

The book's financial forecast also predicts insignificant changes in future rankings. However, a report by the International Finance Cooperation (IFC) on business activities in Indonesia significantly diverges from the book's findings. For instance, while the book suggests that Jakarta is the most competitive province, the IFC report lists the capital at eighth place. Moreover, while Yogyakarta is at number 18 in the book's current rankings; the IFC report deems the province as the easiest to start a business in. Even the book's simulation on improvements in finance and business policies suggests that the province will climb up to at most the ninth position—this is still far below the IFC rank. It also interesting that the capital city of East Kalimantan, Samarinda, is not among the top twenty cities for businesses in the IFC report and, yet, it ranks second in the book.

The book's strength lies in its provision and analysis of vast quantitative information. Data at the sub-national level, let alone data on competitiveness, is hard to come by in the case of developing countries. Secondly, the simulated SWOT analysis provides a "future lens" for policy-makers. Finally, the book employs simple standardized scores to consolidate the various data types into the respective figures on provincial competitiveness.

However, it lacks technical arguments explaining the assumptions it chooses to make. For instance, the governmental and institutional variables used in this study are not sufficient proxies for policies, leadership and bureaucracy operating at the provincial level. Furthermore, some provinces are not likely to improve their weakest indicators if they continue to suffer from underdevelopment. For example, it would be difficult for East Nusa Tenggara to improve its financial, business and manpower conditions if its quality of life and infrastructure development indicators remain stymied. The *what-if* simulation further neglects the fact that politicians and bureaucrats at the *district* level have the authority to set development agendas. As such, provincial governments have limited authority to generate policies and incentives to boost development.

Overall, the book is an excellent introduction to the current and future competitiveness of Indonesia's provinces. However, scholars and policy-makers should remain cognizant of the fact that decentralization has taken place at the district level, which this book does not exactly capture. The reader should approach the rankings with an appropriate knowledge of Indonesia's political and economic history.

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***Malaysia and the Developing World: The Asian Tiger on the Cinnamon Road.* By Jan Stark.** London and New York: Routledge, 2013. Pp. 174.

Jan Stark's *Malaysia and the Developing World: The Asian Tiger on the Cinnamon Road* is intriguing for presenting readers with the multifaceted aspects of trade and development networks incorporating Islam. The author suggests that these constitute alternative modernities. Stark's generally unflattering depiction of these networks focuses on states' and other actors' contemporary transformations of age-old Islamic networks anchored in religion, trade and politics that spanned the Malay World, Central Asia, East Africa and the Middle East from pre- to post-colonial times. His analytical focus falls on the intersections between Islamic values as interpreted by actors, ethnic norms and other translocal identities in shaping agents' economic behaviour. Stark argues that the contemporary networks reflect alternative modernities because they embody non-Western governance styles and cultural underpinnings. This book is situated within the wider debate on the relationship between cultural values and economic behaviour. It is an important contribution to current debates on Islam's relationship with modernity at a time when Asia, which is home to substantial Muslim

populations, is gaining economic prominence on the world stage.

Stark presents other arguments in the book too: that the nation-state is retreating and that global power is shifting from an allegedly hegemonic West to the East. Additionally, he asks if an Islamic *ummah*, or a community of the faithful, held together by common interpretations of Islam, is feasible. The book covers a wide range of geographical locations — Chapters 5 to 9 immerse readers in rich retails about networks linkages between Malaysia and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries, with one chapter focusing on the OIC member, Guyana; and the ties between Southeast Asia and Central Asia, one of the network players here being Kazakhstan. Theoretically, Stark holds together the different network actors strewn across these widespread geographical regions through a framework centred on “meaning”. “Meaning” and its production are the book’s leitmotif and they are conceptualized broadly: “cultures and its intertwinings with politics, questions of power and control, popular appeals to history and a shared past or through authoritarianism and development and its appeals to modernity, progress and change”. The meaning framework is crucial for Stark as he anchors his argument for the presence of alternative modernities as being built upon meaning production. In contrast, his argument is that Western modernities are state-centric and govern their societies through different styles and power structures.

