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collectors are interested in the same kinds of item, or in items of comparable quality, and different collectors sometimes have strikingly different motivations. There are indications that specific approaches to collecting are typical of Belgium, the Netherlands and the United States respectively. *Tribal art traffic* is a book which anyone interested in the looting and trading of cultural property must read.

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Wong Kwok-Chu, *The Chinese in the Philippine economy, 1898-1941*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999, xvi + 279 pp. ISBN 9715502999. Price: USD 23.00 (paperback).

WILLEM G. WOLTERS

Wong's book, based on a doctoral dissertation submitted at Australian National University, is the first comprehensive study on the Chinese in the Philippines under the American colonial administration from 1898 until the Japanese invasion in 1941. The book neatly links up with Wickberg's (1965, 2000) studies on the late Spanish period. The literature on the Philippine Chinese in the first half of the twentieth century is limited to a few unpublished doctoral dissertations and a handful of books on special aspects of the group such as its national consciousness, its legal position and its social organization. Wong focuses on the growth of the ethnic Chinese community in the Philippines and its economic and business activities in the first four decades of the twentieth century. His intention is not only to paint an overall 'faceless' picture of the Chinese community, but also to provide case studies and little vignettes of particular Chinese personalities and their business dealings.

The book is divided in two parts. Part One gives an overview of the Chinese community during the 1898-1941 period, from the difficult years of the first decade under American rule, through the period of economic expansion from 1909 to the end of the 1920s, and ending with the period of stagnation during the Depression of the 1930s. During this period the Chinese entrepreneurs acquired and maintained a strong position in the domestic economy. Early on under the American regime they had abandoned the intermediary role in the export economy which they had fulfilled under the Spanish administration during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Part Two deals with the Chinese way of doing business in the Philippines, with extensive discussion of the credit and banking system, the middleman role in the economy, and Chinese entrepreneurship.

In his concluding chapter the author tries to answer the question of which

factors can explain the successes of the ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs in the Philippines. Although he recognizes that a multitude of explanations can be brought forward, he singles out four key factors. The first is the Philippine context: the fact that the islands had become an agricultural export economy, which created a relatively strong domestic economy providing business opportunities for the Chinese. The second factor is a cluster of Chinese social features which allowed members of this group to maximize their opportunities: the family system, the norm of *xinyong* (trustworthiness) in business relations, and strong financial networks. The third factor is what Wong calls the sojourning mentality: that is, the expectation among Chinese migrants that they would eventually return to China with their wealth. This attitude motivated them to work hard, to save, to send remittances to mainland China, but also to invest in their own businesses in the islands. As conditions in China became unsettled in the 1930s, many Chinese realized that returning home was not possible and that their future lay in the Philippine islands. The fourth factor is what Wong calls the 'Entrepreneur Factor', the success of the Chinese family firms. At the end of his study Wong points out that while many of the Chinese businesses in the Philippines have been successful, none has been able to enter the category of the largest Chinese businesses in Southeast Asia (where one finds, for example, Oei Tiong Ham's sugar firm in the Netherlands Indies, and Tan Kah Kee's and Lee Kong Chian's rubber enterprises in Malaya). The reason for this was that the Philippine Chinese were not involved in large-scale export of agricultural products, where the greatest amount of money was made, but rather had entrenched themselves in the domestic economy, where profits were much smaller.

Wong has based his study on archival materials and published sources on the period under discussion. He has worked in the National Archives in the United States, and has visited libraries in the Philippines and Australia. Unfortunately a certain (and probably large) amount of source materials, including Chinese newspapers and documents, was lost in the fires that ravaged Manila in the last weeks of the Pacific War. However, Wong has made good use of the available material. He has also used Chinese language materials published in China, which contain much information on Chinese entrepreneurs and community leaders in the Philippines. He has traced the activities of more than 100 Chinese personalities, about 150 companies, and large numbers of Chinese-Filipino organizations.

In Part Two of his study, on the Chinese way of doing business in the Philippines, Wong has collected most if not all of the available information on Chinese business practices. However, it is disappointing to notice that this material does not allow us to look deeper into the Chinese business organizations. More specific information would have been welcome on, for instance, the Chinese system of bookkeeping, credit transactions between firms, infor-

mal banking practices, speculation, and the role of social organization (clans, regional groups). Apparently contemporaries did not find it useful to study these topics. Chinese businesspeople themselves considered these practices natural and not worthy of description, while Filipino and American observers did not expect to benefit from delving deeper. One does not find in the Philippine literature of the period an equivalent of the study undertaken by the tax department in the Netherlands Indies on the Chinese business world (Vleming 1926). Being a conscientious historian who sticks closely to his sources, Wong has not tried to fill in the gaps with information from other countries or a later period. Otherwise he could have used Limlingan's (1986) study on the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, with its detailed analysis of business practices used in the Chinese trading company (for instance, a preference for quick business deals, a low-margin/high turnover strategy, a cash-flow system, centralized management, and strong social control). These management practices go a long way toward explaining the success of Chinese firms. Wong has included Limlingan's study in his references, but has not used the latter's analysis of management practices, probably because he does not want to project the analysis of a later period onto his historical narrative. Limlingan made his observations in the 1970s and early 1980s, and although this was outside Wong's period, Limlingan's penetrating analysis suggests that the practices he described have been standard for Chinese trading companies in Southeast Asia since the late nineteenth century.

Wong's carefully documented and well-written study is an important addition to the economic history of the Philippines, and the author can be congratulated on this achievement.

#### REFERENCES

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