

Reviews

W. Dean Kinzley, *Industrial Harmony in Modern Japan: The Invention of a Tradition*. London: Routledge, 1991. pp. xvii + 190. Hardback £ 35.50.

The role of a feudal legacy and Confucian values in shaping Japan's system of employment relations has been a controversial topic among scholars of industrial sociology and industrial relations for at least two decades. This book provides a sobering contribution to the debate by focusing on the development of an ideology of 'harmony' during the inter-war years.

In providing a detailed history of the *Kyochokai* (The Cooperation and Mutual Harmony Society) Kinzley describes elite attempts to 'create and articulate a new industrial ideology', one emphasizing the factory as 'moral community' and with the intention to forge 'a civil religion for the new modern industrial society'. What Kinzley argues convincingly is that such an ideology was no simple 'natural' development, but rather faced intense competition from conflicting ideologies – such as laissez-faireism, Japanese nationalism, democracy and socialism – in currency at the time.

Drawing selectively on Confucian values and appeals to the Japanese feudal way of life, the *Kyochokai* pursued *kyochoshugi* ('harmonism') which required a 'subjugation of particular interests to the needs and demands of society and the nation'. As Kinzley explains, the *Kyochokai*, made up of leading businessmen and public officials, had only limited success in its attempts to determine a legislative and institutional framework for the solution to the new 'labour problem' in a rapidly developing industrial nation. It did play a critical role, however, in 'thought guidance' and by the end of the 1930s *kyochoshugi* provided a frame of reference for the Japanese government. This came through academic and popular publications, worker and management training activities, and strike

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mediation, among others, and Kinzley carefully describes the relevance of these activities in the context of inter-war social, political and economic developments.

This book is unlikely to appeal to general student or practitioner audiences, but will be of great interest to labour and business historians and Japanophiles for its detailed description – drawing on a wealth of sources unpublished in English – and analysis of an organization whose activities helped shape modern Japanese industrial relations. It is also an important contribution to the debate over the role of 'culture' in explaining modern Japan. The book is therefore highly recommended by the present reviewer.

Barry WILKINSON
Cardiff Business School
University of Wales
Cardiff
Wales, UK

Sonja A. Sackmann, *Cultural Knowledge in Organizations: Exploring the Collective Mind*. Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1991. 220 pp. Softcover.

The book concerns a case study of the organizational culture of an American electronics firm and proposes an alternative mode to capture culture in organizations. It addresses the question of culture homogeneity and the question of culture creation and maintenance. The author argues that organizational culture could be captured looking at a set of categories which guide perception and thinking like cognitive maps. She suggests that cognitive maps may be captured looking to different kinds of cultural knowledge such as dictionary knowledge (what it is), directory knowledge (how things are done), recipe knowledge (what should and to be done) and axiomatic knowledge (why things are done).

The section on dictionary knowledge does not reveal much about the organization's culture but it is rather an uninteresting and formal description of the organization's goals, strategy and structure. The question of the cultural groupings as posed in the beginning of the book seemed appealing, as there is not much in the literature on sub-cultures in organizations. The book does not add much about this issue as it concentrates again on formal and functional description of the groups identified.

The issues discussed in the section about directory knowledge seem to be relevant to understand an organization's culture. The organization nevertheless, is presented to the readers as an ideal company where people are happy and where there are no major conflicts and contradictions. As the author describes it 'in general relationships among people at BIND can be characterized as informal, direct, open and respectful with congruence in verbal and non-verbal behaviours. People behave authentically and deal with each other in an honest way. They generally mean what they say and follow up on it with specific actions (p. 98) ... 'Respect is expressed toward people as human beings in their work roles. People who are knowledgeable and skilled in their areas are considered experts (p. 101) ... 'People respect the boundaries of their own territory, turf, or functional domain – whatever one may call it – and those of their coworkers' (p. 101). ... 'People tease and joke with each other but they don't 'step' on each other personally so that somebody may be hurt.'

BIND may indeed be a nice company in which to work to, however one may wonder if this kind of internal organizational image is not produced by the methodology itself, the kind of people which were interviewed and the kind of topic used (introduction of innovation and changes) to capture organizational culture. It certainly does not seem appropriate to capture the culture dynamics, its hidden dimensions and the kind of power relationships culture uncovers. Therefore, it does not seem to be able to capture the particularistic aspects of an organizational culture either.

The section on axiomatic knowledge is interesting to read and it gets closer to what I would understand as being an organizational culture. Also, I would not like to fail to mention that the general framework the author proposes to analyze or-

ganizational culture at the final parts of the book is interesting and may be potentially relevant to those interested to study organizational culture. The way it is used in the book, however, presents a major drawback, either due to the sample (composed mostly by managers) or to the kind of interview topic and schedule used (topic focused). It seems that the method used is only able to capture the rational formal and prescriptive dimensions of organizations. Although the book proposes to discuss culture homogeneity, it does not capture culture heterogeneity or the dynamics of cultural divisions in organizations. It is biased, focused on the questions of integration and cohesion.

