Despite increasing demands from the public (p. 252). In this chapter, the authors also develop a new way to categorize cities based on population size, types of industries and business services available, and outline thirteen policy recommendations related to urban transportation, taxation and loans, and infrastructure needs.

This book will be of interest to those studying urban issues in Southeast Asia as it contributes to a growing analysis of urban spatial segregation. The authors should be applauded for not treating cities as self-contained objects. With their focus on the emergence of temperature-controlled environments and malls, they note that public spaces are being transformed into more exclusive sites. Less attention is paid in the book, however, to how residents are struggling to reclaim the streets or public spaces. The global is often taken too simply, to mean ‘elite,’ ‘capitalist’ and ‘high-tech,’ without attention to other aspects of cities such as migrant workers or the informal economy, which also have global connections. Nevertheless, this book sets the stage for future studies on urban segregation in Southeast Asian that could focus on the unexpected outcomes, tensions, and the sticky materiality of global encounters.

Reference


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This is an important collection of essays about the continuity and discontinuity of hierarchy in the history of a wide range of different societies, especially in the Pacific, Asia, and the Middle East. Most contributors depart from the legacy of the influential scholar Louis Dumont, his specific ideas about comparative research, at once regional and historical, and his understanding of hierarchy within the framework of a theory of values. Not all authors, however,
refer to the work of Dumont, which does not always add to the coherence of the volume as a whole. The book opens nevertheless with a long, theoretical introduction about the advantages and disadvantages of Dumont’s ideas about values, holism and hierarchy in the comparative project of anthropology.

Dumont’s use of the concept of hierarchy is directly related to his theory of values, which in his view invariably organize the relations between elements in a culture. Values denote and signify the relative importance of elements of a culture and as such always serve to produce hierarchies of more or less valued elements. How elements are arranged in such hierarchies can be further specified by referring to Dumont’s idea that the more valued term of a pair encompasses its contrary, that is, in some contexts the more valued term can stand both for itself and for its contrary, as in English the lexeme ‘man’ can stand for both ‘man’ and ‘woman’. But encompassment is just one aspect of the way values organize cultural elements. Dumont also argues that more valued elements tend to be more elaborately worked out and therefore tend to control, if not subordinate, less valued ideas such that they can only be worked out to the extent that they do not contradict more valued ones. An example of this second aspect of Dumont’s theory of values is that in so-called liberal Western societies, ideas about equality of opportunity, which support the achievement of individual difference, are fairly well worked out, while those of equality of outcome, considered to promote the creation of similarity, are less so. The restricted elaboration of values is, in turn, complemented by a third and final aspect of the theory, namely the confinement to subordinate contexts. In a compelling contribution about conversion and cultural change in Papua New Guinea, Joel Robbins demonstrates that traditional religion, with its ontology of spiritual beings, has been subordinated to a place of limited elaboration by emerging forms of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, which have introduced new values such as individual salvation that in Dumontian terms have come to encompass traditional cultural figures by limiting the expression of indigenous ideas that remain associated with them.

In the introduction, Dumont’s theory is introduced and discussed at great length, including the praise and criticisms it has received over the years. Dumont developed his ideas on the basis of his research into the Indian caste system, which caused him to advocate a rigorous distinction between hierarchy and power. Basically, he argued that the Western conception of inequality, intimately associated with, and grounded on, power, is radically different from the Indian conception of hierarchy, which is completely separated from political power. Caste hierarchy, he argued, is a totality ordered by the common value of purity, which encompasses political power, from which it is completely distinct and to which it offers only a subordinate position. The editors of this volume attempt to focus their introduction to this volume on the notion of totality with regard to values. They elaborate that totalisations
of values do not always have to result in representations of a social whole structured along holist lines. Rather, they can be defined as clearly elaborated images representing social life from the point of view of any paramount value. If that value is individualism, for example, which Dumont deems characteristic for Western societies, the totalisation will represent social life as composed of individuals entering relations of their own choosing, rather than as taking the form of a structured social whole. Although this idea is introduced with great vigour, it is unfortunately not systematically adopted in all the papers, which is one of the weaknesses of the volume.

