



Capitalists in Spite of Themselves: Elite Conflict and European Transitions in Early Modern Europe (Elite Conflict and Economic Transitions in Early Modern Euro)

Richard Lachmann

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Here, Richard Lachmann offers a new answer to an old question: Why did capitalism develop in some parts of early modern Europe but not in others? Finding neither a single cause nor an essentialist unfolding of a state or capitalist system, Lachmann describes the highly contingent development of various polities and economies. He identifies, in particular, conflict among feudal elites--landlords, clerics, kings, and officeholders--as the dynamic which perpetuated manorial economies in some places while propelling elites elsewhere to transform the basis of their control over land and labor.

Comparing regions and cities within and across England, France, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands from the twelfth through eighteenth centuries, Lachmann breaks new ground by showing step by step how the new social relations and political institutions of early modern Europe developed. He demonstrates in detail how feudal elites were pushed toward capitalism as they sought to protect their privileges from rivals in the aftermath of the Reformation.

Capitalists in Spite of Themselves is a compelling narrative of how elites and other classes made and responded to political and religious revolutions while gradually creating the nation-states and capitalist markets which still constrain our behavior and order our world. It will prove invaluable for anyone wishing to understanding the economic and social history of early modern Europe.

Capitalists in Spite of Themselves was the winner of the 2003 Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award of the American Sociology Association.

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