Wes Harry, Keith Jackson[*]

Globalisation, the Wave, and the Undertow

'Globalisation, the Wave, and the Undertow' is a critical review of a dozen books with relevance to international HRM and international business. The books under review here are (in alphabetical order):

- Bucknall, H. / Ohtaki, R. (eds.) (2005): **Mastering Business in Asia: Human Resource Management.** Singapore, Wiley: 220pp, £12.99

- Chen, M. (2004): **Asian Management Systems.** London, Thomson: 288pp, £30.99

- Chua, A. (2003): **World on Fire.** London, Heinemann: 346pp, £12.99

- Forrer, M. (2004): **Hokusai: Mountains and Water, Flowers and Birds.** London, Prestel: 96pp, $14.95

- Moellering, G. (2006): **Trust: Reason, Routine, Reflexivity.** London, Elsevier: 230pp, £51.99

- Ong, A. H. (1999): **Flexible Citizenship.** London, Duke University Press: 335pp. £13.99

- Prahalad, C. K. (2005): **The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid.** Upper Saddle River (NJ), Wharton School Publishing: 304pp £9.99

- Rowley, C. / Benson, J. (eds.) (2004): **Management of Human Resources in the Asia–Pacific: Convergence Reconsidered.** London, Routledge: 256pp, $155.00

- Scullion, H. / Collings, D. (2006): **Global Staffing.** London, Routledge: 232pp, $33.95

- Skromme Granrose, C. (ed.) (2005): **Employment of Women in Chinese Cultures: Half the Sky.** Cheltenham, Edward Elgar: 224pp, £53.96

- Warner, M. / Joynt, P. (2002): **Managing Across Cultures.** London, Thomson: 284pp, £34.19

- Warner, M. (ed.) (2003): **Culture and Management in Asia.** London, Routledge: 284pp, £21.99

We divide our review of these books into two basic categories: one contains those books that, in our view, appear to represent the 'Wave' of Western management thought and practice; and one containing books that appear to give access to the (of-

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[*] Wes Harry, Honorary Visiting Fellow, Cass Business School, City University London, e-mail: wesharry@gmail.com.

Keith Jackson, Honorary Visiting Fellow, Cass Business School, City University London.

ten invisible) resistance to this wave – what we term the 'Undertow'. In formulating our views, we draw on our experience of working in Asia and in other non-Western contexts. Our overarching purpose with this review is to increase knowledge and to enable foreigners and host nationals in Asian HRM contexts to better understand each other and so better work together for mutual benefit. We also hope that our theme of 'wave and undertow' will stimulate research interest among the readers of this review.

Visualising the wave and the undertow

We assume that our readers can visualise a wave, breaking from the sea on to the shore. We will soon be asking you to visualise a specific wave, one that represents the arrival of Western notions of HRM theory or policy, or 'best practice' in international HRM as it breaks against the shores of HRM practice, experience and expectation in Asian contexts.

How should we visualise the 'undertow' in our approach? According to one English language dictionary, the term 'undertow' refers to 'the seaward undercurrent following the breaking of a wave on the beach; any strong current flowing in a different direction from the surface current (Collins English Dictionary, 2005: 1751). We note here that, although the wave is likely to gain the attention of most observers, it is the undertow that carries the greater volume and weight of water. We note also that the undertow is active, and not only during the dramatic 'arrival' of the wave to shore. It is active also under the 'surface' of what might be termed the routine movements and currents of water. In certain geographical locations, it is the undertow that poses by far the most danger to the over-confident and unwary who venture into the water.

Developing on this image, we recognise from common experience and observation how visitors to the Asia-Pacific region may not have access to how people express themselves in local languages or dialects. Not every international manager or researcher is multi-lingual, nor cross-culturally aware or competent. However, curious and well-wishing observers can access local cultures through the images the members of these cultures create for themselves. This echoes George Orwell's view of national newspapers – they represent 'a nation talking to itself'. Readers of this review are able to access English-language newspapers in the Asia-Pacific region: e.g. via websites such as 'world-newspapers'. Often it is these newspapers more than those in the local language that give us critical insights into developments relevant to HRM policy and practice: e.g. in terms of encouraging corporate 'whistle blowers' in Japan, or emphasising the need for genuinely independent non-executive directors in Singapore.

