

revolution or civil war (e.g., China, Cuba, USSR). In the case of the remaining countries, power acquisition took place as a byproduct of resisting colonial control, a coup d'état, subsequent to a major military defeat, or after an electoral victory of a communist party. Although Pryor was not able to undertake a cluster analysis, he informally distinguishes the core nations consisting of the Soviet Union, Eastern European regimes, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and North Korea from third-world Marxist regimes such as Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, and South Yemen. He shows that with respect to the nonmarket allocation of resources and regarding price controls, the Soviet Union adhered closest to the Marxist "canonical case" (237) while the other core nations did less so. In third-world Marxist countries the governments had only limited control over the economy because of their reliance on traditional agriculture and the weakness of the Marxist elite.

With respect to economic performance, Marxist regimes did not lag significantly behind market-based economies, and at least in the case of Eastern Europe equality of distribution was greater than in market economies. Yet, most Marxist regimes have had a relatively short life span, with the longest enjoyed by the Soviet Union. The main difficulty the latter encountered in the second half of the 20th century was the growing problem of managing the canonical Marxist economic system. This was compounded by loss of industrial discipline, and rising mistrust and discontent. Finally, there was the ideological shift represented by the "Gorbachev Factor" (259). Once the Soviet Union dissolved, so did the other Marxist regimes in Eastern Europe because in effect they were colonial extensions of the Soviet Union with which they shared similar problems. For third-world Marxist countries, the difference between promise and performance led to their termination, especially once external backing was discontinued. It is of interest that the surviving four Marxist regimes – China, Vietnam, Cuba, and North Korea – had gained power through revolution, national liberation movements, or civil wars, and that all have seen some military action against the US. Finally, the question of whether Marxist and market-based economic arrangement will over time converge, history has turned by and large moot. Perhaps, Pryor points out, China and Vietnam will show the way if they can construct a stable balance between "a centrally planned economy and a market economy with relatively little direct government interference in production and distribution" (263).

While truly grand in scope, this study offers only modest findings. Pryor found that each developmental stage of production contains a number of integrated economic systems that are defined by institutions of property and distribution. While the characteristics of economic systems seem not to have played much of a role in the transition from foraging to agriculture, they did so in the change from agriculture to industry. The author did not find evidence that the sociopolitical context and the environment have much to do with what economic systems have evolved and survived. That is, economic systems "appear as independent entities, worthy of study in their own right" (267). Finally, Pryor cannot say much about some areas of interest because of lack of data, such as economic performance in the case of foraging and agricultural economies. In many ways, therefore, this work leaves the reader with more questions than answers.

Those who have doubts about the validity of studies based on the SCCS and similar quantified cross-societal data sets will dismiss this book – as, for instance, Owen Lattimore did with respect to Pryor's "The Origins of the Economy" (1977), a similar quantitative study. However, even without taking such extreme view, problems with this type of data exist. One question is whether much can be said about developments that took place thousands of years ago, such as the rise of agriculture, on the basis of a sample of contemporary traditional societies. Pryor replies that the results from his crosscultural data set are "plausible but not airtight" (91), and rather cavalierly maintains that the burden of proof is with those who disagree; they need to show that data exist about the transition to agriculture of some 10,000 years ago which challenges his finding. A similar question exists with respect to foragers. His data is derived from contemporary foragers who in their economic and political structure probably are very different from those that used to exist in rich environments of, say, preagricultural Europe. This matter is not discussed by Pryor.

According to Pryor, some anthropologists have charged him "of having 'evolutionist, materialist, and functional' conceptions of preindustrial societies" (23, n. 22). This charge seems rather unfair. As Pryor points out, how can he be accused of this if his effort has been to test socioeconomic relations rather than to assume them? However, his emphasis throughout the book on the economic system – though standard among economists, it is less so among anthropologists – might lead some among the latter to charge him with func-