

economy, critical geography, subaltern studies, and environmental justice, with strategic citations (from which the knowing reader will recognise an outline). While they never elaborate the theory of value behind their descriptions of waste recovery, for example, implicit therein is a long literature in cultural economy. To wit, without citing the likes of Karl Polanyi or J. K. Gibson-Graham, throughout the book they highlight the complex, culturally-determined *linkages* through which value is produced, lost, and recovered — an embedded critique of development and neoliberalism's 'creative destruction'. The same framework informs their critique of casteism. 'The paradox is that waste is mobile', they write, 'but people who collect it seldom are. Waste pickers assemble items that can be hauled up a pyramid of value... [while] upper caste purity is maintained and reinforced by having those at the bottom, low castes and untouchable, available to perform unclean tasks' (p. 213).

The result is a far-reaching survey whose deceptively prosaic argument pulls at many threads of India's social fabric, rather than unpicking a single theoretical or ethnographic seam, as other waste-recovery ethnographies have (such as Alex Nading's description of Nicaraguan chatarreros, or Elana Resnick's Roma municipal recyclers). Relevant to many conversations, scholarly and applied, and with a timeliness proportional to India's growing part in the global waste-stream, the book represents a valuable addition to many a curriculum. 'Contemporary India must redefine its relationship with waste', it argues (p. 14), and the reader can hardly disagree.

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### **Chinese Ways of Being Muslim: Negotiating Ethnicity and Religiosity in Indonesia**

W.W. Hew

Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2018. Pp. xxvi + 305, glossary, map, figures, bibliog., index, GBP£22.50 (Pbk.), ISBN 978-87-7694-211-3.

In the current era of proliferating scholarly literature and increasing intellectual specialisation, rarely does an academic author write *the* book on a particular topic. Nonetheless, this is precisely what Hew Wai Weng has done in *Chinese Ways of Being Muslim: Negotiating Ethnicity and Religiosity in Indonesia*. Hew is the first to attempt a comprehensive ethnographic monograph about the ethnicity and religiosity of ethnic Chinese Muslims in post-1998 Indonesia. 1998 is the year that Indonesia's repressive New Order regime gave way to political liberalisation, opening new possibilities for public expressions of Chinese identity. The empirical ground covered by *Chinese Ways of Being Muslim* guarantees that it will be, for years to come, a useful reference for scholars, students, and anyone else with interest in Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. While the theoretical and thematic framing of the book is somewhat limited, this does not detract from its overall value.

*Chinese Ways of Being Muslim* uses ethnographic field research, predominantly from the Indonesian cities of Surabaya and Jakarta, to describe the identity and representational politics of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in the late 2000s. Each chapter focuses on a different field in which this representational politics takes place: historical narrative (Chapter 2), cosmopolitan imaginaries (Chapter 3), Islamic preaching (Chapter 4), organisational life (Chapter 5), the contestation of religion and culture (Chapter 6), and conversion narratives (Chapter 7). The wide range of topics that are the foci of these chapters illustrates the breadth of the study. This should not suggest, however, a lack of depth. Quite the contrary, the book is rich in fascinating examples of the diversity of Chinese-Indonesian Islamic practice and expression.

Consider Chapter 4, in which Hew describes the life histories and preaching styles of five Chinese-Indonesian preachers and a Chinese-Indonesian Islamic pop band. Here the reader learns of the radically different ways in which these preachers and entertainers cultivate religious authority through configuring particular constellations of Chinese clothing and dance, religious politics, and audience. Hew's treatment

makes clear the fraught symbolic political economy in which these preachers and entertainers carry out their work. He does similar analysis in Chapter 5, describing four Chinese-Indonesian Islamic organisations, with attention to how each fills a different niche in debates over how ethnic Chinese Muslims should orient themselves towards assimilation, Chinese cultural practices, religious conservatism, and related issues.

Within these broad analyses, one finds ethnographic details worth savouring. My favorites are the periodic descriptions of the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque. Through these descriptions one learns that Chinese Muslims of all kinds congregate there, albeit not always interacting directly. These include, among others, liquor-drinking businessmen and young people who claim to align with conservative Islamic political movements. Indeed, even groups of non-Muslim Chinese also attend events, taking the mosque as an emblem of the entwinement of Chineseness, Islam, and indigeneity in Indonesian history. Further, on any given day, one might find the majority of those attending prayers are not Chinese.

These details serve as iconic representations. The book's cover is, after all, a photograph of the Cheng Hoo Mosque with worshipers spilling into the complex's garden. They evocatively illustrate Hew's central argument, namely, that '[d]espite the self-essentialization of Chineseness and the subscription to conservative religious understandings among some Chinese Muslims, I suggest that Chinese Muslim cultural identities, especially as manifested in their mosques, promote religious and ethnic diversity' (p. 2). This is no Pollyanna-ish celebration of pluralism. Hew wrestles honestly with the limits, possibilities, and contradictions of ethnic Chinese Islamic identities. Each of his chapters can best be thought of as a field-specific map of these limits and possibilities. They provide the uninitiated reader a nice sense of the range of expressions of Chinese Islamic identity one is likely to encounter in Indonesia today.

