

## BOOK REVIEWS

**J.S. Eades, Roger Goodman and Yumiko Hada, Eds., *The 'Big Bang' in Japanese Higher Education: The 2004 Reforms and the Dynamics of Change*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2005. 337 pp. ISBN: 187684323**

**Reviewed by Lucien Ellington**

Although a substantial amount of English language work on Japan's schools is available, such is not the case regarding Japanese colleges and universities. *The 'Big Bang'* is an impressive volume that certainly helps address this problem. The widespread changes presently occurring in Japanese higher education make this work even more valuable. Government reforms, demographic trends, private education, personal aspirations of young people and their families and economic incentives are all in varying degrees precipitating a transformation of four-year institutions. The current transformation of Japan's colleges and universities is just as significant as those initiated by the Meiji government and by American Occupation policy makers. The authors in this volume provide readers with a comprehensive and nuanced treatment of these developments.

While 2004 Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (MEXT) reforms are, as described, only one component of the situation, they serve as a focal point for understanding the impact of societal and even transnational factors on Japanese higher education. On April 1st of that year Japan's 88 national universities, which account for less than 20 percent of higher education students but 80 percent of the national budget, were turned into independent agencies. Also, as a result of this policy change, faculty and staff no longer have the status of national civil servants with guaranteed jobs for life. These sweeping reforms, specifically modeled after Margaret Thatcher-initiated-policy in British higher education of the 1980s, are designed to increase institutional autonomy and research and teaching productivity while at the same time developing an "audit culture" that will provide transparency for national government assessment of institutional effectiveness. The reforms are clearly neo-liberal in that an underlying assumption is that competition within a uniform regulatory framework will improve higher education. Although the Japanese paid most attention to the British, neo-liberal reform of public

higher education has been the dominant trend in many Western countries for approximately the last 10–15 years.

Definitive assessment of the effectiveness of these reforms is impossible because they are too new. However, as contributors to this volume point out, they are one of several important factors dramatically changing higher education. Demographic shifts in higher education relative to a few years ago are profound. Analysts project that between 1992 and 2012, the number of 18-year olds will have declined by an astounding 42 percent. Yet, the percentage of this cohort attending four-year colleges and universities has risen from a little over 30 percent in 1992 to 49 percent as of 2002. Although the ratio of 18-year olds matriculating to colleges and universities will almost certainly remain high in the future, it most probably won't increase and the decline in this age group means more competition among institutions for increasingly scarce numbers of students. Within two years projections indicate that the number of spaces available in Japanese universities will equal the number of students applying. Already more than thirty percent of Japanese entering freshman, almost all of whom apply to private institutions, are no longer admitted solely on the basis of entrance examination performance.

Ample attention in this volume is justifiably provided to the role of private higher education in Japan. Currently, close to 75 percent of all college students are enrolled in private institutions. Although some are quite good, many offer substantially inferior educational programs to students. These institutions, already in fierce competition with each other, appear to be losing more credibility with Japanese, despite their current large enrollments. More than half of undergraduates in one middle-level private university profiled in this volume claimed to understand less than half the curriculum. Substantial numbers of private university students now hedge their bets on the job market by also attending technical schools (*senmon gakkō*) to learn skills such as basic accounting that might earn them jobs since they don't view their university degrees as useful, particularly in opening employment doors. The quality gap between public and most private universities in Japan has always been high and it will be interesting to see the impact of the reforms on an already large bifurcation of standards and education that favors the public sector.

Along with a number of other good chapters, this volume also includes an excellent one on graduate and postgraduate education in Japan; a sector that is experiencing unparalleled growth. Law schools, graduate business courses, and PhD programs are expanding while

percentages of foreign students who come to Japan for graduate work are increasing. One of the objectives of the 2004 reforms is to improve graduate and postgraduate research through a system whereby national universities compete with each other for government funds. This process has already started and thus far, a highly disproportionate amount of monies have been awarded to proposals emanating from those already elite national institutions that were formerly imperial universities.

Japanese higher educational institutions have long been, despite outstanding and even world-class exceptions, the weakest component of the nation's educational system. Yet the Japanese public, because of a sound basic precollegiate educational system, and a cultural heritage and dominant middle class that are both supportive of learning, are among the world's most educated and informed citizens. The educational reforms that are the foci of the book have been, unlike the experiment with American-style progressivism in elementary and middle schools, largely uncontroversial among the public. This is because the belief is widespread among Japanese who attended universities that the nation is not getting its money's worth regarding higher education.

This work, part of a series on Japanese Society published by the same press, is highly recommended for those who want to better understand Japanese higher education, the politics of educational reform, and twenty-first century Japanese society.

**Louise Brown, *Sex Slaves: The Trafficking of Women in Asia*. London: Virago Press, 2000 (2001, 2005). 276 pp. ISBN: 1-86049-903-1.**

**Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux**

During a recent stay in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, I took frequent evening walks down from the huge night market to the center of town, passing a cluster of bars near the old city walls. Groups of scantily dressed often very attractive young women sitting just inside the bars would call out, "Welcome." A local guide book explained that a vast majority of these women were Burmese and that outside of Bangkok, with its 13 million residents, little Chiang Mai, with its roughly 100,000 citizens, is one of the major brothel centers in all of Thailand which itself is the center of Asia's thriving sex industry. A packet of condoms conspicuously placed among snack bars and drinks beside my hotel room's refrigerator told me how I could entertain myself if I wanted—a starkly different approach from my hotel rooms in Cambodia where large signs warned of dire consequences if I brought prostitutes to my room.

British anthropologist Louise Brown spent several years conducting intense research in Thailand, Cambodia, Japan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and elsewhere in Asia. Her scope is broad as she examines every aspect of the trade including the market for paid sex, the prostitutes and their agents and customers, their shame, illnesses and addictions and frequent early deaths. We closely follow the young woman's sale to a brothel agent, her often deceptive journey from her home to her new residence (many but by no means all young girls do not know that they have been sold), her "seasoning" (where she is often repeatedly raped and savagely beaten until she stops resisting her plight), her captivity, and her eventual departure as a sickly, broken and often dying young woman.