Finally, the author rejects the existing definitions of culture based on the fact that they have not been properly explored in the organizational context yet. She argues, however, that her measures do not correspond to culture dimensions but she intends on the other hand to apprehend organizational culture at the same time. In my view, and she herself argues it too, they may be relevant to capture cultural knowledge in organizations. If they describe organizational culture remains yet to be seen.

Suzana BRAGA RODRIGUES
Dept. of Administrative Sciences
University of Minas Gerais
Belo Horizonte
Brazil

Lauren Benton, Thomas Bailey, Thierry Noyelle and Thomas Standback Jr., *Employee Training and U.S. Competitiveness*. New York: Westview Press, 1990. 115 pp, \$ 30.00.

With the U.S. economy's increased vulnerability to recession and foreign competition, attempts to identify and explain underlying trends in economic development have acquired greater urgency. Whereas the early 1980s produced contributions which emphasised the global 'revolutionary' impact of technology, more recently there has been an increasing awareness of the role of culture-specific institutions (such as vocational educational and training systems in determining the implications for particular countries of changes in markets and tech-

nologies. In particular, the pre-eminence of Japan, and later the newly industrialised countries, underplayed by earlier analyses, has encouraged this trend towards self-examination by the Anglo-Saxon countries.

The book places itself solidly in the by now familiar terrain of 'flexible specialisation', as defined during the 1980s writers such as by Piore and Sabel, Hirst and Zeitlin, and Sorge and Warner. The relative originality of its contribution lies in its empirical application of the concepts concerned (fragmentation of mass markets and retreat of mass production) to services, recognising the wave of technological change and restructuring now affecting that sector. The authors see the parallel with manufacturing extending still further, with a trend towards regional and 'niche' service-markets echoing the precedent of industrial districts and networks.

As with manufacturing, services are now seen to require a more subtle approach to skills and training, as traditional approaches characterised by routinisation and de-skilling give way to broader skills and a reduced division of labour. The need for more flexible working with more advanced technologies is seen by the authors to require an emphasis on training in three areas: technical skills (increasingly for non-technical personnel), conceptual skills (involving a better understanding of the whole task or process) and communication skills (to suit less bureaucratic structures in which a wide range of employees deal directly with customers, both internal and external). Technical and organisational changes thus mean that firms need to carry out more training, and of a more varied type than before. Whatever the imperatives, the author's detailed sectoral case-studies (banking, textiles, retailing and business services) show uneven development between sectors and between different sectors of the workforce. While accepting that training deficiencies (as opposed to educational deficiencies, which are played down) have been a major cause of reduced competitiveness, the authors emphasise the increased commitment to training on the part of U.S. employers in all sectors with training being seen as integral to the restructuring and repositioning process. Some of the data is perhaps unsurprising – textiles being found to use training as a means of increasing the level of in-

novativeness amongst a de-skilled workforce bequeathed from the Fordist era. This, unsurprisingly contrasted with the position in business services, where a constant supply of qualified recruits has been available. In retailing, again as one would expect, training approaches diverge sharply, with more innovative training more than managerial elite than for the shopfloor where a traditionally narrow focus remains. Banks and consultancies have used training as merely one part of an overall strategy of more flexible working. The authors stress the degree to which training is not a panacea for organisational problems and only has the desired effects if combined with other strategies for change. In addition, training strategies were only found to be effective if they extended up to the higher levels of management. In other words, training at lower levels is no substitute for a more comprehensive shift in the way organisations are managed. In terms of the currently popular debate over the role of the corporate centre, the study found that effective training strategies required a mixed approach, with planning and co-ordination from the centre, combined with an enhanced role for divisional managers in terms of the actual delivery of training.

The book's empirical material (which makes up around four-fifths of the total length) is accessible and engagingly, if rather generalistically, reported. As such it provides many potentially useful examples and insights for personnel professionals, academics and, for that matter, the general reader. Perhaps inevitably, the introduction and conclusions which attempt to place the sectoral case studies in a wider context, and draw out their implications for a wider readership, beg more questions than they can answer in the limited space provided. The complexity and ambiguity of the conclusions, presented in a style that is concise to the point of being cryptic in places, obscures, I think what would be valuable lessons for policy if worked through in more detail.

Nonetheless the book represents a refreshing addition to an expanding field of research and debate.

Adrian CAMPBELL
School of Public Policy
University of Birmingham
Birmingham
United Kingdom