

Book Reviews

***Negotiating Globalization in Asia*. 2006. Quezon City: Ateneo Center for Asian Studies.**

A collection of papers, *Negotiating Globalization in Asia* examines issues that either impact on or get affected by globalization: the economy, capital and labor, culture, national and ethnic identity, philosophy and the arts, among others.

The introductory essay explains that the book is a product of a conference on globalization and nationalism held in 2005 and provides a relatively substantive discussion of the essays' contents. Reading the introductory essay could actually spare the reader from the agony of having to read the individual essays, which incidentally should have been edited further for more clarity and ease of reading particularly for the general public.

The book is composed of 10 essays that are clustered into three groups. The first group examines the impact of globalization on the economy and culture of societies, with the first essay noting that in the cases of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, capital borrowed eventually exited these economies. The essay suggests that unless governments are able to use borrowed capital for productive endeavors thus preventing capital from leaving their economies, these societies will continue to keep on borrowing.

The second essay acknowledges that globalization has led to "flexibilization of labor" and zeroes in on the practice of contractualization that companies resort to as one of the forms of labor flexibilization. It suggests that it is the mandate of the government to ensure that the rights and interests of the labor force remain protected. Unfortunately, the essay does not contain specific recommendations on how exactly governments could do so.

With foreign companies being set up in Asia, effective communication between foreign managers and local employees becomes a challenge, points out the third essay. New forms of communication between these companies' headquarters and plants located in various Asian states are now widely used, with English being the language utilized. However, English words are often misused and misunderstood by the locals. There is therefore a need to develop competence in intercultural communication.

The second group of essays examines the nexus between globalization and national identity as well as ethnic identity. The first essay in this group examines how the Kretek (for Indonesia) and the Death Way Bridge (for Thailand) evolved to symbolize Indonesian and Thai identities in a globalizing context. The second essay examines how the Nisei, the second generation Okinawan-Filipinos, view themselves and define their identity as a group, noting that the Nisei's identity is "characteristically fluid and capable of shuttling to and from an Okinawan and a Filipino identity". The third essay discusses how the Mingei, a Japanese folk craft for daily use, lost some of its "salient characteristics" but gained new ones. However, its being carried in various places has made it a symbol of Japanese identity.

The third group of essays, as explained in the book's introductory chapter, focuses on "localization", which is "a way of appropriating foreign culture" while "maximizing one's own tradition and values to address modern problems". The essays in this section focus on Malaysian poetry, Sama Dilaut (maritime communities and boat nomads throughout Southeast Asia), and Asian horror films. Interestingly, this section also includes a discussion of the future of Western philosophy in Asia.

With globalization being the only thread that runs common in each individual chapter of the book, each essay could practically stand on its own. This is understandable as the book, as previously pointed out, is a

compilation of essays. In addition, some issues discussed in the various essays cut across the three sub-themes used to organize the essays included in this volume. This, of course, is a basic limitation of volumes that put together essays written by different authors.

What could have been done, however, is for a more rigorous process of refinement in order to make each chapter form part of one coherent book. Otherwise, the book should have been presented as an edited volume, with a particular editor being identified. However, as it is, the book is presented not as an edited volume but is actually made to appear as if it were co-authored by several writers.

There is also a preponderance of essays on Japanese cases or Japanese-related issues. Even the essays that are not supposed to be focused on Japan have substantive discussions on Japanese issues. This makes the reader wonder if the conference and the book's publication have been supported by a Japanese institution. While there is nothing wrong with such a case, it is incumbent that readers are appropriately informed if this were the case.

Overall, *Negotiating Globalization in Asia* could serve as a useful reference for those interested in examining the impact of globalization on various facets of life. But given the quality of essays included in this volume, it is not recommended reading material for the general public.

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