Brown made some interesting discoveries along the way. Contrary to the image of Western sex tourists leading the way, the vast majority of male customers are Asian men, many of them laborers themselves. Brown, basing her research on a variety of surveys, estimates that up to two-thirds of all adult Thai men have visited a brothel at least once in their lives and that many go as often as once a week. Many of the girls, who in lower-end brothels, come to accept their situations because of the often mistaken belief that they are sacrificing themselves for the welfare of their parents and siblings by bringing them a few extra dollars a month. This feeling

is quite credible—families in small farm villages I visited in Cambodia and Burma in May, 2006 often had an income of about \$30-40 a month. A further tragedy is that if they ever escape or are released from their bondage, the shame of their situation makes it virtually impossible to return to their homes. Some girls who do manage to break away actually return to their pimps because they simply have no other place to go. Many, let go because they are so diseased with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases, simply die in the street because nobody wants them. Many of the girls do not survive into adulthood. It is always easy to begin sex work, but almost impossible to leave. And because they are slaves, they earn next to nothing except an early death and the condemnation of society.

Tragically the average age of prostitutes is declining rapidly as customers will pay high prices to have sex with a disease-free virgin. Brown found that almost 70 percent of those girls who were or who had been child prostitutes were HIV positive. Poor diets, lack of exercise, and cramped living conditions combine to age sex workers in the poorer parts of the region and many of them also contract tuberculosis, a disease of poverty that kills as many workers as Aids. Many are afflicted with both Aids and TB.

Governments and police do virtually nothing to help the prostitutes. Laws often exist against prostitution, but if they are enforced, it is the girls themselves and not their pimps or customers who are arrested. . As slaves, the girls are rarely allowed out on the street and if they do get a chance to go shopping, they are often accompanied by a male watchdog. Some girls escape and go to the police for help, but Brown uncovered many cases where the policemen receive bribes from brothels to return runaways and to ignore infractions of the law. Many of the prostitutes in Chiang Mai are Burmese girls actually brought to town by police officers for a special fee—often about \$750- from the Burmese border in the Golden Triangle. Very often these officers are among the best customers of a house of ill-repute. Southeast Asian girls trafficked to Japan may earn better money as well as their release after a few months or years when their visas run out, but their *yakuza* captors keep them confined, always on the move, and sexually active all of the time.

Living conditions in the brothels are horrendous. One Nepali girl in India told Brown of her life in a brothel in sad and bitter tones:

I was in this place for three years and for two of them I never saw the sun. They never let me out. I was in a little room with two other girls and there was no window. It was always dark and there

was only one light that was on almost all the time. Often we would talk to each other and imagine what it would be like to be outside and in the sunshine. I thought about my home but it just made me upset. (p. 226)

Brown writes that:

Asia's sexual codes are built on the subjugation of women and the exploitation of the vulnerable. In this sense Asia is just like anywhere else. But in Asia the level of hypocrisy is greater. More accurately it is staggering. In official discourse and in everyday life the subject is wrapped in silence although, among men at least, it is a badly kept secret....Prostitution occurs on such a scale that individual, purchased sex acts cannot be anything other than an intrinsic part of society and a reflection of its social and economic structure. Poverty, inequitable economic systems, skewed sexual codes and discrimination against females are terrible burdens for many women throughout the world. In Asia these burdens are especially heavy. The most vulnerable women find themselves caught in a trap from which they cannot escape....Sex and slavery are natural partners in a manmade world. In Asia they are absolutely inseparable. Sex slaves are an intrinsic product of male-dominated Asian societies. They are part of a vicious game that men play with women. They are the abused, stigmatized and bitterest sum of Asian values...." (pp. 253-55).

Louise Brown's *Sex Slaves* is a very sad book, but her careful in-depth research and clear considered scholarly writing make this a mandatory text for any course dealing with Asian women's issues.

**Peter D. Hershock, *Chan Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005. ISBN: 0824828356**

**Reviewed by Tom Pynn**

Peter Hershock's introduction to Chan Buddhism is the most recent volume in the University of Hawai'i Press' new scholarly series, "Dimensions of Asian Spirituality." Such a series is important, as Dimensions' editor Henry Rosemont, Jr. explains, for a number of reasons chief among them is that in our increasingly interconnected and intimate world tolerance "alone cannot contribute substantively to making the world a better—and sustainable—place for human beings to live." This is because at worst tolerance is tolerance on my terms only (therefore a tactic of exclusion or inclusion) and at best tolerance offers little more than benign neglect. Instead, Rosemont advocates moving "beyond mere tolerance to appreciation and celebration of the many and varied forms of spiritual expression." Such an appreciation and celebration, according to Rosemont, will "diminish the otherness of the other and create a more peaceable and just world in which everyone can find meaning in their all-too-human lives." Books like Hershock's may indeed go a long way in helping us to appreciate other spiritual traditions and aid us in bringing about the world Rosemont envisions by offering us an intimate view of spiritual practices *as practices* and not simply intellectual and historical curiosities.

Hershock's structure of the book is fourfold: to give the reader a sense of Chan's rootedness in Indian Buddhism; its development in China with particular emphasis on "examining in some detail a particular genealogical thread in the traditional narrative 'quilt' of Chan practice: the lineage that runs from Bodhidharma through Huineng, Mazu, and Linji;" a "reading of Chan in its own terms with a philosophical 'reconstruction' of Chan practice;" and to explore the contemporary relevance of Chan's "ultimately performative and relational nature of . . . awakening." Hershock's reading of Chan offers westerners—both those with and without an interest in Chan philosophy or practice—an innovative reading of Chan practice that will dispel our misconceptions about Chan as well as offer us insights into the limitations of our own tactics and strategies for alleviating suffering and handling crises.