One of the most well known images to be exported from Japan – and indeed from Asia – and subsequently influence Western patterns of perception is The Great Wave at Kanagawa (*Kanagawa oki nami ura*). A web search for 'Hokusai Great Wave' should enable one to see a representation of this imago. Seeing it might cause the reader to reflect on how this wave is no more than a representation; and that it might represent is how employees in local subsidiaries might respond to the (occasionally hostile) representations of HRM 'policy' or standardised notions of 'best practice' from headquarters managers and thus determine how HRM policies and theories become interpreted in local practice.

According to the first book in our review (Forrer), this and other Hokusai prints of the 1830s 'may not directly strike us as Western, but they bear witness to a large-scale familiarity with the working of the Western-introduced telescope' (2004: 12). Hokusai had studied Western notions of 'perspective', and chose to apply them differently. His work became popular as part of a European fad for 'the Orient' and had a decisive influence European 'Impressionists' such as Monet. Hokusai and his agents realised this and soon began to produce prints in bulk for both domestic and European markets. Does this process of export and knowledge transfer sound familiar?

Through this review we encourage all HRM researchers and practitioners to look at images of Asia – be these (e.g. in Japanese contexts) Hokusai or *manga*. We encourage non-Asians to 'turn the telescope' that fascinated Hokusai in designing his 'big wave' images: in the case of Western headquarters and Asian subsidiaries, who is more distant from whom? By reflecting on images as presented by Forrer, we can imagine how HRM polices and embedded or emerging notions of 'best practice' might be perceived by local Asian stakeholders, and recognise how non-Asian HRM researchers and practitioners might learn from alternative 'undertow' perspectives, and so gain competitive advantage.

Developing a 'great wave' perspective on HRM convergence

The first specifically HRM book we review is the 2004 text, *Management of Human Resources in the Asia–Pacific: Convergence reconsidered* by Rowley and Benson. This benchmark study developed from a text published in 1997 by Rowley for the *California Management Review*. Here the author questioned whether 'convergence' truly was a feature of international HRM in terms of policy and practice across national contexts. He developed a model of national HRM in order to allow facilitate comparisons between HRM contexts. This model is designed as a three-tier hierarchy– a common enough feature of Western management models. The three tiers are:

- HRM 'architecture': i.e. the underlying beliefs, assumptions, context-specific expectations and behavioural norms that underpin collective choices and preferences in HRM policy and practice. This concept relates to our own notion of the 'undertow'.

- HRM 'policy': i.e. the roles and objectives those HR managers and other decision-makers with HRM responsibility take upon themselves and seek to impose on others.

- HRM 'practice': i.e. the surface level observation of attempts to implement HRM policy; 'HRM' as it is enacted and experienced in real-life situations.

The Rowley and Benson (2004) text invites scholars from a range of Asian regions and economies to assess the extent to which HRM in their locality is 'converging' or 'diverging' in relation to Western HRM norms. The economies covered are: China (People's Republic), Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines, bringing together contributions from a mix of local and Western HRM scholars and practitioners.

We regard this book as representing a 'great wave' perspective on of Western HRM research because the findings that inform each chapter are presented in a rigidly

formulaic structure, exploiting the apparent clarity of the three-tier model outlined above. This approach is understandable given the repeat diagnostic nature of the research and analysis: i.e. applying the model from 1997 ('as was') to the situation 'as is' in the years leading to 2004. This lends the multi-authored and multi-locational study a significant degree of research *reliability*. Within the given standardised structure, observations and expression of local differences can be perceived to emerge and so compared.

As an illustration, a chapter by Christopher Skene (writing about HRM in the Philippines) notes that 'fairly rigid workplace structures and rules' apply. Nevertheless, he discerns evidence of a 'pragmatic blend of Western practices with those that are specific to Philippine culture'- what locals might term a 'halo-halo' mix of HRM observance and practice (Skene, in: Rowley/Benson, 2004: 106).

