
Review

Reviewed Work(s): Hare Krishna in America by E. Burke Rochford,

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ries which explain different critical factors blocking capitalist development in China. Then he argues that the Western theories of capitalism which question why rational capitalism did not develop in China, often provide a misleading answer concerning non-Western societies. Hence, the unique character of the Chinese civilization, according to Hamilton, cannot be explained by a theory, which illuminates the details of Western history. John Clammer and Trevor Ling try to show that Weber's interpretation of the relationship between religious ethic and economic action in Asia is a multi-factoral analysis of an ancient civilization, within which the religious factor played a limited role. They argue that the conventional understanding of the "Weber thesis" has no relevance whatsoever to the social structure of the modern Southeast Asian societies. Clammer shows that there is no direct relationship between the Islamic religious beliefs and the relative underdevelopment in Southeast Asia. In order to explain the real cause of the poverty and underdevelopment in that region, Clammer argues, one must approach from the historical and political economic point of view. Similarly, Ling's study of Hindu and Buddhist communities in Sikkim and Nepal, found no significant direct causal link between religious beliefs and extreme poverty. It is a consequence of a number of socio-historical and political circumstances of these countries.

The essays in these two books show that Weber's comparative study of world religions provides a methodological departure point for sociologists, who are interested in the relationship between religious ethic and secular interests. They show that Weber's ideas on the sociology of religion can be used more effectively, in the changing social context, if they are launched along with his other sociological concepts.

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Soma Hewa

E. Burke Rochford, Jr., *Hare Krishna In America.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1984, 324 pp., \$11.00 US paper.

Despite a conspicuous North American presence of orange-robed, hymn-chanting Hare Krishna devotees throughout the mid-1970s, no full-length academic examination of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) had been published since 1974, a full decade before the appearance of the book under review. If for this reason alone, E. Burke Rochford's eight year study of the American Hare Krishna movement would be a welcome addition to the literature on new religious movements. Moreover, as a very sympathetic participant observer of the Los Angeles ISKCON group for six years, Rochford acquired knowledge of the movement and its participants far beyond what a detached researcher could have attained. For these reasons and others, the book contains much to commend,

and scholars on modern sectarian groups will benefit from examining it. The book also, unfortunately, disappoints on issues of sociological theory, internal cohesiveness, and presentation of qualitative and quantitative research findings. This uneven book could have been better.

The ten chapters represent almost two sets of findings: one set from insights shaped by social interactionism (chapters 1-5); the other from historical descriptions and analyses of organizational change (chapters 6-10). Rochford's interactionist findings are supplemented by answers from a non-random questionnaire that he was able to administer to 213 devotees from six Hare Krishna communities in 1980 (and subsequently which was denied distribution in two more communities because unnamed ISKCON leaders deemed it to be too controversial [p.7]). By his own reckoning, his sample represented about 10 percent of the group's US population at the time (p.xi).

After a brief introduction to the study in chapter one, the author speaks candidly in chapter two about his struggle between observation and active membership, and insightfully identifies personal and academic benefits and costs that resulted from the two, seemingly contradictory, postures.

The third chapter presents most of Rochford's survey findings about Hare Krishna members. Put briefly, converts tended to be former drug experimenters under 21 years old when they joined. They were single, high school educated, middle-class whites who had been members of churches or synagogues in their youth, and were almost as likely to have been Catholic (33 percent) as Protestant (35 percent), while twice as likely to have been Jewish (15 percent) than from no religious background (7 percent). Rochford also presents material about the occupations and earnings of the converts' parents, the converts' involvements in other movements or organizations, their employment situation at the time of joining, and self-reported reasons for doing so. Since the last published survey on Krishna devotees was a smaller (N=63) study done on members from two California centers sometime prior to 1974, Rochford's findings considerably expand what we know about ISKCON members.

