

Book Review:

Human Resource Management for Southeast Asia and
Hong Kong (2nd Edition)Authors: **Chwee Huat Tan & Derek Torrington**Tan, C. H. & Torrington, D. (1998). *Human Resource Management for Southeast Asia and Hong Kong (2nd Edition)*, John Wiley & Sons.Volume 6:
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REVIEWED BY: LEE SOO HOON

In this updated edition of Human Resource Management for Southeast Asia and Hong Kong, Professors Tan and Torrington provide both practitioners and students of Human Resource Management (HRM) with many more case studies and hard-to-find critical and distinguishing information about the HRM practices in Southeast Asia. Compared to the first edition, this book has not only expanded its coverage by adding chapters to specifically show the differences in the HRM practices between the East and West, it has also added several additional chapters on specific HRM practices and concepts.

This book puts HR practices in the context of its cultural roots, historical colonial backgrounds, post-colonial nationalisation and government intervention strategies, and national foreign investment policies. The respective countries' efforts in attracting foreign multinationals in the in the respective countries' industrialisation drive set the stage for different approaches in HR practices for the different types of corporations. Thus, in addition to providing detailed information on the mechanics to HR functions such as doing HR planning, validation of the selection process and tools, steps in conducting a job evaluation, and other such detailed mechanics, the value-added in this book is that the authors provide the context in which HR practices are carried out in Southeast Asia. It provides the big picture, the national strategic perspectives on how HR practices evolve over time that is unique for each country in Southeast Asia.

This book is also more Human Resource oriented as opposed to the Personnel approach taken in the first edition. It treats human resources as an organizational asset rather than a cost factor. More regional examples have been integrated into the main text of each chapter and much of the content has been rewritten in a style that is crisp and to the point. The authors constantly link their discussion of HRM practices back to the cultural context and national strategies of each of the Southeast Asian countries.

This book brings together conceptual approaches and human resource management practices that are current in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The book also provides information on what Japanese, American and European subsidiaries operating in various countries in Southeast Asia do in terms of their HRM practices in their host countries. What local indigenous companies do in terms of their HRM practices are also compared to those of the foreign multinational corporations (MNCs).

This book provides a wealth of information on the HRM practices that is important for human resource practitioners working in Southeast Asian countries or those with regional roles and responsibilities in these countries. With the influx of alliances and foreign partners coming to the aid of indigenous ailing companies as a result of the Asian economic crisis, this book serves as a key reference text for those individuals who need to quickly understand how HRM practices work and how employees need to be motivated in this part of the world.

Chapter Two is unique compared to other HRM books as well as the first edition of this text. It shows how the differences in management concepts, ideas and cross-cultural differences impact the development of HRM practices in Southeast Asia. Very interesting and insightful comparisons between HR practices and management concepts between the East and West are made, which are grounded in the assumptions of how people behave. Using Hofstede's Theory T and T+, and contrasting that with McGregor's Theory X and Y, the authors provide us with vivid anchors and a solid theoretical foundation to understand the uniqueness of the HRM practices in Southeast Asia. Specific examples and case studies are meticulously provided for each of these Southeast Asian countries.

Additional chapters were added to this book, such as a chapter on Career Management, Job Evaluation, Labor Management Relations, Conflict Management, Employee Involvement and Empowerment, The Future of HRM and a Major Case Study on the Shell group of companies which forms the lynch pin for wrapping up the key ideas expressed throughout the book. This book not only provides a powerful reference for practitioners interested in knowing the HR practices in Southeast Asian nations, but it should also be the key text to a HRM curriculum in any Southeast Asian university or a course in International HRM in North American universities.

Each chapter is written in a user-friendly and easy-to-read manner. Each chapter begins by stating its objectives so that readers know what to expect, and concludes with a summary of the key concepts discussed in the text. Questions to ponder on these HRM practices are also included at the end of each chapter. Boxes containing key points are used in each chapter to highlight important concepts, which helps the reader reflect on the discussions from the preceding sections of the text. The reference section after each chapter is a rich source of citations of Asian research studies. The authors have also indexed major references for future research purposes.

The book is organised into 9 parts. The first part is key in setting the tone and context for understanding the development and practice of HRM in Southeast Asia. In this introduction, the authors provide us with information on the cultural context, national strategies and uniqueness of MNCs operating in Southeast Asia. The other parts are organised around such key management principles as Planning, Organisation, Sourcing, Performance and Development, the Involvement of human resources in setting company practices, Rewarding for contributions to the organisation, the Future Challenges of HRM in Southeast Asia, and ends with a major case study on the HRM practices in the Shell group of companies.

One area that this book can add in its uniqueness is to provide recommendations on how to improve the various HRM practices currently found in Southeast Asian countries given the evolving economic policies and national strategies. In addition to providing readers with information on what is currently taking place in Southeast Asian countries, the authors can take on the role of consultants to key decision makers for both the governments and companies throughout Southeast Asia. The authors can help these leaders be proactive in developing, organizing, planning and assessing their human resources so as to be globally competitive.

Overall, this is an ambitious book that has completely fulfilled its mandate to provide readers with critical information on the HRM practices in over 10 Southeast Asian countries. The authors applied their insights and experience very expertly to the Southeast Asian situation by considering their current regional practice from the perspective of cultural contexts, historical colonial backgrounds and current national strategies.

Lee Soo Hoon

Department of Organisational Behaviour

Faculty of Business Administration

National University of Singapore