However, it is in the co-editors' 'Conclusions' where the most explicit expression of 'big wave' (i.e. Western-oriented) expectations of HRM 'best practice' emerges. For example, the editors claim that HRM 'practice' across the Asia-Pacific region appears to be 'converging: ' i.e. relative to the model used to structure the survey. They note that HRM 'policy' development in the Philippines and in Japan is making 'progress', while convergence in HRM 'architecture' across the Asia–Pacific region evinces 'mixed progress'.

We offer two specific observations in response to these conclusions. Firstly, terms such as 'best' (as in HRM 'best practice') and, by extension, associated notions of 'progress' are value-laden and, in the broadest sense, political: they suggest benchmarks of expectation and assumed authority and / or expertise of knowledge and insight. Secondly, the suggestion that the underlying 'architecture' of HRM policy and practice development across the Asia-Pacific evinces (only) 'mixed progress' (i.e. as evaluated from a Western HRM perspective) leads us to revisit our review theme of 'wave and undertow' and the resistance of the shore to the 'great wave'.

Global perspectives on HRM in Asia

HRM systems in a global context are examined in *'Managing Across Cultures',* by Warner and Joynt (2002). These two co-editors present a series of chapters on different regions of the globe discussing the impact of culture on managing in different places. Much of discussion covers Asia; however, Asian writers are almost completely absent. India and South Asia are not included, while smaller countries such as Australia and South Africa find a place. Tung covers cross-cultural issues in Asia within five and a half pages but only considers East Asia. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner use more space building their case that China and S. E. Asia together represent both a mirror and a mirror image of the West. Sklair ends the book with a discussion about the changing roles of states and state agencies and the necessity for benchmarking and best practices in management by even the smallest local companies that wish to survive in a global economy. Sklair also discusses the role of the Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC), a global elite sharing values and objectives. Members of the TCC have more in common with each other - irrespective of race, religion or nationality - than they with members of their home community. The TCC elite often share a similar educational background in the top western universities and business schools, share

similar aspirations in terms of material and financial success, and even share a common language given that English is the preferred means of communication. Later in this review we will consider the consequences of this divergence between so-called 'elites' and others.

Warner in *'Culture and Management in Asia'* (2003) selects a variety of authors to represent the region in a country by country assessment. As with the previous book reviewed, Western authors dominate with less than half of the seventeen authors being Asian – although most of the foreigners, including Warner himself, have much experience and expertise in Asia. The book endeavours to show how a successful manager can operate 'at ground level' in a globalised business environment. The book demonstrates the region's links with the global economy and the impact on Asian states of membership of the World Trade Organization. Most of the contributors discuss the impact of global ideas and ways of working within the global business environment, but occasionally signs of resistance and the endurance of local factors are highlighted. In his discussion of Singapore, Hampden-Turner points out that the values of the local elites, in terms of education and occupation, are not the values of those (e.g. women, farmers, and small traders) who tend to be employed outside major international organisations. These excluded groups encourage resistance to foreign ways of working. This challenge from members of the host society is explained in terms of 'baradari' or social organisation, including family and kinship, as outlined by Khilji in his chapter on Pakistan. Child and Selmer discuss the dynamics of similar value systems when they discuss China, and although many *gwiello* (Westerners) will have heard of *guanxì* (personal connections and networks used to get things done) they will rarely have had access to the overwhelming Chinese wish to resist outside influences. In contrast, the Japanese appear to have accepted outside influences in order to build prosperity; but, as Debroux shows, this is an acceptance on Japanese terms and the social pressures (especially in the past three decades) are such that a sense of communality has led to resistance to Western (usually taken to mean US American) employment practices. Almost nowhere in Asia has there been more resistance to Western ways of working than in India. For, as Budhwar shows in his chapter, the weight of history, society and poverty combine to make Indians fearful of the consequences of global management systems even while accepting Western outsourcing contracts.

