

**Lisa Rofel, Sylvia J. Yanagisako.** *Fabricating Transnational Capitalism: A Collaborative Ethnography of Italian-Chinese Global Fashion.* The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019. xiii + 377 pp. \$104.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4780-0029-7.

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Based on participation observation and interviews in China and Italy, this book is a collaborative ethnography of Italian-Chinese ventures in the global fashion industry. The two anthropologists, Lisa Rofel and Sylvia J. Yanagisako, conducted ethnographic research in China and Italy with their respective regional and linguistic expertise. Drawing on their decade-long research and a contribution by an anthropologist and fashion studies scholar, Simona Segre Reinach, Rofel and Yanagisako argue that it is the process of privatization, negotiation of labor value, rearrangement of accumulation, reconfiguration of kinship, and outsourcing of inequality that produce transnational capitalism. More specifically, Rofel and Yanagisako point to the crucial role that historical differences of capital, labor, state, and kinship play in forming global capitalism.

In this book, Rofel and Yanagisako introduce a new methodology of multi-sited, transnational collaborative ethnography to study transnational capitalism. They initiated their collaborative research in 2002, connecting Shanghai, China, with northern Italy and other regions of Europe and the United States. They collectively and separately conducted research with Italian firm owners; Chinese and Italian production and distribution managers; and Chinese entrepreneurs, officials, facto-

ry workers, retail clerks, and consumers in the greater Shanghai area, including Hangzhou, Jiaxing, and Wenzhou. Rofel continued her research in a Hangzhou silk factory where she previously worked as an ethnographer in 1984. She also conducted research in a silk yarn factory and a business that includes textile, dyeing, and garment factories. She followed these entrepreneurs to their social networks in the export of clothing. Rofel and Yanagisako conducted a small amount of research together in Prato, Italy, on the fast fashion industry developed by the largest Chinese community in Italy. Yanagisako and Reinach interviewed fashion industry representatives and government officials at the headquarters and production sites of Italian firms in Como, Milan, and Rome.

With the ethnographic evidence presented in the book, Rofel and Yanagisako argue that the historical legacies of nation, kinship, politics, the state, and social inequality play a crucial role in forming transnational capitalism. Central to Italian-Chinese transnational capitalism, they contend, are five key dynamic processes: privatization and public/private division, negotiation of labor value, rearrangement of accumulation, reconfiguration of kinship, and outsourcing of inequali-

ty. Integral to all these processes, they ascertain, is the state.

First, Rofel and Yanagisako argue that their ethnographic research demonstrates that “public” and “private” are not only political but also historically contingent. Their research reveals the ways the Italians and the Chinese negotiate the ambiguity between these two categories in producing Italian fashion. Second, Rofel and Yanagisako show how inequalities of labor power are historically, culturally, and nationally contingent as the Chinese and Italians assert, contest, and renegotiate the value of their labor in their transnational collaborations. Third, the authors argue that the rearrangement of accumulation in China has catalyzed Chinese entrepreneurs’ desires for cosmopolitanism, embodied by fashion and relations with a European nation—Italy. Fourth, Rofel and Yanagisako’s research evinces the pivotal role family and kinship play in the Italian-Chinese transnational capitalist accumulation of wealth. Eschewing the previous argument about the decline of the significance of kinship in modern capitalism, they argue that kinship continues to be crucial in capitalist accumulation in Italy and China. Fifth, they highlight the transnational inequalities produced by ongoing negotiations about whose contributions to transnational capitalism is more invaluable. While the Italians justify inequalities by stressing their Chinese partners’ inexperience in, and lack of understanding, of Western fashion, they also blame Italian labor unions and state regulation policy in Italy for the outsourcing of manufacturing to China and other countries.

This book comprises three parts. Part 1, a chapter by Rofel and Yanagisako, discusses how power asymmetry between Chinese entrepreneurs and Italian owners and managers dictates the ways they negotiate and strive to transform the value of their labor. More specifically, they highlight the historical and power-centric nature of such negotiations in producing the

value of labor. As they demonstrate, these negotiations are contingent on Chinese and Italian cultural identities, historical significance, and relationships with culture, place, and fashion.

Part 2 consists of a coauthored introduction and three chapters written individually by Rofel, Yanagisako, and Reinach. Reinach, an anthropologist of fashion studies, breaks down the process of transnational capitalist collaboration of fashion into three forms: sourcing, the process through which Italian owners garner raw materials and a labor force in China; fashion production, the process through which fashion is produced and manufactured; and branding, the process through which fashion products are distributed worldwide via the brand. Reinach argues that such collaboration is fraught with tension and conflict, as the Chinese actors wrestle with China’s economy and the Italians undergo the crisis of “Made in Italy.”

Rofel’s chapter shows that Chinese entrepreneurs and government officials eschew and distance themselves from China’s socialist past to collaborate with Italians to seek profit. Yanagisako’s chapter demonstrates that Italian owners and managers shoulder the historical baggage of the 1970s labor conflict in Italy, which shapes their style of investment and attitude toward Chinese workers in China. The 1970s conflict has prompted Italian owners and managers to resent the Italian labor union power and favor the willing diligence of Chinese workers. Rofel and Yanagisako’s ethnographic chapters conclude that central to the transnational capitalist collaboration is the ways in which the Italian and Chinese social agents interpret their cultural history, family, and class to understand their current situations and envision future hopes.

Part 3 includes a coauthored chapter and two chapters individually written by Rofel and Yanagisako. Rofel’s chapter examines how the Chinese approach family business with constraints, as family business is regarded as “corruption” in

China. In contrast, Yanagisako, in her chapter, asserts that kinship is central to Italian firms and that family business has been the norm in Italian capitalism. Yanagisako emphasizes two distinct processes of generation that is critical to understanding family business in Italy. These two processes include the generation of new family firms and the succession of generations in family firms. She argues that although transnational Italy-China collaboration has solidified and reinforced the succession of generations in family firms, it has also mitigated and undermined the generation of new family firms in Italy. Rofel and Yanagisako's ethnographic chapters reveal that while kinship is pivotal to Italian family firms, Chinese actors have a more ambivalent attitude toward it. Such a cultural and historical difference shapes the kind of collaborative relationships the Chinese and the Italians develop in their transnational capitalist collaborations.

The conclusion of the book offers a review of the main arguments as well as an update of recent transformations. Rofel and Yanagisako argue that while an increasing emphasis on middle-class Chinese consumers arises, the transnational Italy-China collaboration continues with the changes.

Grounded in an innovative, collaborative multi-sited ethnography, this book makes a major contribution to existing literature by capturing the nature and power dynamics of transnational capitalism. While the book engages closely with previous work on some crucial themes, such as private/public, labor, and kinship, it would have benefited from providing a historical and critical dialogue with previous researchers on the multi-valent concept of "value" and "state." Given their critical roles in the understanding of the essence of transnational capitalism argued in the book, these concepts should be treated with their due historical, cultural, and political significance. That said, the book will be welcomed by a wide array of scholars interested in transnational capitalism, labor, kinship, fashion, China, Italy, and beyond.

globalization

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