



In the Name of Civil Society: From Free Election Movements to People Power in the Philippines (Southeast Asia: Politics, Meaning, and Memory)

Eva-Lotta E. Hedman

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What is the politics of civil society? Focusing on the Philippines - home to the mother of all election-watch movements, the original People Power revolt, and one of the largest and most diverse NGO populations in the world - Eva-Lotta Hedman offers a critique that goes against the grain of much other current scholarship. Her highly original work challenges celebratory and universalist accounts that tend to reify "civil society" as a unified and coherent entity, and to ascribe a single meaning and automatic trajectory to its role in democratization. She shows how mobilization in the name of civil society is contingent on the intercession of citizens and performative displays of citizenship - as opposed to other appeals and articulations of identity, such as class. In short, Hedman argues, the very definitions of "civil" and "society" are at stake. Based on extensive research spanning the course of a decade (1991-2001), this study offers a powerful analysis of Philippine politics and society inspired by the writings of Antonio Gramsci. It draws on a rich collection of sources from archives, interviews, newspapers, and participant-observation. It identifies a cycle of recurring "crises of authority," involving mounting threats - from above and below - to oligarchical democracy in the Philippines. Tracing the trajectory of a Gramscian "dominant bloc" of social forces, Hedman shows how each such crisis in the Philippines promotes a countermobilization by the "intellectuals" of the dominant bloc: the capitalist class, the Catholic Church, and the U.S. government. In documenting the capacity of so-called "secondary associations" (business, lay, professional) to project moral and intellectual leadership in each of these crises, this study sheds new light on the forces and dynamics of change and continuity in Philippine politics and society.

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