In a timely re-working of a now standard text, Chen (2004) examines *'Asian Management Systems'*. He concentrates on examples from East Asia; specifically Chinese, Japanese and Korean systems. Chen endeavours to cover history, culture and comparative management systems as well as Western management models. Although the comparative examples are intra-Asian the foundation of the book adopts Western perspectives and considers how Asian countries have dealt with these. Chen shows that the universalist approach, in the early part of the second half of the 20th century, had to deal with culture and environment – usually by imposing systems which ignored both culture and environment. He outlines various models in order to explain how the approach gradually changed from the use of pure economic and political power to one which recognised the obstacles created by culture and environment. However, by the time of the Asian financial crisis in 1997/8 the confidence in the potential for ex-

pressly Asian models was severely damaged so that the foreigners, their investments and expertise were welcomed and invited to show China, Japan and Korean how to compete successfully in the global economy. Chen offers interesting insights to Asian cultures, and especially in how these affect joint venture activities.

The book *Global Staffing*, edited by Hugh Scullion and David Collings (2006), is one of the Routledge 'global HRM' series. According to the back cover 'blurb': 'This series examines human resources in a global context, and features in-depth and accessible textbooks that combine the essential theory and best practice of international HRM'. We could ask whether the various paradigm shifts driven by academic research (e.g. from Personnel Management (PM) to HRM, SHRM, IHRM, SIHRM, and now 'global' HRM) really mean that organisations are getting better at managing people. Having said this, we should recognise that the purpose of this book and others in the series is to illustrate current research insights into a process (international human resource management or IHRM) located in a 'global' context. The research presented in this book claims to inform us about 'essential theory' and simultaneously guide us towards 'best practice' in IHRM. The book, in general terms, fulfils both these promises.

The early chapters trace the development of IHRM theory and research. Subsequent chapters highlight some current controversies and enduring contradictions in HRM / IHRM research and practice. In chapter 5, for example, Scullion and Collings discuss 'talent management' in the context of international and expatriate manager assignments. In one short section, the co-editors / authors remind us of how women managers are underrepresented in both IHRM research and practice. Given that female managers are proportionately more successful on international assignments than their male counterparts, and given the truism that expatriate failures are expensive, it raises the question of why women are not (in practice) selected more routinely for such assignments. One reason, it appears, is because of the enduring 'blind-spots' for women managers in HRM research, in addition to the enduring 'masculine' nature of the cultures and structures of the international organisations that HRM researchers interact with.

Chapter 7 (by Harry and Collings) develops the theme of 'localisation'. In discussion it refers to 'locally' researched – and experienced – case studies: e.g. of expatriate versus local manager tensions in Oman. The authors argue that HRM polices and practice based on a localisation agenda is one solution towards obviating undue gender discrimination, the mis-management of talent, and other issues related to the effective management of diversity. Citing Selmer (2004), they emphasise how this endeavour should 'commence with the incumbent expatriates' (Harry/Collings, Chapter 7: 152).

Chapter 9, written by Linehan, further develops a gender perspective on the embedded contradictions in HRM research and 'best practice', connecting also with the 'localisation' theme developed in chapter 7. Linehan reminds us of how women in Asia often seek out international employers in order to develop their career and avoid the male-dominance of HRM structures and cultures they encounter in domestic organisations – a phenomenon we know from practical IHRM experience across East and South East Asia and across industries and business sectors. However, she also emphasises how the hopes of these local women managers are often bitterly con-

founded as 'the worst forms of sexism they encounter come from expatriate, not local males' (Linehan, Chapter 9: 184 – citing Westwood/Leung, 1994)

Overall, this is an impressively accessible book. It eloquently links the niceties of IHRM theory with the complexities of IHRM practice. For our taste, its title combined with the predominance of male perspectives suggests that it is embedded still in the 'great wave' tradition of IHRM research and writing. However, the examples we have highlighted here suggests a keen sensitivity for the 'undertow': e.g. as represented by the interests of people from diverse (if high-end niche) backgrounds and those who experience discrimination in respect of HRM and IHRM practice. Perhaps the publishers could be persuaded to promote more diversified titles in this series, or point us to the availability of such texts such as the forthcoming *The Changing Face of Women Managers in Asia,* edited by Yukongdi and Rowley for the Routledge *Working in Asia* series.

