



The Evolution from Horse to Automobile: A Comparative International Study

Imes Chiu

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Little work has been done to explicate the motivational factors of agency, particularly in cases where an artifact initially deemed ineffective or superfluous becomes an everyday necessity, such as the automobile at the turn of the twentieth century. Farmers saw it as a "devil wagon" but later adopted it for use as an all-around device and power source. What makes a social group change its position about a particular artifact? How did the devil wagon overcome its notoriety to become a prosaic mainstream device? These questions direct the research in this book. While they may have been asked before, author Imes Chiu (PhD, Cornell University) brings a different and refreshing approach to the problem of newness. Preexisting practices and work routines used as explanatory devices have something interesting to say about diffusion strategies and localization measures. This innovative study examines the conversion of users. To understand the motivating factors in mass adoption, the study focuses on perceptions and practices associated with horses and motorcars in three different settings during three different periods. All three cases begin with the motorcar in the periphery: all three end with it achieving ubiquity. This multiple-case design is used for the purpose of theoretical replication. Results in all three cases show that a contrived likeness to its competitor—the horse—contributed to the motorcar's success. The motorcar absorbed the technical, material, structural, and conceptual resources of the technology it displaced. This book, which includes several rare photographs, will be an important resource for those who wish to study the history of transportation and technology adaptation.

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