

DOI: 10.1355/sj35-2n

Electoral Dynamics in the Philippines: Money Politics, Patronage and Clientelism at the Grassroots. Edited by Allen Hicken, Edward Aspinall and Meredith Weiss. Singapore. NUS Press, 2019. x+357 pp.

In *Electoral Dynamics in the Philippines*, Allen Hicken, Edward Aspinall and Meredith Weiss teamed up with fifty Filipino researchers to run a series of two-week surveys targeting 1,200 voters across the Philippines. Their objective was to map out “a detailed and nuanced view of electoral dynamics in the Philippines” (p. 7) that would show how family-centred political machines use different types of patronage to win voters to their side. These scholars ran a survey before and during the 9 May 2016 election, where 18,000 national, provincial and local offices were up for grabs. In that election, Rodrigo R. Duterte also became the first mayor to be elected directly into the presidency. They focused their written and oral questions on the flow of monies and other resources from the machines to voters (the editors have listed several caveats that explain why their concern was mainly distribution and nothing else).

The result is not only this rich ‘snapshot’ of the political machines as the “foundational building block of the Philippine patronage system” (p. 9). It is also the first-ever nationwide study of the different ways that *local political machines* pay off voters and prevent them from filling their ballots in favour of the competition. The editors (and one author) lay out a canvas that looks critically at the existing literature (some quite old) on Philippine politics. The portrait is not precisely sanguine—elections are compromised by money, political parties are empty shells (or alternately exist but change political colours regularly) and real power lies in the hands of political families.

Electoral Dynamics in the Philippines sets itself apart from the literature for three reasons. First, we know how patronage resources are distributed from national state leaders to their provincial, city and town allies, but we do not know how these are distributed at

the local level during elections. There have always been frequent complaints about cheating in the polls. But if one looks closer at the pundits and scholars who frequently raise the alarm, one finds their conclusions lacking in detail. What often begins as an assumption gradually turns into assertions. This book stands on quite solid empirical ground.

Second, by showing variations in patronage distribution, the book has given us a more nuanced portrait of ‘vote-buying’ in the Philippines. This habit is not just a question of ward leaders handing out cash to voters. The process is more transactional, as the former engage in bidding wars against rival campaign managers. Voters get to exercise some power as they sit back and wait for which machine offers the highest tender for their votes. Elections may be corrupted by money, but they also represent the only moments in the country’s history where Filipinos ‘get to choose’. After elections, it is back to ‘normal’, where dynasties rule over spoils unencumbered by public concerns. Filipinos assert their democratic right to choose their leaders, as long as the price is right.

Finally, the book throws doubt on just how true the statement is that Philippine elections are won by the candidate possessing the most potent ‘three Gs’—i.e., guns, goons and gold. It turns out that the strategy was never the norm; it was the exception. In all but a few elections where violence appeared widespread (1949, 1969, 1986), voting *throughout the country* has been driven by ‘gold’.

Pundits and scholars had never given any definite answer to the question: how much do votes cost these days? *Electoral Dynamics in the Philippines* has come up with some figures: ₱20 (US\$0.40!) for municipal council seats, and between ₱1,000 and ₱1,500 (US\$20 to US\$30) for mayor and sometimes candidates for the legislature. That said, I am not sure whether voters are still receptive to these paltry sums. When my late father made the quixotic move of running for a city council seat in 2004 (he lost), the price for a vote was already ₱300 (US\$6). By 2016 this surely must have gone up considerably given that the sources of money have likewise increased (from remittances of overseas Filipino workers, to the revenue share of

local governments, to the growing involvement of the illicit sector in politics). But it is also possible that ward leaders could, as it were, keep the price down, with assurances to voters that the ‘additional payments’ in the form of spoils and office positions will come once their candidate wins power.

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DOI: 10.1355/sj35-2o

Identity, Equity and Social Justice in Asia Pacific Education. Edited by Raqib Chowdhury and Lilly K. Yazdanpanah. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2019. ii+186 pp.

This book addresses salient issues of identity, equity and social justice from an Asia-Pacific educational perspective. This project is laudable and ambitious because it endeavours to juxtapose these three separate issues, each of which constitutes a respectable research agenda, in a single volume. It is also timely in that it is a reminder of the need to ‘de-Westernize’ scholarship and give more recognition to indigenous perspectives in a post-colonial era and the dawn of an Asian century, socio-economically and politically.

The book is a great addition to scholarship in two ways. First, many of the contributions in the book recognize the intersection of traditional local culture and global modern forces that collectively shape identities and influence equity and social justice. For example, Matsunaga (pp. 116–36) reports how the transnational identities of four university teachers of English as a foreign language in a Japanese university influenced their patterns of classroom discourse with their students. Kim’s chapter (pp. 167–83) illustrates how differences in perceptions on the Three No’s Policy of academic deans of universities in a metropolitan city such as Seoul and in more remote regions in Korea had implications for equity. Similarly,