One of the things Hershock does exceptionally well is develop the historical context in which Buddhism emerged. In just five pages the author is able to show that the two main

conditions in which Buddhism emerged were the “erosion of the authority of the Vedic elite,” the appearance of “a new class of religious practitioners” called *sramanas* (“strivers”), and the proliferation of liberative technologies and narratives. Hershock briefly mentions that these “strivers” may have “in part represented a resurgence of indigenous traditions from pre-Aryan India.” This is a fascinating historical claim that Hershock does not develop. While not *immediately* relevant to Hershock’s goal of presenting Chan Buddhism as a living practice, it could provide an interesting dimension to what appears to be the Buddha’s appropriation of yogic elements of practice which would then set the stage for the case that Chan represents a virtuosic improvisation on Indian Buddhism.

Noteworthy in Hershock’s account is his clear explanations of important Buddhist ideas: Middle Way, the Four Noble Truths, the three marks, karma, samsara, and nirvana. Hershock’s reading of the Four Noble Truths, the three marks, and karma are especially important in illuminating the difference between the misconception of Buddhism as concerned with enlightenment, a static state of accomplishment, and Buddhism as an “enlightening practice,” an on-going process that brings the practitioner’s values, intentions, and actions into ever clearer focus. Furthermore, his emphasis on the lived, face to face encounter between teacher and student (also important in yoga, Vedic, Confucian and Daoist practices) is crucial to understanding Chan’s convergences with these traditions as well as its divergences with these teaching structures.

As Buddhism expands beyond its Indian beginnings and spreads throughout South Asia, Southeast Asia, and China, Hershock has to show how it might be possible for a non-indigenous philosophical and spiritual practice to take hold in another society. After all, other religious traditions have appeared in these regions, especially in China, without exerting much influence on the culture. In particular, how did Buddhism, a foreign tradition, come to be regarded by many as integral to the three-part root of Chinese culture? Hershock explains this by the two-fold process of assimilation: accommodation and advocacy. The first phase of assimilation is what Hershock calls accommodation, in which the original non-native system of concepts and practices “is opened in such a way as to accommodate some important local concepts and practices.” This is especially important Hershock explains if Buddhism is going to fulfill one of its basic counter-cultural functions: cultural critique leading to cultural reformation. In the early development of Chinese Buddhism, Hershock demonstrates the first phase of assimilation by

showing how the core Buddhist concepts of change, interdependence, and emptiness are convergent with the two complementary spiritual traditions of Confucianism and Daoism.

The second phase of assimilation is advocacy, “making room for . . . indigenous resources and then opening them in new directions.” As Hershock explains, advocacy does not supplant indigenous value systems, but selectively supplements them: “this process depends upon improvising personal and cultural narratives that are recognized by the indigenous population as complementing, and not conflicting, with their own.” The author shows how in the early development of Buddhism in China the teachings of karma and buddha-nature perform the counter-cultural work of re-orienting the Chinese toward more skillful means of addressing suffering. In regards to karma, Hershock notices that there “no indigenous Chinese analogues—even distant ones—for karma.” Furthermore, neither Confucianism’s “culture-consolidating efforts” nor Daoism’s “culture-subverting effortlessness” skillfully addresses the meaning of human temporality. Karma, in Hershock’s understanding, is a “path of creatively engaging the future” while also paying close attention to the past and developing critical and moral clarity in the present. The Buddhist teachings on buddha-nature also performed the second phase of assimilation by effectively “cutting through the opposition of Confucian self-cultivation . . . and Daoist no-cultivation.”

Unlike earlier forms of Chinese Buddhism, Chan is not a textual tradition. Its tactics for liberating transformation of values, intentions, and actions rests on the interplay between teacher and student. Therefore, in focusing on three exemplary Chan teachers—Bodhidharma, Mazu, and Linji—Hershock performs a reading of Chan lineage that takes the reader beyond the cult of personality to the heart of the teacher/student relationship. He writes, if Chan “was to grow at all, it had to grow out of a demonstrated ability to enter liberating forms of interdependence—to swing the gate of ignorance open onto wisdom, the gate of habit formations onto attentive virtuosity, and the gate of clinging desire onto moral clarity.” This characterization of Chan implies both its accommodation to Confucian and Daoist spiritual practices as well as its advocacy of innovative spiritual practice. The key to Chan’s innovative tactics, according to Hershock, is its emphasis on “virtuosic teachers” who “immerse themselves in exemplary relationships with their students, teaching with words but certainly not through them.” Illustrating this point with details of the teaching strategies of Bodhidharma, Mazu, and Linji,

allows Hershock to clarify the oft misunderstood description of Chan as a teaching outside the scriptures; that is, the role of words in Chan teaching and transmission.

Throughout his introduction, Hershock uses the aesthetic language of jazz music in order to emphasize the improvisational and performative—and thereby Chan's innovative dimensions in the development of Chinese Buddhism—dimensions of Chan teaching and practice. This excellent way of explanation helps Hershock to demonstrate the important difference between (mis)understanding Chan as a spiritual practice of enlightenment and grasping Chan as an “enlightening practice.” Many of us are familiar with Dogen's insistence that to sit zazen *is* enlightenment, but we may miss the improvisational and performative elements in the practice of Zen he implies. The language of improvisational virtuosity, a theme Hershock has been developing over the course of several articles and books, allows the author to give an original reading of karma. This is the book's most important contribution to western understanding of Chan. Noticing that “Chan virtuosity takes place on the infinite dramatic field of daily life,” Hershock rightly infers that karma is not a passive structure, something humans are in some sense at the mercy of, but the ever-changing context in which each of us forms his/her values, intentions and actions. Therefore, he shows that karma is something we *do* rather than something that happens to us. This shows us that our suffering is largely of our own making and being largely of our own making, suffering can be alleviated. In short, seeing karma in this way allows us to address skillfully our suffering and the suffering of others.

*Chan Buddhism* is a superb introduction to a highly influential form of Buddhist spiritual practice. Both highly readable and philosophically rigorous, Hershock's book would make an excellent secondary source in any college-level course on Chinese religion and/or philosophy, Buddhism, or contemporary religious practice. Scholars in Chinese religion and philosophy will also find this book useful in re-familiarizing themselves with the contemporary significance of Chan as it continues moving beyond its Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese borders to the West.

