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Family Firms, Transnationalism and Generational Change: Chinese Enterprise in Britain and Malaysia

Edmund Terence Gomez

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Abstract This article reviews theoretical perspectives about the development of Chinese-owned enterprises in two major sets of literature. The first school of thought adopts culture as the primary explanatory tool for the dynamism of Chinese enterprise. The second school employs the concept of transnationalism, which has served to create a link between identity and capitalism, to analyse Chinese entrepreneurship. Both sets of literature argue that common ethnic identity facilitates the creation of business networks, which explains the rise of Chinese capitalism. This study questions the foundations of these theoretical arguments by tracing the evolution of family firms and by employing the concept of a "generational change".

Keywords Chinese enterprise · Culture · Transnationalism · Networks · Identity · Family business · Generational change

Culture, Family Firms and Enterprise Development

A contentious tradition of scholarship has emerged in which scholars of one school have traced Chinese economic behaviour to cultural traditions, particularly Confucian ethics. In this literature, Chinese culture explains the dynamism of entrepreneurship


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