Indeed, this collective volume does not seem to be the result of a collective enterprise, although this does not necessarily detract from the value of individual contributions. It contains two chapters by former students of Dumont, who both emphatically defend his ideas and demonstrate the value of his theory with a case-study on the difference between hierarchy and inequality in Samoa (Serge Tcherkézoff) and with a lucid essay on the distinction between hierarchy and power in Dumontian terms (André Iteanu). As already mentioned, Joel Robbins contributes a fine essay on changing religious values following the globalisation of Christianity in a remote Melanesian society. Annelin Eriksen presents a parallel case from Vanuatu, focusing on two coexisting and structurally complementary social forms, in which gender differences are implicated. Janet Hoskins describes the twentieth century Vietnamese religion called Caodai, offering a new religious interpretation of the colonial encounter with France, from which the issue emerges of how individualism may transform social movements.

David Sneath and Kjetil Fosshagen both challenge Dumont’s assumption that religion provides a point of entry for the study of non-Western societies in which it was supposed to be separated from the political domain, with case-studies about the nomadic state structures of the historical Mongol empire of Inner Asia and the Ottoman empire in the Middle East. Interestingly, Fosshagen refrains from referring to Dumont, just like Valerio Valeri (posthumously) and Ingjerd Hoëm in their contributions about the expression of hierarchy in pre-colonial marriage rules in Hawai’i, astutely labelled ‘horizontal hierarchy’, and the nature of hierarchy in the traditional exchange system of Tokelau. Hoëm finds more inspiration in James Fox’s notion of social ascendancy than in Dumontian ideas of encompassment. Olaf Smedal, finally, turns to contemporary ethnography again with a chapter about the role of sacrifice in Eastern Indonesia (Flores), contending that hierarchical values in his case are not related by encompassment, but rather by obliteration, rendering the other completely irrelevant, thus reigning supreme as unassailable totality. The book concludes with an insightful yet inconclusive epilogue by Frederick Damon.

In sum, there can be no doubt about the standard and the value of these
miscellaneous essays, all addressing hierarchy, most flirting with Dumontian ideas, and without exception analysing continuity and change of hierarchical relations at various levels of a range of different societies. Indeed, they compellingly show that Dumont still provides ample inspiration for the comparative study of hierarchy and change in anthropology.


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Erotic triangles is a brave, surprising, and thought-provoking addition to the ethnographic literature on Southeast Asian performing arts. Readers are likely to agree with Spiller, who states that his interpretation of Sundanese cultural practices is ‘eclectic, heterodox, yet compelling’ (p. 2). His book covers issues of gender, power, and performance in Sundanese arts and culture. He selectively applies a bricolage of divergent theory in an attempt to understand the processes by which Sundanese people reconcile contradictory gender values.

Spiller’s title is indicative of the scope of the book; though the art form on which he focuses is made up of female singers and dancers, drummers and male dancers, Spiller’s thesis is strongest in its appraisal of masculinity and dance. Spiller posits that through dance, Sundanese men express and sculpt their masculinity and social status as they negotiate between leading and following the music. His research on the participation of female performers, however, is less refined. In particular, Spiller’s perspective that the *rongging* (the female dancers and singers) are self-objectified performers expressing the contradictory qualities of ‘both the divine goddess Dewi Sri and prostitutes’ could be seen as restrictive by feminist scholars (p. 89).

While *Erotic triangles* claims to be about Sundanese dance, Spiller’s entry point into his fieldwork was through the West Javanese music tradition of *kendang* drumming. For an outsider moving into Sundanese performing arts, starting with music has some logic. Sundanese drummers can produce both musical sounds and dance movements, but Sundanese dancers usually only know how to perform dance. Drumming might be a nice ingress into examining Sundanese dance, but Spiller unfortunately only provides scant descriptions of dance movement.