Re-connecting with the undertow

Our next book for review stands in stark contrast to the Scullion and Collings text. With some degree of courage it develops issues that this latter text highlighted but did not develop. The book *Employment of Women in Chinese Cultures: Half the Sky* (2005, edited by Skromme Granrose) echoes Mao in the title but paints a decidedly 'undertow' image of women's experiences of HRM in China (including Taiwan and Hong Kong).

This text brings together eight contributors - six female, two male. A selective glance at the Index entries in this book emphasises the undertow focus. Consider the following list of items and themes highlighted across the book's 198 pages: 'family' (with 26 page references); 'childcare' (with 25); 'childbirth' (20); 'marriage' (12); 'mother' (12); 'breast-feeding' (10); 'violence against women' (8); 'wife' (8); 'divorce' (3); 'menstruation' (3); 'rape' (1).

From a male reader perspective, these themes stand out – indeed, jump out. In the reading, they become memorable. Take, for example, the references to 'menstruation'. We learn that the Peoples' Republic of China (1994) Labour Act forbids the employment of female workers in certain jobs and conditions: e.g. underground miners, and (during the menstrual period) high above ground or in low temperatures (2005: 77). We learn that in Taiwan, women during their menstrual period can claim an additional one day's leave per month as sick leave (2005: 93). Questions arise: What about older female employees? How do male managers observe or otherwise handle this allowance? How aware are non-Chinese managers of these issues? How aware do they want to be?

For contrast we can note that in 2005 Fang Lee Cooke published *HRM, Work and Employment in China,* a text that can act as a compliment to this review book and offer (in our view) an effective wave and undertow synthesis. As male reviewers we can this be prompted to ask: How do Chinese women managers and HRM researchers respond to or identify with the significance given to these types of HRM issues? In our view, such memorable and (as a male) little understood insights encompassed in the Skromme Granrose edition add details to our understanding of the patterns of HRM practice and experience in real-life. They cause us to ask the hard questions about IHRM research and practice. They encourage us to use our imagination and to 'turn

the telescope' – an opportunity we emphasised in our discussion of the Hokusai wave and (we hope) in the subsequent development of this 'wave-undertow' theme for our review.

Thus, and to connect again with the conclusions from our review of the Rowley and Benson (2004) text, we can ask about the extent to which HRM practice in China is converging with western practice: e.g. with regard to the employment of women. In a concluding chapter, Skromme Granrose suggests that she and her fellow contributors are aware of divergent agendas and tolerances. In the terms of our current review, she appears to be aware of the wave / undertow distinction. Looking to improve the prospects for women employees in China, 'a Western perspective' (according to this book's editor) would focus on changing employment laws and thereby seeking to impose change. In contrast, adopting a 'Chinese perspective' would generate a different image or pattern of change: 'be patient … depend on multi-generational family structure [and simultaneously on] ..networks between educated women, and power not readily measured by the numbers that appear in tables and books but power reflected in the culture of art and emotion such as stories poems and paintings, and harmony with nature' (Skromme Granrose, Chapter 8: 198 - *adapted*).

The social and economic impact on women and families is shown by Ong (1999) -*'Flexible Citizenship',* where *t*his impact is regarded as being an important driver and consequence of the migration of Asians into other parts of the world. Although Ong is particularly concerned with Chinese migration, much of what she discusses will apply to South Asian communities also. For example, Ong considers the way that kinship rather than nationality links communities so that families will send sons and daughters to far off places to build a better future not only for their offspring but also for their cousins and other relations. The groups she considers are not the TCC elites which Sklair (as mentioned earlier in this review) considers to be at the forefront of globalisation. Rather, these migrants express the common people's way of dealing with governments and elites which are not willing, or able, to protect and develop their own citizens. The Chinese and Indians as well as (in earlier times) the Japanese, Arabs and other Asians, have dispersed around the world forming self supporting communities linked by kinship and trust and so built up successful but low profile trading and other business activities. While the world's attention has been on the 'great wave' of global management ideas, these businesses have been built upon the most ancient of cooperative units- family and kin working together. The successes of these businesses are often hidden, partly because of kinship pressure to avoid displays of affluence, but also to avoid raising the hostility of the host population which is resentful of incomers' relative prosperity.

