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The Modernisation of the People's Liberation Army
and its Repercussions

Bernard Ganne et Yveline Lecler (eds.), *Asian industrial clusters, global competitiveness and new policy initiatives*

Singapour, World Scientific Publishing Company, 2009, 562 pp.

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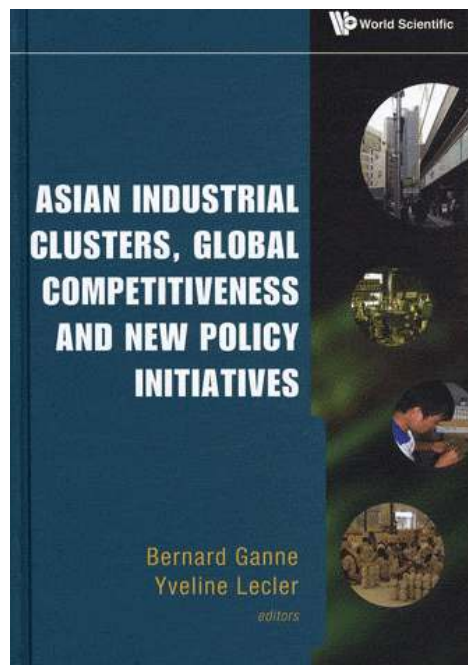
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- 1 The clustering phenomenon shapes local economies worldwide. The concentration of specialised firms benefiting from advantages of co-location in terms of information sharing, labour market, and specialisation processes is indeed a systemic organisation form of economic development in both industrialised and emerging countries. This book joins in such an outlook and provides fieldwork results on multiple forms of cluster-based industrialisation patterns experienced by Asian countries positioned at different stages of developmental maturity. After first tackling Japan's manufacturing decline, it turns to a masterful analysis of the SME-based industrialisation process of China and the surrounding countries of Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia.



- 2 Edited by Bernard Ganne and Yveline Lecler, the book stems from a research program whose final scientific results were presented in an international workshop held in 2006. Contributors carried out extensive surveys in Asian countries; the book is therefore a

structured collection of highly original material. This makes for fascinating reading right from the outset, in an investigation of topical dynamics through close observation within a timeless socio-economic paradigm in which SME systems characterise country-specific industrial transformations ranging from the traditional to the globally competitive.

- 3 This book aims to answer the following questions: which lessons can be learned from the Asian experiences of industrial clusters? Which are the prevailing policy approaches? Are traditional conceptualisations suitable for Asian studies?
- 4 As the editors point out in the introductory chapter, the industrial policy approach to local development sometimes fails to detect diversified organisation models at the local level in Asian countries. One of the major attempts of the book is a re-evaluation of the traditional theoretical approach in light of the Asian experience, in order to grasp the essential dynamics of industrial clusters underlying future trajectories. Above all, the risk of reducing the variety of specificities in the local context is high if observers are Western-oriented and use traditional categories of analysis. History, tradition, and social roots have to be taken into account.
- 5 Part One provides the theoretical framework and underlines the shift from a general industrial policy approach to an industrial *cluster* policy approach in Asian countries. Bernard Ganne and Yveline Lecler review the theoretical scenario on agglomerations of firms, pointing out the prevailing force of interpretative Western models of industrial districts, industrial clusters, and poles of competitiveness. They consistently highlight new lenses through which we can closely observe and interpret industrial transformations of Asian countries based on sociological and local economic development bases. Differences between the industrial policy approaches followed by Japan and those of other East Asian countries are clearly laid out by Akira Suehiro, who provides a taxonomy of industrial clusters and policies in an evolutionary perspective.
- 6 Part Two focuses on Japan. Industrial policies on SMEs implemented since the late 1970s have been predominant in setting the legal stage for development during the rural urbanisation path. Policy measures were initially devoted to the creation of geographically localised industries, and then shifted towards the promotion of innovation through technology transfer and university-industry linkages. More recently, the central government has supported collaboration among local players in order to enhance science and technology (Akira Hattori). Decentralised governance and the involvement of the private sector is a prerequisite for the success of industrial cluster formation, as demonstrated by the repeated failure of industrial policy based on the creation of various types of industrial parks during the 1990s (Yoichi Sekizawa). Furthermore, autonomous initiatives of the private sector are a noteworthy attempt to solve industrial regeneration issues in SME clusters (Lecler Yveline and Yamaguchi Takayuki). Finally, Mitsuharu Miyamoto explores clusters of SMEs in their evolution from subcontractor status by shifting towards in-house products and increased bargaining power.
- 7 Part Three explores China's cluster development since the late 1970s and points out the emergence of a wide variety of industrial clusters highly differentiated at the local level. Jici Wang investigates evolutionary patterns of cluster formation and future trajectories in light of the local-global nexus. The proliferation of export processing activities, together with the endogenous forces of the private sector and local governments, brought about a process of geographical concentration in coastal areas.

