparent "elite" orientation of the Confucian tradition. The "Confucian label", as James Watson argues, long associated with the interests and values of the ruling elite in traditional China, is "essentially meaningless" when applied to Chinese "peasant popular culture" (pp. 91–92). In a different way, the same reservation is shared by Wang Gungwu, who appeals especially to the experience of the early Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia, for whom the "Confucianism" of the cultured elite would have meant very little (p. 45).

In response, perhaps a "typology" of Confucianism may be offered. For example, Roderick MacFarquhar distinguishes "elite Confucianism" from "vulgarized Confucianism" or "bourgeois Confucianism" (p. 60). Similarly, but more elaborate, Gilbert Rozman distinguishes five types of Confucianism: "Imperial Confucianism", "Reform Confucianism", "Confucianism of social elites not holding high government posts", "Merchant house Confucianism" and "Mass Confucianism" (p. 40). While this may prove useful to a sociological understanding of Confucianism, it is not clear

whether there are core values binding these groups together, or whether and in what ways they have contributed to the modernization of East Asia. Rozman, to be fair, made clear that he was but outlining some preliminary results of an ongoing research project. Nevertheless, evidently the scholarly community is still a long way from any major consensus concerning the meaning and nature of "Confucianism".

An important debate which emerged at the workshop concerns the role of Confucianism in economic development. On the one hand, there is the view that there is no intrinsic barrier to modernization or opposition to the acquisition of wealth in Confucian ethics, so long as wealth is not acquired through immoral means or at the expense of the welfare of the people. As Schwartz puts it, although Confucianism itself "wasn't particularly looking in that direction ... there are many cultural practices associated with Confucianism that, once modernization gets underway, proved to be very favorable to it, such as the habits of industry and collective discipline which Confucianism seems to promote" (p. 16).

On the other hand, Thomas Gold is not alone when he counters that certain aspects of Confucian culture, such as "hierarchical submission" and "acceptance of the legitimacy of powerful individuals and groups determining the role set of individuals", may gravitate towards an "affinity for authoritarianism", which may not be "conducive to the privacy and spontaneity necessary for rapid economic development" (pp. 42–43). Indeed, as MacFarquhar asks, why is it that "in the land of its formation Confucianism has been so singularly unsuccessful, if indeed it is Confucianism that has promoted economic development?" (p. 26). In this regard, a couple of speakers have pointed to a "conflict" or "tension" in Confucianism, be it between "wealth and power" and "moral community" (Tu Weiming, pp. 74–75), between the individual and the state, or the conflicting claims of unity and diversity (Peter Bol, p. 19). What seems clear, in the final analysis, is that Confucianism can hardly be reduced to a monolithic tradition or a fixed set of values yielding predictable results.

Despite the diversity of opinions, one issue at least seems to have found substantial agreement. This concerns the involvement of the state in East Asian society and economic development. Examples from Japan and other countries are drawn to support the claim that East Asian governments tend to make their presence felt more forcefully in the social and economic arenas than their counterparts in the "West". Still, even here, caution must be advised. Ezra Vogel, for example, draws attention to the differences among the various East Asian economies and the ways in which different governments have attempted to direct and manage economic growth" (pp. 84–85). In any event, even if all agree that the state plays a significant role in social and economic development in East Asia, it does not resolve the question whether these countries can be described as "Confucian" states. In this way, we also see how diverse themes in the various sessions are interwoven in the discussion.

Some of the presentations deal specifically with aspects of Japanese and Korean culture, such as education and political-economic planning. In these reports, it is interesting to note, there seems to be a more straightforward and less questioning view that a strong Confucian presence can be detected in Korea and Japan. For De Vos, for example, "The Confucian experience in Japan is no longer taught as Confucianism, but it is still experienced" (p. 54). In Korea, especially among college students, according to Kim Kwang-ok, "the Confucian tradition is a symbol of national

identity and cultural purity" (p. 98). Similar sentiments can be found in the comments by Ronald Dore, Carter Eckert, Michael Kalton, Henry Rosovsky and Samuel Yamashita. Is it the case that a transplanted tradition takes on more intense fervour in its new surroundings? It may also be that upon closer scrutiny ambiguities concerning the purported "Confucian" presence would come into the open.

The workshop took place at the time when world attention was focused on Tiananmen Square. This may have inspired some of the comments on the potentially "negative" side of Confucian culture. Tu Weiming, for example, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, thus remarks that because of its concern with uniformity and control, "a highly politicized Confucian state could be highly repressive" (p. 18). This and other comments bring to view that whereas some participants are interested in Confucianism as an empirical phenomenon, others may have a more personal interest in delineating the spiritual and humanistic core of Confucian ethics which may lead to a rejuvenation of Chinese culture. Regardless of one's interest, however, there is a great deal to be gleaned from this volume.

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Bernard Sellato, *Nomads of the Borneo Rainforest: The Economics, Politics, and Ideology of Settling Down*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994. Translated by Stephanie Morgan.

The book concerns the Punan societies of the Borneo rainforest which consist of a dozen small bands of former hunters-gatherers who are presently settled or partly settled. Sellato explores the different factors which have contributed to bringing these nomadic communities to switch to a sedentary mode of living over a period of two centuries.

The book is divided in two sections. The first part consists of an exhaustive historical reconstruction of the Bukat and the Kereho, two exonyms used in the literature and official documents in the classification of Punan subgroups. The geographical origin of the Bukat is placed in the upper Kapuas of West Kalimantan, while the Kereho represent the groups presently living in the southern part of the Muller mountains. The author's work is based both on secondary historical data and oral traditions collected during ten years of fieldwork among a dozen small groups. Emphasis is placed on the process of population movements and the establishment of trade relations with sedentary farming communities in the broader context of colonial political interaction.

Sellato uses an ethnohistorical perspective. The migration patterns of the different bands are chronologically established via different aspects of social life such as conflicts and the formation of alliances, political organization, marriage patterns, gender roles, dietary habits and linguistic influences. He demonstrates that historical