After a case study of a young woman recounting her conversion tale (chapter 4), Rochford presents what may be the best section of the book: an analysis of different roads to membership for men and women, plus a related analysis concerning social exchange success for male and female solicitors of money and potential converts. He convincingly shows that "men are often recruited into ISKCON after they have initiated contact with the Krishna devotees in public places, while women are more apt to be recruited through social network linkages with ISKCON members or movement sympathizers" (p. 125). After insisting on the social equality as one solution of their marginal status, Rochford suggests that an alternative solution for some women lies in their "living traditionalist lifestyles [as Krishna devotees] that are given legitimacy and purpose as a matter of ideology" (pp. 135-136). (His

analysis of men, however, does not address the benefits that they accrue from participation in patterns of gender traditionalism.) He next extends his analysis by showing that female devotees are less apt than men to be ignored in public places when trying to initiate a social exchange, since women threaten both sexes less than do men in such settings. These findings, as Rochford himself realizes, well may be applicable to situations far outside of the Hare Krishna movement itself.

With chapter six, the book shifts away from interactionist analyses and toward historical and organizational issues. Specifically, Rochford examines “a number of organizational changes and crises that arose in the middle and late seventies and the strategies used by ISKCON’s leaders and members to avert the movement’s decline” (p. 149). He focuses on “the interrelationship between recruitment strategies, ideology, movement structure, and external social forces as they have influenced ISKCON’s history in America” (p. 150). After a summary of the group’s early days in the late 1960s, Rochford presents a credible picture of the group’s transition from an exclusivistic posture in the early 1970s to a more inclusivistic attitude in the late 1970s. The transition, he shows, was a successful strategy that was designed to offset the diminishment of new recruits at the same time that many persons were leaving the group after the death of its founder, Swami Prabhupada, in 1977.

Also in transition during the mid-to-late-1970s were policies on literature distribution and fund-raising, which Rochford discusses in chapter 8. Briefly stated, ISKCON leaders developed moral and theological justifications for increased fund-raising while ISKCON communities began defining member status in terms of persons’ fund-raising skills (p. 194). Although significant, the tensions caused by these policy shifts were less potentially damaging than the power struggle (that Rochford presents in chapter nine) between the Governing Body Commission (GBC) and the “new gurus” — a struggle that manifested itself in at least five successive crises between gurus, their followers and detractors, and the GBC (the latter of which eventually won).

The final chapter discusses the future of Hare Krishna, and predicts that the movement “promises to exist into the twenty first century” (p. 257). One aspect of this prediction rests upon the group’s development into what seems to be an ethnic church that provides a religiously familiar environment to many South Asians. Furthermore, the group is economically diversifying and undergoing an image-change in the public’s eye (a change which, understandably, the movement itself has tried to effect favourably). Finally, ISKCON appears to be growing at modest rates in several other countries, particularly in Latin America (pp. 276-281). (His failure at this juncture to discuss the role of children in the movement’s growth is unfortunate, especially since he hints at their importance early in the introduction [p.14].

Much useful and occasionally important information lies within the book’s covers, and Rochford’s straightforward prose makes the information easy to assimilate, except for his unavoidable use of several sanskrit terms. A

short glossary, however, would have helped, and its omission is but one of several practical items (such as charts, maps, and lists) that would have aided greatly in the presentation of Rochford's findings. We are never told, for example, exactly where the Hare Krishna temples or communities were in the United States (Canada, by the way, is barely mentioned), nor are we told the location and boundaries of the new gurus' "jurisdictional" zones in which they were responsible for initiating new converts. For my tastes, far too many of the internal source citations to articles and books fail to provide page numbers, thereby making verification of many academic claims very difficult. Minor shortcomings such as these accumulate to the point that they detract significantly from the overall impact of the entire study. He never shows us, for example, a copy of his questionnaire, nor does he identify how many persons he interviewed. In one interesting chart about converts' preconversion involvements in other social, religious, and therapeutic movements, the utility of the information is diminished greatly simply because the author failed to tell us how many members were actually represented by the percentage figures in each cell (p. 65). Finally, he seems to accept the devotional but factually unsupportable claim that the practice of disciplic succession maintains "a five thousand year old tradition... going back to Krishna Himself" (p. 19). Krishna devotionalism is not nearly that old, nor was Krishna an actual historical figure.