**Elizabeth Freund Larus, *Economic Reform in China, 1979-2003: The Marketization of Labor and State Enterprises*. Lewiston New York and Queenston Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005. ISBN: 0-7734-6145-0**

**Reviewed By Daniel A. Métraux**

I have read a significant number of books and articles concerning the dramatic economic, political and social changes that have occurred in China since the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976. Studies range from the sensational and irresponsible to the overly academic. What we really need are some works that outline the modern economic development of China in a step-by-step manner while simultaneously giving one or more case studies to

better understand the process. Elizabeth Freund Larus has provided us with such a study with her book *Economic Reform in China: The Marketization of Labor and State Enterprises*.

The transition from a command to a market economy is not an easy one. At the height of the Communist era the Chinese economy was dominated by large State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) which employed millions of workers, produced a whole range of heavy duty items such as steel and in many cases in recent years were operating at a loss.

Economic liberalization has brought explosive growth, greater efficiency and higher wages in the private sector and has turned many SOEs into economic dinosaurs. A “shock therapy approach” would be to close many or most of the SOEs, but that would have resulted in the mass firing and dislocation of tens of thousands of workers.

Labor relations remain one of the critical problems facing Chinese authorities today. Dr. Larus focuses on the topic of SOE reform, especially the impact of these reforms on employees. SOEs played a huge role in many workers’ lives, providing them not only with employment, but also housing, health care and social security. The sudden privatization of SOEs where they would be little more than profit-oriented concerns would have devastating effects on the workers, especially older less productive ones.

The trick, therefore, is to find ways to improve the SOEs’ economic functions through such practices as down-sizing while at the same time protecting the welfare and livelihoods of workers. It is very much of a balancing act between the marketization of SOEs as profit-oriented institutions and the need to protect the stability of the work force.

China's SOE market reform process has been piecemeal rather than uniform and there have been both successes as well as failures. Even though the nation is led by an authoritarian government, it must pay attention to the needs, welfare and responses of the workers and has thus had to resist the wholesale privatization of large industrial SOEs.

The result is that there has been slow progress in China's economic reforms. This reform in the industrial sector has led to the selection of a market-oriented approach that can move forward only very slowly because of the many constraints and expenses incurred while the Chinese seek to transform the SOEs and their labor system.

Larus' work is clear, well researched and well written. Her case studies of the Baoshan Iron and Steel Works and of the Anshan Iron and Steel Works allow us to examine the book's themes from a more micro corporate level. The research is based on extensive field work in China through the mid-1990s plus considerable archival work.

This volume belongs in any library with a serious collection of monographs on contemporary China.

**R. Keith Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. ISBN: 0131930397**

**Reviewed by Chizuru Saeki**

R. Keith Schoppa presents a rich modern Chinese history which is satisfactory to even professional Asian historian experts. Starting with the relations between Chinese and Manchus, his chapter develops from the Opium War (1839-1842) to Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), which Schoppa calls “civil war.” His vivid depiction of Taiping leaders including Hong Xiuquan, Yang Xiuqing, and Wei Changhui attracts reader’s endless curiosity on this mysterious rebellion, which almost overturned the Qing government. Schoppa’s accurate evaluation about the failure of Taiping Rebellion brings Chinese as well as Western points of view. Schoppa also does not ignore female activists in Chinese history. As a revolutionary feminist against the Manchu government, Qiu Jin was introduced, he also devote some later chapters to a discussion about the feminist movement in 1970s Taiwan.

The strength of this book is the author’s rich description of Chinese history in the early republic period. His episodic introductions on “dog meat” warlord, Zhang Zongchang and corruptive civilian official Cao Kun are eye opening. Although the readers may want to know more about Japanese side of the story, particularly concerning the assassination of Zhang Zuoling in 1928 and the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Schoppa makes a clear narrative of the general Chinese history in Sino-Japanese conflict in 1920s-1930s.

Sometimes the author’s rhetorical writing might confuse readers unfamiliar with the expressions like “Japan swallowed Korea in 1910, ” but generally his narrative flows steadily. There are so much more that the readers can benefit from this book. Schoppa introduces Chinese wartime propaganda which culminated anti-Japanese sentiment among Chinese. Famous political cartoonist Feng Zikai and his works are introduced’ Schoppa mentions that “side by side with the anti-Japanese coverage in cartoons, newspapers, street drama appealed to heroic Chinese resistance of the past.” (275) As a part of this campaign, Hua Mulan, aTang dynasty woman warrior emerged as a propaganda item. I believe this has been done from his original research, giving this book a fresh insight which most commonly used other modern Chinese history books do not deal with.

The section after 1949, the chapter 16, talking on the establishment of Mao's People's Republic of China might have been benefited if he had inserted a table to explain more clearly the political structure of PRC. The chapter 20, where Schoppa describes Chinese foreign relations in the world, probably he could have included the issue regarding Japanese history textbook description on China incident, and the rape of Nanking, as well as Senkaku island territorial dispute issue. In this chapter, there is a nice map inserted, describing China's maritime territorial claims in regional East Asia, but unfortunately he does not explore further to discuss Senkaku Island issue, one of the biggest topics in contemporary Sino-Japanese relations.

Other than that, Schoppa covers Chinese contemporary foreign relations pretty comprehensively, including China's preparation for 2008 summer Olympics, premier Zhu Rongji's participation at ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nation), in which China, Japan and South Korea took the lead in negotiating an agreement to create a regional free trade zone of over 1.7 billion people by 2010. Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to China in 2001 as the Chinese called off the exchange in protest of his visit to the Yasukuni Shrine is nicely depicted. Schoppa extends his observation even to Sino-Russian agreement on joint military exercise in 2005 and Sino-American relations after September 11.

Good coverage of China's contemporary foreign policy is another of Schoppa's strengths that makes his book more updated than other conventional Chinese modern history books, which typically end with Deng Xiaoping's period. Over all, Schoppa's book is well written with a clear narrative. It could find good use as the textbook for upper courses of Asian history as well as an introductory Chinese history textbook for professional historians.