On the surface, such an argument could pass as banal. I suspect most readers who pick up

*Chinese Ways of Being Muslim* will already expect to find such diversity among Indonesia's ethnic Chinese Muslim minority. The account Hew offers is so fully developed, however, that this would not be a fair criticism. The value of the work is not the fact that it makes this argument, but in how it does so through its detailed attention to the matrix of possibilities for representing oneself as Chinese and Muslim in contemporary Indonesia.

A less satisfying aspect of the book is its emphasis on representational identity at the expense of other ways of approaching ethnicity and religiosity. In some respects, this is a manifestation of classic problems in identity studies. Hew so well develops the matrix of possibilities for representing oneself as a Chinese Muslim that he loses sight of anything but the politics of representation. Mosque architecture becomes a narrative of Chinese and Islamic history, liquor drinking a sign of one's pre-conversion identity, and Chinese New Year a symbol of ethnic heritage. Hew does an excellent job showing the reader how all of these representations are contested, but here I am suggesting that these contested phenomena are not simply representations. Mosque architecture is not only a story, alcohol drinking is often the result of a cultivated palate or addiction, and celebrating Chinese New Year might best be understood through the logic of the gift rather than identity politics.

This shortcoming is most apparent in the final chapter, which is about Chinese Muslims' conversion narratives. Unlike in the chapter about Chinese Islamic preachers, the reader finds no extended life histories of particular people. Instead, what Hew offers are ideal types, illustrated by quotations or anecdotes from multiple interlocutors. It is telling that in the earlier chapter, which deals with a group more explicitly in the business of self-representation (that is, Chinese-Indonesian preachers) the reader encounters individuals and the complexities of their lives. In contrast, when turning to seemingly more ordinary and personal representations, where one might expect to find traces of understandings or experiences of being ethnically Chinese and Muslim that are not reducible to the afore-sketched

matrix of representation, the author fragments and reorganises his interlocutors' responses in ways consistent with this matrix.

While this reader would have appreciated more consideration of less explicitly representational aspects of Chinese Muslim life, this does not distract from the empirical wealth found in the text, or the thorough way in which Hew sketches the range of possible ways of representing oneself as a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim. The book is written in an accessible style, making it suitable for readers from the undergraduate level up. I recommend it to anyone with an interest in Chinese-Indonesians, religion and identity politics in Indonesia, and the representational politics of ethnic and religious minorities in general.

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## The Comfort of People

D. Miller

Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017. Pp. x + 226, figures, bibliography, USD\$30 (Hc.), ISBN: 978-1-509-52435-8.

Why did Daniel Miller, well-known for his work on the anthropology of material culture and new media, write *The Comfort of People*, a book that explores sociality among terminally ill hospice patients in English villages? Miller himself acknowledges that he originally had 'no intention of carrying out research with hospice patients' (p. 1). He explains that while conducting the *Why We Post* research project (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/why-we-post>) he was approached by a hospice director who asked him to make some applied recommendations for hospice use of new media. Miller accepted the project because he was frustrated his academic work to date 'never had a directly applied outcome' and 'no one would notice if [he] skived off and did a bit of applied work on the side' (p. 4). This

background is important. Although Miller says he wrote this book as 'a kind of praise poem to the hospice' (p. 6), its core contribution to my mind concerns the relationship between new media and the end of life.

*The Comfort of People* is not a typical scholarly text or anthropological monograph; there are only 35 references and no index. Instead, a short introduction and conclusion frame eighteen short stories. The book also includes Miller's applied recommendations for hospice use of new media in a final chapter. The short stories are generally presented as a discussion of interview transcripts. This can be effective; some beautifully depict patient lives as they navigate health-care systems and keep their loved ones informed of their condition. Story one, for example, called 'Sarah', explores Sarah's adoption of Facebook as a key medium that allowed her to turn her terminal prognosis into 'something of value for others' (p. 20). Facebook allows Sarah to keep everyone apprised of her situation without having to do so individually, while at the same time acting as a canvas for her to collect her thoughts and render them into something intelligible. The book's presentation format, however, may be frustrating for readers seeking greater theoretical and analytical depth. Moreover, some stories do not add much value. Story four, called 'Parkinson's', and story five, called 'Four Friends', for example, are really just interview transcripts with little or no discussion at all.

Yet for what is essentially a footnote of a larger research project, *The Comfort of People* contains insights of interest to media scholars, anthropologists and medical practitioners as well as hospice patients and their network of family and friends. There are three I found illuminating.

The first concerns the promise of new media in mediating social relations—even improving them—among the terminally ill. Here, Miller introduces the notion of polymedia (also discussed in Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller, *Migration and New Media: Transnational Families and Polymedia*, Routledge, 2012). Polymedia is a holistic perspective on media that acknowledges how different media achieve different outcomes for different people. Polymedia thus compels us to avoid asking