

BOOK REVIEWS

The Dark Side of Japanese Business

Three 'Industry Novels'

BY IKKŌ SHIMIZU

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY TAMAE K. PRINDLE

ARMONK, NEW YORK: M.E. SHARPE, 1996

277 PAGES

This book consists of three novels dealing with aspects of Japanese business life, written over a span of twenty-four years. The first, *Silver Sanctuary*, dating from 1969 and included in slightly different form in Prindle's earlier translation, *Made in Japan and Other Japanese "Business Novels,"* concerns a breach of bank secrets, eventually traced to a female bank employee seduced and rejected by her coworker, a man on the executive track. The story illustrates the tension in gender roles and expectations in Japan, and the different career trajectories that these different roles entail. The second novel, *The Ibis Cage*, first published in 1968, is about the negotiations and manipulations involved in the defloration of a geisha: an eighteen-year-old well coached in her role of attracting the desire and earning the money of rich old clients. The third novel, *Keiretsu*, first published in 1992, makes up by far the bulk of the book. It concerns a first-tier *keiretsu* parts supplier, Taisei Automobile Lighting Company, and its strained relations with Tokyo Motors, its parent company and major customer, by whom it is ceaselessly exploited. The novel unfolds through Shigeya Hamada, the aging president of Taisei, and his efforts to install his son as president, as against the efforts of Tokyo Motors to take over Taisei's presidency; this takes place against the backdrop of the 1985 Plaza Accord, the 1987 stock market crash, the death of the *Shōwa* Emperor, and other events of the late 1980s.

Although they contain interesting insights into Japanese human relations, I would be reluctant to use the first two of these novels in my classes on Japanese society and on culture and business. Students already prone to exoticize Japan don't need to read about geisha defloration in the context of contemporary Japanese business; nor do students already prone to hold stereotypes about Japanese women need to read about young women throwing their lives away on men who spurn them. These novels, as noted above, were written in the 1960s, and are indeed dated. Since the value of Shimizu's novels for an English-speaking audience is pedagogical rather than literary, it seems odd that Prindle selected these novels to translate: why not more recent works by Shimizu or other "industry novelists," works less susceptible to the lures of stereotyping and exoticism?

The third of these novels, *Keiretsu*, is, however, an altogether different matter. This novel, in its portrayal of the human miseries created through the "colonial" relationship between parent company and supplier, is important as an antidote and counterpoint to more abstract and more positive accounts of the structure and workings of

the Japanese economy. There are a number of recent ethnographies discussing the quandaries faced by Japanese blue-collar workers, but I know of none discussing the plight of employees in small supplier companies at the mercy of their *keiretsu* parent company. One must be cautious about using a novel to illustrate social reality (I would think twice before assigning John Gresham to a class studying the American legal system); but the novel's portrayal of Japanese business, while a touch melodramatic, does ring true to my ears.

This novel is by no means a great piece of literature—its characters often sound in their conversations as if they are self-consciously explaining Japanese economics to a gallery of college students—but this hardly matters. The story is gripping, and teaches a great deal about "the dark side of Japanese business," as well as about other aspects of Japanese life. I will use it in my own classes, and I recommend other teachers of courses on Japanese society or Japanese business consider using it as well. ■

Gordon Mathews

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Exploring Indonesia

Past and Present

BY BJORN SCHELANDER

HONOLULU: CENTER FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF HAWAIIAN, ASIAN AND PACIFIC STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, 1996

This volume is an introductory textbook on the social history of Indonesia, a country of immense diversity. The book is divided roughly into three parts, written in strict chronological order. Part One deals with the physical characteristics of the country. Part Two deals with the historical development of the Indonesian state, and finally, Part Three deals with contemporary Indonesia.

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of Indonesia, including its geography, natural resources, and peoples. Major ethnic groups, religions and cultural beliefs are all briefly surveyed. Chapters 2 to 5 concentrate on the historical development of the Indonesian society. Chapter 2 concentrates on the early Indonesian empires (Srivijaya, Shailendra, Mataram and Majapahit) and contacts with the great

civilizations of China and India, and the influence of the nearby Malay world. The story continues in Chapter 3 with the development of trade and the coming of Islam.

Chapter 4 starts from the age of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and its attempts to monopolize Indonesian trade with the outside world as well as its attempts to control the different indigenous empires. Chapter 5 begins with formal Dutch colonization and the growth of Indonesian nationalist movements. The author dwells on the major themes of Dutch control (the cultivation system, the 'liberal' period, and the Diponegoro and Java uprisings) and the growth of national consciousness.

Chapter 6 discusses the politics and economy of modern, i.e. post-independence, Indonesia. The Japanese occupation and Dutch attempt to take back Indonesia after the Second World War are, unfortunately, covered in brief. The major portion of this chapter deals with Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" and Suharto's "New Order" regime.

The strength of the book lies in the individual set of exercises after every chapter. These questions, presented in multiple choice format, true/false, fill-in-the-blanks, and topics for discussion, are useful in provoking thinking on the materials presented. The chronological method is useful in bringing out themes such as exploitation by colonization and the inevitable collision between Western and indigenous Indonesian cultures after the Second World War. The simple, descriptive writing also makes the book easy to read and understand. The illustrations on some major Indonesian articles such as Kris (traditional warrior sword) and Bemo (minibus) are interesting, although it must be said they are highly selective, and one wonders if drawings of pepper, clove, and nutmeg are really that useful to the student. There are far more interesting things that are uniquely Indonesian that should have been featured.

My only criticism of the book is the lack of balance and the brief coverage of most of the material. There is too much emphasis on the early part of Indonesian social history, and not enough on the present, or contemporary history. Much more emphasis should be given to the Sukarno and Suharto regimes. The Sukarno and Suharto years should form a major part of the book and not simply be lumped together into a short chapter. If students are to understand Indonesian society, a deeper understanding of the past forty years of Indonesian history is the key. The materials also need to be presented with more depth, although given the target audience, it might be difficult to do so.

In sum, I found this textbook useful for high school students studying Indonesian history for the first time. It is not suitable for college undergraduates who require something in greater depth.

James Chin

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The Asian American Educational Experience

A Source Book for Teachers and Students

EDITED BY DON T. NAKANISHI AND TINA YAMANO NISHIDA

NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 1995
404 PAGES

The wide-spread perception of Asian Americans as a "model minority" does a profound injustice to Asian Americans and to all other minority groups in America as well. This text examines three main points associated with the myth of the model minority:

1. How did this stereotype come about?
2. What purpose does this misconception serve, and who benefits from its perpetuation?
3. In what ways does this stereotype continue to do harm?

A series of articles from the book reveal the facts behind the myth and provide insight into the manner in which pedagogical practice has accommodated the myth. As shown in these articles, which are

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