It is the causes and consequences of the host populations' resentment which is the topic of Chua's (2003) book '*World on Fire'.* Subtitled 'How Exporting Free- Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability', this book draws on tragedy in Chua's family in south east Asia, where jealousy of the success of 'overseas Chinese' families is the catalyst of much crime and of governments' indifference to the fate of citizens who are not considered true 'sons of the soil'. Chua shows that, in linking with global economic powers, the activities of TCCs in Asia, Africa, post-communist Russia and Latin America has created a violent and potential revolutionary

backlash against 'the West' and against capitalism. What she describes is not so much an 'undertow' as a massive surface flow that could mobilise the marginalized and powerless of Asia, from the civil servant in Gaza to the *salariman* in Ginza. While economic success is only open the elite - the aforementioned Transnational Capitalist Class - globalisation holds no attractions for the majority of those living and working in the Asia Pacific region.

This insight is reinforced in Prahalad's (2004) text *'The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid'*. According to Prahalad, a prominent voice in studies of global business strategy, the poor are seen by global capitalists, and undoubtedly by managers, as a problem for the state to deal with, and not a concern of the private sector. TCCs and other elites who have benefited from globalisation and have not shared these benefits with the billions of poor in Asia. Drawing on his background in India, the author is concerned about how to spread these benefits through global activities and global management practices so as to generate local wealth and inclusion of local cultures, values and ways of working. He uses the language of business, consumers, markets, and business opportunities to show that global business activities can bring local prosperity. His study is wide ranging, going beyond Asia to the other side of the Pacific, from micro-finance to macro-business. He offers no easy answers but he knows that when mobilised and energised the people of Asia will work for their own, their families', communities' and employers' benefit.

Another 'great wave' view?

The book *Mastering Business in Asia: Human Resource Management*, edited by Bucknall and Ohtaki (2005), is the type of book that catches the eye of international managers and expatriates browsing in bookshops at hub airports. It is immediate in its appeal. It talks directly to the kind of 'global talent' identified by high-profile and globally confident McKinsey consulting executives, such as Michaels and Ohmae during the 1990s. It echoes a path of academic HRM research that has become an essential element of wide-ranging HRM studies today: 'global talent management', as evidenced in some of the titles we have reviewed here. This particular book exudes confidence as senior HRM consultants at the Mercer Human Resource Consulting Group describe some of their 'greatest hits' in Asia. The backgrounds of these consultant authors display a level of diversity, illustrative of current economic and business developments in Asia: i.e. 6 Chinese; 2 Indian; 2 Japanese; 1 Slavic; and 2 Western. In the context of our current review, we are tempted at first glance to label this text as giving voice to the 'undertow'.

However, this sense of diversity becomes tempered by recognising the extent to the consultancy perspective expressed by these authors tends towards a standardisation of insight - an 'in-house' approach to HRM consultancy as described in this book, an example being the 28 factor 'competency model' illustrated here by Bucknall and Ohtaki (2005: 205-206). In its essence, the text is decidedly 'great wave'; indeed, its focus on 'talent' appears to be consciously elitist, a focus we might describe as 'niche globalism'.

Having said this, the clarity and confidence of this practice-based approach is refreshing: it gives us as HRM researchers and practitioners a clear and provocative

point of reference, and thus a point of comparison to the complex reality of our own HRM contexts. From their position of market prominence, the Mercer consultants can pose direct and challenging questions, albeit (at times) overstated and designed for impact. For example, they explain 'Why Japan's HRM revolution had to happen' – one reason being that 'globalisation forced Japan *[sic]* to adopt HRM systems to secure and retain the best talent' (Bucknall/htaki 2005: 93). Excuse me, 'forced' *all* of 'Japan'?