**Theodore C. Bestor, Patricia G. Steinhoff, & Victoria Lyon Bestor, Eds., *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003. 414 pages; ISBN 0-8248-2525-X (hardcover), 0-8248-2525-1 (paper).**

**Reviewed by Steven E. Gump**

When reading works on Japan by scholars I do not know personally (and, still a graduate student, practically the only scholars I know well are those I have been fortunate to have as professors), I often wish that the authors had included more of their own “stories.” That is, I wonder about their backgrounds and how they became interested in Japan in the first place. I wonder who (or what encounters) directed them to their particular research topics and areas of inquiry. I wonder about their initial (and subsequent) experiences in Japan as students and researchers. And I wonder how they navigated the system, so to speak, and were able to carry out research in and about Japan that resulted in the published articles or monographs along the likes of which I someday hope to produce myself.

As if in response to my questions, Theodore Bestor, Patricia Steinhoff, and Victoria Lyon Bestor, in *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*, have brought together essays by twenty nonnative Japanologists that offer interdisciplinary insights and personal suggestions about how to prepare for, carry out, analyze, and reflect upon fieldwork research in Japan. By “fieldwork,” the editors mean gathering information “on site, non-experimentally, from and about human informants” (p. 3). Perspectives are not limited to those from scholars in the expected disciplines of anthropology and sociology, however: the fields of history, international relations, political science, and religious studies are also represented in this collection. The research on which these essays are based has been carried out by the contributors from rural to urban settings, all across the Japanese archipelago.

Following an introductory essay by the editors are four broadly thematic sections: “Starting Out,” “Navigating Bureaucratic Mazes,” “Asking: Surveys, Interviews, Access,” and “Outsiders in Insiders’ Networks.” An appendix on using digital (on-line) resources by Victoria Lyon Bestor is both timely and helpful, since “doing good fieldwork and getting access to documents are often inseparable activities” (p. 372), and a vast array of useful information on

Japan is increasingly becoming available via the Internet. A useful glossary of Japanese terms and a comprehensive index complete the handsome volume.

At the heart of the work, using words of the editors, is “the complicated dynamic of field research, poised between standardized disciplinary research methodologies and the challenges of doing research within a particular culture” (p. 7). Indeed, throughout the essays, many of the themes are especially characteristic of (if not specific to) research in a Japanese context, such as capitalizing on one’s Japanese language ability (e.g., contributions by Coleman; Culter; Hendry; S. Smith), the importance of personal introductions with respect to access to potential interviewees and data sources (e.g., T. Bestor; Gordon; White), and the significance of respecting obligation and reciprocity (e.g., Hardacre; McConnell; Roberts). Such themes resonate with the editors’ desire to emphasize that “fieldwork in any society involves careful attention to cultural specificity” (p. 2). But other themes, such as considerations of fieldwork ethics vis-à-vis research on human subjects (e.g., Roth; R. Smith; Steinhoff), the characteristics of “good” fieldwork (e.g., Brinton; Campbell; Johnson; Krauss), and openness to serendipity or chance (e.g., Arase; Reader; Yano) cross cultural borders and are applicable to fieldwork researchers in any context. Thus the essays in the volume, although perhaps of most practical interest to students and researchers of Japan, are of theoretical and methodological significance to students and researchers contemplating or preparing for fieldwork in other cultural contexts as well.

Read in tandem with scholarly works by the various contributors (published elsewhere), the essays in this volume further humanize the scholars themselves as well as the work they have carried out. (A nice compositional touch, personalizing the authors of the essays even more, is the inclusion of a photograph of each contributor “in the field” at the outset of each essay.) Moreover, according to the editors, combining the essays in this volume with scholarly pieces by the contributors serves to “illuminate how researchers incorporate the results of participant observation and interviews into their publications and how different methodological strategies may be related to different ways of presenting the results” (p. 16). By reading the personal and reflective essays in this collection, students preparing for fieldwork in Japan (or elsewhere) will learn a lot about the art of ethnographic inquiry, including physical, psychological, temporal, financial, and other barriers that may be encountered along the way. Experienced researchers, on the other hand, may see reflections of themselves and their experiences in these essays.

One of the essayists in this volume with whom I have had the pleasure to work is anthropologist Robert J. Smith. Engaged in the study of Japan since 1944, Professor Smith contributed an especially reflective piece on long-term field research, the last essay in the collection. (When I was a student of his a few years before his retirement from Cornell University in 1997, he was already well practiced in the art of being reflective about his personal and professional experiences in and with Japan.) He offers a thoughtful commentary on fieldwork initially carried out over fifty years ago in Japan and the rewards of maintaining a long-term relationship with a single community. At the same time, Smith eloquently touches on the themes of change and the passage of time that affect both places and individuals (including the researcher himself), offering comments on memory (p. 353) and the wistful powers of nostalgia (p. 358).

In short, *Doing Fieldwork in Japan* should undoubtedly prove to be a valuable resource, especially to students contemplating fieldwork in Japan. Although carrying out conscientious and high-quality ethnographic work in any initially unfamiliar context is not easy, the essays in the volume reassure students that the problems mentioned in the essays “happen all the time” (p. 246). The contributors, therefore, act as surrogate mentors, offering sage advice, welcome recommendations, and needed encouragement to budding scholars as they maneuver their ways through culturally and methodologically unfamiliar territories with the ultimate goal of becoming members of the community of scholars on Japan.

**James T. Gillam, *War in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, 1968-1970: An Historian's Experience*. Lewiston NY and Queenston ONT: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006. 331 p. ISBN: 0-7734-5775-5**

**Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux**

Besides my work in Asian Studies I have a passion for the Civil War era of American history. Over the past 18 months I have probably read thirty to forty books on the subject, enjoying most of all accounts by people who fought in or lived through this traumatic epoch in American history. I myself came of age during the Vietnam era and participated in my share of anti-war rallies and in the McCarthy campaign in 1968 in Wisconsin that helped to send President Johnson to his political grave. I got married during that fateful summer of 1969 when President Nixon announced his Vietnamization Program and graduated from Beloit College the day that Nixon ordered the start of the ultimately failed invasion of Cambodia.

Our colleague, James T. Gillam, distinguished former editor of SERAS and Professor of History at Spelman College in Atlanta, was in college at the same time as I.