On several key issues Rochford's study fails to locate itself within larger bodies of sociological literature, and this failure diminishes the impact that the study will have on the sociology of religion and related areas. For example, Rochford's forthright discussion of his difficulties in maintaining an objective research posture toward his subject fails to cite analogous discussions that other academics have published about their experiences studying such groups as the Jesus People, Mehr Baba, and the Moonies. Curiously, most of these studies were carried out by people whom he acknowledged in the first pages of the book (xiii). Moreover, he also failed to cite at least one earlier, overview study of Hare Krishna that J. Stillson Judah published in 1974, and likewise did not mention an article that Francine Daner published in 1975 on conversion to Hare Krishna. Nor did he cite at least two anti-Hare Krishna books that were in print during the 1970s. By claiming that "there has been no investigation to date which [*sic*] addresses the public outcry generated toward the new religions and the ways this reaction has influenced their choice of strategies and overall patterns of development in the United States and elsewhere" (p. 172), Rochford seemingly forgets work done by Anson Shupe and David Bromley on Moonies and anti-cultists (that he even cites elsewhere), as well as a 1983 article published by James Beckford and Annette Hampshire that documents the reactions of the British Moonies to public pressure in the 1970s and compares it to American Mormon reactions to public pressure in the mid-nineteenth century. While not wanting to belabour the point, Rochford's study omits both sociological

material and other relevant sources, and these omissions, combined with other shortcomings, probably will prevent his study from making the kind of scholarly contribution that perhaps it could have made.

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Karl Mannheim, *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Edited by David Kettler, Volker Meja, and Nico Stehr. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, 256 pp., cloth.

In pursuit of their long-standing devotion to the history and development of the sociology of knowledge in general and the thought of Karl Mannheim in particular, the editors of this volume now offer the first full translation of Mannheim's *Habilitationsschrift* on conservatism, submitted in December 1925 to Professors Carl Brinkmann, Emil Lederer, and Alfred Weber, acting on behalf of the faculty of philosophy of Heidelberg University. Over a year later Mannheim published an article entitled "Conservative Thought" in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*, and it was generally assumed that this was in effect the text of the *Habilitationsschrift*. The editors show that this was not the case. The English version of this paper, prepared by Mannheim's brother-in-law, Paul Kecskemeti with Mannheim's collaboration, went beyond the original article and incorporated additional portions of the *Habilitationsschrift*, but only the present version is its complete translation.

Lest it be thought that we deal here with purely philological niceties, the editors show conclusively that the different versions of the work point to significant tensions and contradictions in the work of the young scholar. In this period, they argue, Mannheim was torn between a value-free Weberian orientation toward the study of intellectual phenomena and Hegelian-Marxist philosophy that was largely inspired by his one-time companion-in-arms, Georg Lukács. When writing in a Weberian vein, Mannheim argued that the social origin of an idea had nothing to do with its validity and that the sociology of knowledge was a program of study, not a philosophy; yet, when following Lukács' lead, he asserted that his ultimate aim was the development of a philosophy of history that would help to overcome the current cultural and social crisis.

A comparison of the different versions of the essay on conservatism, the editors argue, allows one to perceive the hesitations and contradictions that Mannheim suffered when trying to come to terms with these divergent orientations. They also argue, though they do not really document the fact, that Mannheim might have toned down certain of his more unorthodox notions in order not to offend the academic powers that be at Heidelberg. (He did not fully succeed. The Inner Senate of Heidelberg University approved his licensing as *Privatdozent* only by a narrow vote of six to four.)