

Generous Thrift: Post-Pastoral Cooperation and Fortune-making among the Torghuts of Mongolia

Tomasz Rakowski



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Publisher: [Berghahn](#) [2]

Year of publication: 2022

Book/ journal title: THRIFT AND ITS PARADOXES From Domestic to Political Economy

Original Language: angielski

The author describes some new forms of cooperation that emerged among the Torghut of contemporary Mongolia

with focus on how the Torghut, once children of shepherds, managed to create family- and schoolmate-based collectives orientated towards cross-border trade and then city business-making. We call their skills 'social thriftiness' as they present a virtue of being thrifty and, paradoxically, giving away at the same time. We also show how their way of acting and self-organising is related to their former, pastoral forms of cooperation, and to their material and spiritual investing in the nutag, local homeland, and local sacred mountains.

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Edited by **Catherine Alexander and Daniel Sosna**

Afterword by Chris Hann

DESCRIPTION:

Thrift is a central concern for most people, especially in turbulent economic times. It is both an economic and an ethical logic of frugal living, saving and avoiding waste for long-term kin care. These logics echo the ancient ideal of household self-sufficiency, contrasting with capitalism's wasteful present-focused growth. But thrift now exceeds domestic matters straying across scales to justify public expenditure cuts. Through a wide range of ethnographic contexts this book explores how practices and moralities of thrift are intertwined with austerity, debt, welfare, and patronage across various social and temporal scales and are constantly re-negotiated at the nexus of socio-economic, religious, and kinship ideals and praxis.

REVIEWS

"This is an exciting and theoretically innovative volume... It presents a collection of richly ethnographic, well-written chapters from across the globe which re-consider thrift – as a category of social, material, and economic action – in the light of contemporary ethnographic research and theory." • Nicolette Makovicky, University of Oxford

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