His life experience at the time, however, was markedly different. The Vietnam War had reached its height with the disastrous Tet Offensive in early 1968. American casualties were huge in 1968—over 14,000 killed and many more wounded. There was a need to replenish our fallen forces in Vietnam and the Johnson Administration determined to send over as many draftees as it could. When Gillam, then a rather bored student at Ohio University, lost his deferment after he left the University, he received a notice from his draft board that it was his turn to serve his country. After a significant amount of training that saw him rise to the rank of sergeant, he set off for Vietnam on 9/11/69.

Dr. Gillam has composed a moving memoir of his time in the Central Highlands of Vietnam and later in Cambodia between the latter part of 1969 and the summer of 1970. It is a clearly written and deeply personal testament to the ugliness and realities of war which should fascinate future generations of readers just as the Civil War memoirs have enthralled me over the past few months. A talented writer, Gillam takes us back to that difficult time and we march with him through the jungles and the bitter turmoil that led to the deaths of so many on both sides. In an uncanny way, however, Gillam keeps his emotions under control as he does when he

describes his killing his first enemy soldier. He was bringing up the rear of his patrol, turning right and left to make sure no enemy forces snuck up from behind. During a break, Gillam suddenly encountered an armed man who had appeared without a sound:

He was in khakis, and I saw he had a rifle on a long sling on his right shoulder. The butt was behind his right shoulder, and the barrel was pointed down to keep rain out of the barrel. Time froze, and we stared at each other for an eternity. Neither one of us moved until we heard Jim Higgins, the platoon's radioman, coming to tell me that the break was over. The NVA soldier started to raise his weapon but he had only one hand on it. I was sitting with both hands on mine, so I had an advantage. I got my weapon up first, and we began shooting at each other from a range of about twenty feet. He had an SKS carbine. It's a semi-automatic weapon that fires one shot from a seven round magazine each time you pull the trigger. I probably would have died if he had had an AK-47 set on automatic. He fired his weapon twice, and both shots were low, between my butt and heels. I learned later that an AK-47 set on automatic would have kept firing and cut through both my legs and body because they tend to rise to the right from the recoil of firing. My M-16 was on semi-automatic because I had found I was a more accurate shot on that setting. I pulled the trigger three times as fast as I could. The first shot hit him above the belt. The second hit higher, near the collarbone. The third one hit a tree behind and to the left of his head. He dropped straight down into a sitting position, staring at me with his weapon still pointed at me. But, I knew the damage an M-16 did at close range, and I knew he was dead with his eyes open. (pp. 122-23)

Gillam takes us through all phases of the war in the Highlands and in Cambodia including the sadness of losing good friends. One of the tragic deaths that Gillam had to live through was that of Mike Mullen who with his Battalion Commander became famous posthumously because their deaths had come about as a result of American fire.

Their story was told in the now famous book and movie, *Friendly Fire*.

The fact that Gillam is also a gifted historian adds directly top the quality of the book. Other memoirs simply give the author's experiences without giving the reader the "bigger picture," but Gillam does this very well. He gives us a very coherent picture of the war in 1967-69 to set the stage of his entry and his analysis of the military and political situation in Cambodia prior to May 1970, brief, yet with sufficient depth, is superb.

At the end of the book we return to the United States where some passengers on his plane prefer not to sit next to him because in their eyes US soldiers were little more than killers; later he and a buddy were assaulted in Chicago. When he failed to get a cab to stop for him on his way to the airport, he had to get a prostitute to get one for him. Such disrespect for somebody who had fought for his country in a brutal war!

Gillam's book is a fine worthy read for anybody interested in the Indochina wars and in military history. It would be a splendid book for any Vietnam War course. The only criticism I can offer is to remark on a number of typos and grammatical errors—better proof reading please! Good job, Jim. Mission accomplished!

**Nancy E. Sato, *Inside Japanese Classrooms: The Heart of Education*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004. 325 pages; ISBN 0-8153-2115-5 (hardcover).**

**Reviewed by Steven E. Gump**

Nancy Sato, in *Inside Japanese Classrooms*, attempts an ambitious project: She mines ethnographic data she gathered primarily at two Japanese elementary schools between 1986–89 (yes, over 15 years prior to the book’s publication) for certain “timeless” (p. 2) and universal themes regarding how Japanese education works. Sato’s agenda does not attempt to explain how the system works *so well*; she leaves such a judgment to her readers. But readers of her work, a fine example of educational anthropology, will undoubtedly be impressed by the system and will be potentially moved by Sato’s deft and occasionally poetic descriptions of the learning contexts within Japanese elementary schools and, by extension, Japanese society as a whole. Indeed, just as Sato “was inspired in the course of [her] daily research,” she wishes to inspire “educators everywhere” with her descriptions and findings (p. 7). She is correct to conclude that her findings “offer fresh insights into Japanese society and education, teaching–learning processes, equity, and classroom life” in Japan (p. 255).

For her study, which she originally undertook to investigate practices that promote equity in classroom learning for her 1991 Stanford doctoral dissertation, Sato intentionally selected two public schools in Tokyo serving populations with highly contrasting socioeconomic backgrounds. Her research for this project involved ten months of in-depth classroom observation at the two schools plus an additional year of interviews and follow-up visits. At times, Sato portrays “Mori,” the poorer—and more “traditional”—school, with sympathy; she portrays “Umi,” the richer—and more “privileged”—school, with depictions that occasionally (yet suggestively) imply a lack of genuineness (see, e.g., p. 42). The same goes for “Mr. Ito,” the fifth-grade teacher whose class she observed at Mori, and “Mr. Seki,” whom she observed at Umi, although both were “dedicated professionals” (p. 147) and “excellent” teachers (p. 6). Sato is careful to avoid “analytically convenient dualisms” (p. 19)—especially with respect to the problematic dichotomies of “homogeneous” versus “heterogeneous” and “group oriented” versus “individualistic” (p. 248); but the two schools she selected nonetheless seem to fall at opposite ends of the spectrum: “Both schools share many common features and some differences are just

matters of degree, but significant differences exist throughout Japan, and these two classrooms provide a strong example” (pp. 112–3). At the same time, though, the schools and classrooms observed are specific cases, not generalizations: “Images of ‘typical’ are just as varied as the schools and classrooms we try to peg into a ‘typical’ group” (p. 164). Sato’s “overall impression of Japanese elementary schools” was “*variety*” (p. 15, original emphasis).