Jun Wang specifies technology and innovation processes recently occurring in Guangdong Province, where local state corporatism is overcome by institutional change and proactive local government engagement (Jianniu Xu). Geographical concentration is analysed in detail in Zhejiang Province, where the emergence of industrial clusters involved a wide range of manufacturing sectors, but is also linked to trading activities organised on the basis of distribution networks aimed at domestic and international markets (Tomoo Marukawa). The distribution capacity of Yiwu City is particularly explored by Ke Ding, who highlights the crucial role of external linkages in terms of trade and production in understanding the future trajectories of industrial clusters. Finally, Lu Shi and Bernard Ganne draw a ground-breaking comparison between Zhejiang industrial clusters and European industrial districts, in particular those in Italy. The low level of cooperative behaviour in Zhejiang industrial clusters is seen as the main difference, and as based in cultural and as yet unexplored organisational foundations.

- 8 Part Four shows the results of extensive fieldwork in Vietnam, where industrial clusters have evolved from artisan forms of production to industrial clusters through technological innovation and access to international markets (Stephen J. Appold and Quy Thanh Nguyen). Cooperation among SMEs is the main feature here (Quy Nghi Nguyen). The rapid industrialisation processes of Thailand and Malaysia over the last 60 years are also investigated. Thailand's transformation, triggered by external markets and supported by local entrepreneurship, has given rise to several types of industrial clusters, the specialisations of which range from manufacturing to knowledge-intensive sectors devoted to standard and high-tech products (Audrey Baron Gutty, Catherine Figuière, and Jean-Christophe Simon). Recent proactive cluster policies devoted to private sector enhancement of the promotion of innovation systems are at the initial phase; the margin for public and private collective actions is therefore strongly indicated (Patarapong Intarakumnerd). Finally, the latter part of the book explores in detail the evolution from specialised industrial clusters driven by the foreign direct investment (FDI) and outsourcing practices of foreign companies at the dawn of the 1970s to the agglomeration dynamics reached at the local level in Malaysia today (Elsa Lafaye de Micheaux).
- 9 In compiling country-specific evolutionary industrial patterns, the book also provides glimpses of cross-country relocation dynamics and manufacturing activities over time, as well as the competitive strategies implemented by both governments and the private sector. While China's development is at the core of the book, its emergence during the economic decline of Japan as well as its relocation effect on Vietnam are of interest not only to readers interested in Asian economies in the era of globalisation, but also to scholars of comparative political economy.
- 10 Fieldwork material is presented in a catchy and detailed manner highlighting *national* and *local* industrial policies and distinguishing them from other factors contributing to Asian competitiveness. Although new theoretical conceptualisations of organisational forms are not explicitly pointed out, attempts to re-evaluate the traditional cluster approach are met through the provision of critical and unconventional analyses of local economic development in East Asian countries. The multidisciplinary approach applies a unique and fascinating coupling of pure scientific contribution and intellectual curiosity to public-private interactions. Overall, the authors bring a new perspective to industrial cluster transformation in Asia through a critical examination of policy

approaches, and point out the possibility of government failure in designing the industrialisation process through an agglomeration of firms.

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