



# Hard Bargaining in Sumatra: Western Travelers and Toba Bataks in the Marketplace of Souvenirs (Southeast Asia)

*Andrew Causey*

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## **Hard Bargaining in Sumatra: Western Travelers and Toba Bataks in the Marketplace of Souvenirs (Southeast Asia) Andrew Causey**

Hard Bargaining in Sumatra is an artfully written and penetrating examination of interactions between Western travelers and Toba Batak wood carvers in the souvenir marketplaces of Samosir Island, North Sumatra. Toba Batak carvings, ranging from simple human figures of wood to elaborately engraved water buffalo horns, are described in tourist guidebooks and by Toba Batak vendors alike as "traditional" and "antique," despite many recent changes and inventions in form. This pathbreaking work investigates how notions of place and self are constructed by the travelers and the Bataks in the context of ethnic tourism. The author proposes that these interactions be understood in light of Louis Marin's concept of utopics, suggesting that tourist venues such as hotels and marketplaces are neutral spaces where both locals and visitors can act out behaviors that would ordinarily be constrained by their respective cultures. Rich in ethnographic description and employing a lively narrative style, Hard Bargaining in Sumatra is essential reading for students and scholars with interests in anthropology, cultural studies, globalization and tourism research, art history, and identity studies.

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