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International Business Success in a Strange Cultural Environment

Mamarinta P. Mababaya

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The book focuses on the cultural aspect of the author's published PhD thesis entitled "The Role of Multinational Companies in the Middle East: The Case of Saudi Arabia", which he has carried out at the University of Westminster. It explores the success of multinational enterprises doing business in Saudi Arabia vis-à-vis their cultural awareness and responsiveness. The empirical findings discussed in this book reveal that international business success in a strange cultural environment depends partly on the ability of multinational managers to understand the local culture. The cultural subject in this book pertains to Islam in its entirety. The findings may seem strange to many readers who are not familiar with Islamic culture, in its purest form. Many newcomers to Saudi Arabia -- especially non-Muslim foreign investors, businessmen and workers -- often find many things "strange" about the Kingdom, its people and cultural values. Some feel it odd that many Muslims give more importance to prayer than business. Some are disappointed when they find commercial establishments like shopping centres closed as Muslim workers go to the mosques to attend to their daily prayers. Business visitors find strange the fact that in the midst of their meetings with their Saudi or Muslim counterparts, the latter excuse themselves for prayer. They have these "strange" feelings due to their lack of understanding of true Islamic culture. The cultural aspect of this book will help businessmen and concerned institutions worldwide gain understanding of Islam and reconcile their cultural differences with the Muslim world. Through this book, international companies will be able to have a better understanding of authentic Islamic culture, which will help them gain greater competitive advantages in the Saudi marketplace.

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