



Past and Future Culture

Anne E. Witte

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This unconventional book takes the reader on a cultural journey to explore the gradual internationalization of past cultures as they become the societies of the present. Eight thematic chapters provide accessible and interdisciplinary views of cultural and post-cultural manifestations of human diversity, bringing to the non-specialist audience an introduction to values, authority, international media, social capital, cultural globalization and civic community. Contemporary questions concerning nations, migration, post-modernism, multiculturalism, and faith systems are discussed. Each thematic chapter gathers data, provides insights, and gains in anecdotal momentum to offer the non-specialist reader a panorama of past and future culture written in thought-provoking prose. Limited experience with international cultural environments and the professional demand for individuals aware and sensitive to diversity has created a need for accessible and pragmatic cultural training books tailored to the needs of non-specialists. Many engineers, scientists, doctors, psychiatrists, development professionals, managers and people working in international affairs have limited background knowledge of world cultures and few opportunities to correct this gap. Traditional area studies courses and expatriate training address some operational needs by giving “do’s and taboo’s” advice on specific regions in the world and cataloguing and comparing social styles for the purposes of management, tourism, technology-transfer or trans-national problem solving. These and other publications focused on the theories of intercultural communication provide occupational and practitioner advice for people who cross cultures. This essay builds on cross-cultural studies, but takes a broad and interdisciplinary perspective on past and future culture to emphasize the transitory, temporary and path-dependent conditions of all cultural behavior. Past and Future Culture provides eight “Culture Focus” mini-chapters featuring a brief snapshot of one major contemporary civilization. Focus chapters include the cultural spheres of India, China, Russia, Africa, South America, the “West,” Japan, and Central Asia. In just a few pages, the reader can get a broad overview of essential historical and societal topics concerning these world growth regions. This up-to-date and engaging essay is a “portable” world of culture, filling a gap in the educational curriculum and training literature of specialized career programs crowded with disciplinary objectives and occupational focus. Drawing from more than a thousand academic publications, the author takes a unique interdisciplinary perspective to emphasize the vital importance of cultural awareness for all international undertakings. The intentionally broad topic span makes a wide range of important humanistic and social science concepts relevant to careers in business, science, engineering and medicine.

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