

Book Review

S. Chatterjee and A. Nankervis (eds), *Asian Management in Transition: Emerging Themes*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke and New York, 2006, paperback, 386 pp.

Books on globalization continue to pour from the presses of the publishers, whether large and small, academic and practitioner-oriented, international or regional. One useful text that focuses on Asia in particular has caught our attention. Readers of *Human Systems Management* may well be interested in its coverage of the many themes often covered in the journal.

Who are the authors? Professors *Samir Chatterjee* and *Alan Nankervis* (who teach international management in Australia, at Curtin and RMIT, respectively) lead a team of specialists in the field. To be more specific, Dr. Chatterjee is Professor of International Management in the School of Management, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Western Australia. He has taught at several universities in Europe, USA and Asia, including the University of Warwick in the UK, the Thunderbird School of International Management in the USA and Hokkaido University in Japan. Dr. Nankervis is Associate Professor of Human Resource Management at RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. He is the author of a successful Australian textbook, *Strategic HRM* (4th edition). The contributors cover a wide range of countries in the affiliations and origins, many of them based in Asian or Australian universities, so they constitute a credible international cast.

What is the book about? The editors have produced a solid, detailed and edited text entitled *Asia Management in Transition: Emerging Themes*, as a user-friendly work of five parts and eleven chapters. As the authors point out, the work offers a comparative examination of business and management in Asia. By zeroing in on eight key Asian countries, it looks at the impact of both globalization and national managerial cultures on managerial development and practices and evaluates the varying responses to the challenges of globalization made by economies with a wide range of managerial heritages. It offers a practical guidebook for students, enabling them to map the divergent and

convergent forces that shape the managerial transition process in Asia. Interested in the dynamics of globalization, the editors first deal with the ‘convergence–divergence’ debate (p. 16ff) but later go on to examine each country’s system geographically, all eight of them, rather than thematically.

Which nations appear in the text? The main nations the book deals with, China, India and Japan are all well-covered and the others in the region in similar detail, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand. Perhaps it was odd to leave out Hong Kong and Taiwan, however. The editors tend to be relatively enthusiastic about ‘convergence’ but at the same time explore in rich detail the diversity found in the Asian context. They use as the *point de depart* the ‘Asian Management Model’ as their main framework to promote a ‘holistic’ understanding of its characteristics (p. 23). The emphasis on national models is persuasive, as you know when you have left India and arrived in China to do business, for example, in spite of converging modes of management.

What are the merits of the work? There is indeed a great deal of very useful factual description, as well as over-arching analysis, to be found in this book, especially the historical background to each national economy and its management system. But this is not an edited symposium aimed at specialists; it is more of a generalists’ *teaching text*, let us say for a relatively advanced student readership, compared with other competing volumes.

What are drawbacks? A few criticisms may be made about this teaching-text. The quality of the chapters is variable; the collaborators of the editors are a ‘mixed-bag’, some better than others. But the editors appear to be less self-consciously striving for academic respectability than other authors of similar works; they keep more to the ‘straight and narrow’, instead of getting mired in doctrinal disputes. The referencing in the book, for instance, also might be improved in the second edition by eliminating some of the older pre-2000 articles cited and replaced by more recent ones. Tables might be updated as well. A full bibliography at the end of the book would also be welcome.

Who will the book appeal to? The book should at-

tract an MBA readership but can also be easily recommended for third-year undergraduates. In paperback, it represents good value at the list-price, given the number of maps, figures and tables included, as well a list of abbreviations and a good index. Since the Asian market is now more and more the dynamo of global economic growth, knowing more about its manage-

ment is essential for students; this book has indeed much to be said for it.

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