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Anthropologies and Histories: Essays in Culture, History, and Political Economy (Hegemony and Experience)

William Roseberry

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"Elegantly written essays. . . . Roseberry is the real gem, an anthropologist with extensive Latin American field experience and an impressive scholarly grasp of the histories of anthropology and Marxist theory."--Micaela di Leonardo, The Nation "An extremely stimulating volume . . . rich and provocative, and codifies a new depature point."--Choice "As a critic . . . Roseberry writes with sustained force and clarity. . . . his principal points emerge with a directness that will make this book attractive to a wide range of readers."--American Anthropologist "Roseberry in among the most astute, careful, and theoretically cogent of the anthropologists of his generation. . . . [This book] illustrates well the breadth and coherence of his thinking and guides the reader through the complicated intersections of anthropology with history, political economy, Marxism, and Latin American studies."--Jane Schneider, CUNY In Anthropologies and Histories, William Roseberry explores some of the cultural and political implications of an anthropological political economy. In his view, too few of these implications have been explored by authors who dismiss the very possibility of a political economic understanding of culture. Within political economy, readers are offered sophisticated treatments of uneven development, but when authors turn to culture and politics, they place contradictory social experiences within simplistic class or epochal labels. Within cultural anthropology, history is often little more than new terrain for extending anthropological practice. Roseberry places culture and history in relation to each other, in the context of a reflection on the political economy of uneven development. In the first half of this books, he looks at and critiques a variety of anthropological understandings of culture, arguing for an approach that sees culture as socially constituted and socially constitutive. Beginning with a commentary on Clifford Geertz's seminal essay on the Balinese cockfight, Roseberry argues that Geertz and his followers pay insufficient attention to cultural differentiation, to social and political inequalities that affect actors' different understandings of the world, other people, and of themselves. Sufficient attention to such questions, Roseberry argues, requires a concern for political economy. In the second half of the book, Roseberry explores the assumptions and practices of political economy, indicates the kind of problems that should be central to such an approach, and reviews some of the inadequacies of anthropological studies. William Roseberry is a professor of anthropology at the New School for Social Research.

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