



# Marketing Death: Culture and the Making of a Life Insurance Market in China

*Cheris Shun-ching Chan*

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How do companies sell life insurance in a country where death is a taboo subject? In *Marketing Death*, Cheris S.C. Chan explores both how and why the life insurance industry has managed to emerge in China, a country with an entrenched cultural stigma against the very topic of death. Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork and engaging with current scholarship, Chan explores the processes and micro-politics by which foreign and domestic companies have negotiated local cultural resistance and created a market in spite of it. In doing so, she asks larger questions about how different societies view and value life and death, what is meant by "cultural values," how they interact with a set of fragmented cultural tools to compellingly organize individuals' practical daily lives, and how the market is influenced by them. Chan tells a story not just of the emergence of the Chinese life insurance industry, but of the dynamic relationships between culture and markets, local norms and foreign influences in one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

*Marketing Death* is the first book to offer a sociological analysis of the emergence of a life insurance market outside of a European or American context. Through in-depth study of the expansion of an industry whose unique "product" - gambling on one's own sudden death - has always met with a measure of resistance, but never more so than in China, Chan provides a new lens for understanding how modern capitalist enterprises are diffused to regions with disparate cultural traditions.

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