Stark’s theoretical application of “meaning” is most effective in Chapter 5. He anchors “meaning” — reading it as power-based imagined communities linked via spaces — with detailed discussions on how Islamic knowledge and norms now flow less from the Middle East to a recipient Southeast Asia; rather, the flow has reversed in directionality. Malaysia is an important modern Islamic country that is shaping the international Islamic banking and *halal* food markets. I found this chapter the most convincing for providing a well-developed argument and narrative anchored in supporting data; it was effective in what the chapter aimed to do.

A stronger case for differentiating Western, state-centred forms of modernity from meaning-centred alternative modernities would have contributed to a cogent analysis overall. Distracting from this central task is a meaning-based theoretical framework that is too broad and too diffuse. Stark has treated “meaning” as a substitute for “culture”, itself a notoriously difficult concept to define, as anthropologists have shown. The author operationalizes “meaning” in a variety of ways at different junctures in his book. Each of these applications itself is diffuse. The result: a theoretical basis that has yet to show clearly how these modern Islamic networks are different from and alternatives to Western modernities. Using different and broad applications of “meaning”, the author misses opportunities to flesh out his arguments sufficiently. The different theoretical operationalizations of “meaning” include, but are not limited to, the following: “meaning” as “entangled history”, a cross-disciplinary approach that shows the multidirectional intersections between “cultures, history and other fields of the social sciences in terms of translocality and transnationalism”; “meaning” as hybridity and space where what reigns is discordance and “new historical subjects of the transnational phase of late capitalism” and “the global dialectic of the unrepresentable”; and imagined communities that connect different geographical regions. Broad concepts such as “culture”, “identity”, and “history” may have been better served by being specifically defined and anchored to concrete processes of alternative modernities.

Consider Stark’s argument that the Islamic networks he examines are alternative manifestations of modernity because religious and other cultural values are the main organizing network principles. However, states adopting Western forms of modernity can be pinpointed to apply cultural values to enforce, for example, trade protectionism. It becomes difficult to accept a culture-based distinction to differentiate between Stark’s two categories of modernity. Consider also that actors illustrating and espousing alternative forms of Islamic modernities can be shown to

have, for example, bureaucratic procedures and manuals for carrying out banking activities, which also exist in Western banking practice.

The reader is left asking if perhaps, despite its positive contributions, modernity inherently carries seeds of hegemony such that it becomes difficult to differentiate “Western” from meanings-based alternative modernities — Stark’s argument is that actors in both Western modernities and the alternatively modern Islamic networks he examines exhibit hegemony. Where Stark *does* posit two categories of modernity, he raises the intriguing question of whether “Western” and what he refers to as alternative forms of modernity are different yet intrinsically linked styles of thinking and living in the broad domains of religion, politics, economics and culture. Let us take the concept of “Islam”; where it is operationalized in concrete ways by being assigned strict referential meanings, for example, specific and enumerated sets of rituals for Muslims to follow, codes of conduct can be constructed. However, such narrow readings may invite dissent and charges of hegemony with Muslims very likely calling for space where multiple interpretations of Islam can exist. So, when Islam is released from its confining boundaries and each person defines Islam according to her needs and desires, pluralism would have

been achieved but at the expense of a common and universal application and administration of Islam. When there is such a return to a broad meaning of Islam, the most powerful groups’ interpretations of Islam assume prominent power positions in society, again inviting charges of hegemony. And so the cycle continues as an oscillation between the two poles of different styles of thinking. Both applications of Islam carry meaning in Stark’s sense but each is different in the extent to which it offers space for interpretation and pluralism. It is perhaps such processes operating in different domains in society and *where* the balance ultimately falls in the overall picture that can aid in differentiating between what Stark calls Western and alternative modernities.

Malaysia and the Developing World presents the reader with fascinating data. Stark has indeed shown that many versions of modernity exist. These different possibilities confront moderns with questions on how best to actualize their individual and social visions, which often involves not just access to knowledge but being imbued with a moral consciousness to make satisfying decisions.

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