The work is organized as follows: Introductory and concluding chapters bookend six central chapters that detail the study’s conceptual framework, the settings of the two schools, a typical school week and school year from the students’ perspective, meticulous notes from two classroom observations, the academic side of classroom instruction, and an exploration of equality and equity in Japanese elementary schools. Extensive appendixes include school calendars, English translations of Sato’s student interview guide and paper-based research instruments (surveys of students, teachers, and parents), and detailed field notes from two additional classroom observations. A bibliography and two useful indexes round out the volume. Even though Sato’s eye for detail is keen and her ability to describe seems quite effective, her work would be enhanced by the inclusion of at least some visuals (perhaps photographs from Japanese schools).

In her introductory chapter, Sato describes the four major goals of her book, each of which I believe she meets: (1) to create a more comprehensive and deeper appreciation of Japanese education; (2) to learn from the Japanese about practices to assist U.S. educational reform; (3) to understand how to create and sustain strong learning communities in public schools; and (4) to begin to identify commonalities among the most powerful educational experiences regardless of the country or culture of origin. These goals suggest the audiences who could potentially benefit from reading her work: students of education, educational policy drafters and implementers in the United States, and educators at all levels. Sato’s research assesses, among other issues, “classroom and school organization, education goals, teaching methods and philosophies, curriculum content, learning activities, tests, grades, other evaluation structures, classroom management strategies, student grouping patterns, social relations, as well as student and parent attitudes and expectations, which set a vital context for learning” (p. 35). On the micro level, Sato was so impressed by the “collegial sharing” that transpired in the teachers’ room at one school that the “pedagogical excitement” of one particular incident “invigorated” her to such an extent to want her “own classroom to try out the new ideas”

(p. 235). (For details on the goings-on in teachers' rooms in Japanese junior high schools, see my research note in this issue.)

At the outset (pp. 8–9), Sato also describes two theoretical constructs that emerged from the “theoretical treasure hunt” (p. 259) of her ethnographic research: the “four Cs” of educational excellence (community, connectedness, commitment, and caring) and the “five Ks” that form the basis for the “academic basics” in Japan (*kankei*, *kimochi*, *kurō*, *keiken*, and *kokoro*—relationships, emotions, hardship, experience, and heart). These ideas resurface throughout the book, where Sato provides examples of each component in action (as well as in synergetic combination). Later (p. 207) she introduces five additional “Cs” that are especially essential for administration and policy making: coherence, consistency, continuity, congruence, and cohesion.

Interestingly, the idea of “culture” seems to take a back seat in Sato’s study; I became aware of its absence when encountering the author’s definition in an endnote in the fourth chapter (p. 105). Earlier in chapter 4, when Sato confesses to being “perplexed but fascinated by the lack of adult supervision and the range of tolerated behaviors and boisterous noise levels” in the Japanese elementary school classrooms she observed (p. 67), she demonstrates how things that researchers find most “perplexing” and “fascinating” are usually those that are different from their expectations or personal experiences in more familiar contexts. Indeed, although readers of her book learn how Sato, as an American, approaches many of the issues at hand herself, we are less informed about her roles in the classrooms she observed. A few clues are provided in chapter 5, where Sato mentions the lack of barriers between her (“a foreigner”) and the students in Mr. Ito’s class (p. 119). “Even when I wanted to stay off to the side, like a fly on the wall,” she recounts, “a student would inevitably notice and invite me to join” the day’s activities (p. 113). Thus participant observation must have been the norm for Sato in the classrooms she visited.

Any outsider’s study of the educational system of a different society is likely to employ teleological arguments when practices in schools seem to correlate with expected or experienced cultural beliefs and behaviors of adults. But Sato explains Japanese society through the educational system (instead of the other way around): “Many areas of Japanese society replicate the expectations and demands placed on students” (p. 55). She explores the way in which even students in elementary schools are bound up in the trajectory toward attendance at elite universities and, resultantly, bright future career outlooks (pp. 153–7); Sato later describes—and

is critical of—the Japanese schooling system as “a sorting mechanism set in a hierarchical pyramid structure” (p. 214).

In a link to the educational philosophy of John Dewey (ultimately made in the concluding chapter on pp. 251 and 260), Sato believes school should be viewed “not just as a place but also as a process” (p. 218). In what she describes as a “fascinating twist,” Sato’s study “found that ‘community’ is not just a certain place or identifiable set of people, interests, and characteristics; rather ‘community’ is also the ongoing set of relations, constantly evolving from moment to moment throughout the day” (p. 3). Another fascinating finding, I felt, was that academic achievement in Japan appeared to be fostered by spending more time—not less, as reform-minded individuals in the United States are wont to do—in so-called extracurricular or nonacademic areas, including interpersonal relations, art, music, physical education, and special events and ceremonies: “Despite the extra time and energy burdens, extracurricular activities are not considered ‘extra’” (p. 85). Thus, as Sato emphasizes throughout her work, building community is central to the success of the Japanese educational enterprise.

Although Sato includes references to numerous studies carried out more recently than her fieldwork, I would have been more assured of the continuing validity of some of her comments if she had been able to revisit a Japanese classroom (ideally at one of the same schools as in the original study) before preparing this book. (If she had more recent experience in Japanese classrooms than her data-collecting trips in the late 1980s, she did not mention it.) Even though my experience in Japanese junior high schools fell ten years after her experience in Japanese elementary schools, I would nonetheless suggest that Sato’s remarks about the number of hours of television watched—and the number of hours of computer games played—during the week are probably low for contemporary elementary school students (p. 118). Furthermore, she is critical of the lack of multicultural and international content in elementary school social studies (pp. 230, 248); this situation has since changed, both on paper and in practice. And I am certain that Sato’s across-the-board observation that “Japanese teachers do not face classroom management as a battle” (p. 191), if made today, would be made with at least some qualifications.