We can change context and ask how globally valid the Mercer approach is. Should managers with HR responsibilities in SMEs in Hong Kong or Taipei, Jakarta or Sydney 'buy in' the type of models and concepts that the Mercer Group proposes? Or should they rely on local tools and traditions to 'make' their own? If we take 'globalisation' and the global 'war for talent' seriously, then the answer becomes a strident 'yes' to the 'buy in' option, assuming that our talented staff members are likely to buy books like this in the name of professional self-development of the type managers in SMEs routinely consider too expensive to offer in-house. In this way they can learn more about what the HRM consultancy-style 'great wave' has to say (even in terms of a 'fad'), and learn to compete (more sustainably and substantially, if possible) on their own terms.

Undertow: visualising the essential human element in HRM?

With his (2006) book *Trust: Reason, Routine, Reflexivity,* Moellering (who works at the Max Planck Institute) brings a wealth of insight from German Social Theory tradition to issues that, from both a practitioner and a researcher perspective, are at the core of effective HRM or 'people management' in both national and international contexts.

The book is based on the author's doctoral research at Cambridge University. It is not a book about HRM. However, it is a book about people, and connects the experiences and expectations of people individually and collectively – and in the terms of our current review, at both wave and undertow levels – in relation to the complex human psychological and physiological state that is 'trust'. It is a book about how people choose or attempt to relate to each other and to abstract systems, evoking parallels of analysis in how people choose to behave in contexts of HRM policy development and practice across global, national and local cultural contexts. Moellering's narrative is vivid and eloquent such that, in visual terms, we feel encouraged to 'turn the telescope' and imagine ourselves as a crewmember on one of Hokusai's boats, challenged by the 'great wave' off the Japanese coast by Kanagawa. With Fuji-san traditionally serene and impassive in the distance, we ask: whom do we trust; how do we trust; when do we trust, and why?

The origins of this book are rooted in international management practice; namely, seeking answers to questions such as:

- Why do so many international joint ventures (IJVs) and other strategic business alliances collapse?

- Why do those involved (frequently after prompting or reflection) cite 'loss of trust' as a common cause of this failure?

With an initial focus on Sino-foreign IJVs, Moellering began to research such questions and came to a deep understanding of 'trust' – a process made relevant to Chi-

nese business contexts in joint publications with John Child: cf. *Organization Science* 14 (1), 2003. In attempting to answer such vital yet open-ended strategic questions about IJVs, Moellering draws on images and concepts from both Western and Eastern traditions. For example, his 'Trust-Wheel' image challenges more linearly-oriented Western models of trust specifically and of causality generally; it confronts researchers and practitioners from an 'either / or' philosophical tradition with an image expressing a cyclical 'both / and' dynamic - a dynamic recognisable to Hindus and Buddhists and members of other philosophical traditions rooted in Asia.

This neatness of insight does not make it easy for us to apply the 'Trust-Wheel' and other theoretical constructs that Moellering refers to in HRM contexts. It does, however, decorate for us a space in which to reflect and think, just as we believe the Hokusai image does. Images such as Moellering's re-emphasis of trust decisions as representing a fundamental 'leap of faith' invokes an experience that informs the collective 'human condition' over and above any reference to specific HRM 'architectures'. While guiding us towards a differentiated and grounded perspective on 'trust', Moellering reminds us as HRM practitioners and researchers to re-connect policy to practice, and to practice that re-emphasises the 'human'. It encourages us to re-emphasise the 'H' in 'HRM', in addition to the strategic 'R' and (from Western perspectives, at least) the often control-obsessed 'M'. With his text, Moellering helps us understand the range of (often) unpredicted and / or unwanted responses that HRM policies and practices evoke in the people we are trying to do business with or 'manage'. In doing so, it helps us to relate conceptually to the 'wave-undertow' image developed in this review.

Postscript: working together

Just as sand is moved around but not destroyed by a wave, so people might adapt for while but then revert to their own ways of working. For long term change to occur in the way people work, the advantages of change must be clear and accepted by those involved. As we have shown in these reviews, imposing management systems using power, whether economic or political, can build resentment and resistance which will work against those who seek to impose managed change. Experience has taught those facing storms that, when they work together, new lands can be created and protected from the wilful waves of hostile seas.