In short, readers have much to learn about elementary education in Japan from Sato’s insightful descriptions, interpretations, and analyses. I would caution readers, however, to remember that certain details in present-day Japanese elementary education may differ from

those described by Sato, even though the ultimate (and inspiring) aims and goals of the educational enterprise may be the same. Also, as Sato herself admits, “the positive elements prevail” in the findings of her study (p. 10); so, despite all the strong points of the Japanese education system, be careful not to end up believing that the system, at least at the elementary level, is perfect.

**Michael Ashkenazi & Jeanne Jacob, *Food Culture in Japan*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003. 207 pages; ISBN 0-313-32438-7 (hardback).**

**Jacqueline M. Newman, *Food Culture in China*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004. 230 pages; ISBN 0-313-32581-2 (hardback).**

**Colleen Taylor Sen, *Food Culture in India*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004. 197 pages; ISBN 0-313-32487-5 (hardback).**

### **Reviewed by Stephen E. Gump**

In the foreword to the Food Culture around the World Series, of which these three volumes on the food cultures of China, India, and Japan are a part, series editor Ken Albala (University of the Pacific) writes that “there is perhaps no better way to understand a culture, its values, preoccupations and fears, than by examining its attitudes toward food” (see Newman, p. ix). The appearance of the series demonstrates increasing interest in the foods, food histories, and eating cultures of people around the world and, according to Albala, marks a “definitive stage in the maturation of Food Studies as a discipline” (Newman, p. ix). Emerging as an academic field in the 1980s, food studies has often been considered a subfield of any number of other disciplines, including folklore, anthropology, history, sociology, and psychology. In fact, the field, which focuses on a basic human need that pervades both time and culture, could be considered a poster child of interdisciplinary studies, as “it crosses the boundaries between the arts, humanities, and sciences, blending nutrition and health professions with the culinary arts and hospitality management.”<sup>1</sup>

Initiated in December 2003 with *Food Culture in Japan*, the series currently (summer 2006) includes twelve titles, involving cultures on every inhabited continent save Australia. Each book in the series opens with a country or regional map and timeline and includes chapters with the following titles (or variations thereof): Historical Overview, Major Foods and Ingredients,

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy M. Long, “Introduction,” in *Culinary Tourism*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 2–19, 7.

Cooking, Typical Meals, Eating Out, Special Occasions, and Diet and Health. (*Food Culture in China* also includes a chapter on Regional and Provincial Foods.) Several foundational or otherwise representative recipes are included in each volume, as is a glossary, resource guide (pointing to informative books, cookbooks, videos, and websites), bibliography, and index. Each volume is illustrated, though not excessively (and somewhat idiosyncratically), with monochrome photographs and line drawings.

In *Food Culture in Japan*, Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacob succinctly describe Japanese cuisine, “at its best,” as “an overwhelming sensory aesthetic experience” (p. x). Their concise historical overview nicely emphasizes food-related issues (the introduction of rice cultivation after the 5th century C.E., beginnings of tea cultivation and drinking by the 9th century, development of more “modern” forms of *sushi* in the 18th century) as well as the influences of geography (including Japan’s proximity to China), climate, and religion on Japanese cuisine. Their chapter on staple foods presents rice, soybean paste (*miso*) and fish stock (*dashi*) as “the three major ingredients that define Japanese cooking, emotionally, culturally, and in terms of prevalence” (p. 29). Patterns of cooking are explored by describing a typical (modern) kitchen and cooking utensils; food categories (e.g., rice-based dishes, steamed dishes, simmered dishes, pickles) are then detailed. Though the authors note the high sodium content and rising prevalence of fatty and refined foods in the Japanese diet, the final chapter details health benefits of a “traditional” Japanese diet: low fat content, small portions, emphasis on vegetables and fish, freshness, and presence of health-promoting foods such as tea and seaweed. Ultimately, the authors conclude that the Japanese principles of “simplicity, naturalness, elegance, and balanced quantities provide solutions to both personal and worldwide food problems” (p. 176).

I recommend two supplemental books on Japanese food that are not listed in Ashkenazi and Jacob’s resource guide: Richard Hosking’s *A Dictionary of Japanese Food* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1996), for much more detailed information on Japanese ingredients, cooking techniques, and implements; and the Japan Travel Bureau’s *Eating in Japan* (Tokyo: JTB, 1987), for material that strengthens the relatively brief chapter on eating out. Also, some books in the resource guide could have been updated. For example, the Hendry (*Understanding Japanese Society*) and Reischauer (*The Japanese*) books were each in their third editions by 2003, although the first editions (from 1987 and 1977, respectively) are listed.

Jacqueline Newman's *Food Culture in China* is built on the same footprint as *Food Culture in Japan*. The author describes the "longest continuous food culture in the world" (p. xi) and focuses on the history of food consumption for the Han population. Her historical overview begins in the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras (dating back over 10,000 years) and situates the land, people, language, and food history from the earliest dynasties (shrouded in the myths of Suiren, Shennong, and Huangdi) to the present. Although Newman presents rice as a staple of the Chinese diet, she privileges soy sauce and bean curd (tofu) as "foods considered Chinese" (p. 29). Generically, rice and other staple grains (such as wheat, millet, and sorghum) are referred to as *fan*; the accompanying vegetables and meats are called *cai* foods (pp. 1, 35). (The Chinese diet, like the Japanese, traditionally includes larger quantities of grains and vegetables than animal proteins. But, because most breakfasts in China do not involve much rice, noodles, or other grains, breakfast is not considered a meal [pp. 58, 119].) Newman includes a discussion of the five primary tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and savory, p. 32) and even mentions the Japanese term *umami*, which has universally come to be used to describe the fifth taste, "savory," the only one not identified by traditional Western science in terms of distinct taste receptors on the tongue. (Surprisingly, Ashkenazi and Jacob do not include this important information in their text.)

For a country as large as China, Newman's chapter on regional and provincial foods is a necessity, even though she is able to present only a "broad-brush view" (p. 91) of four major regions: the South (Guangzhou [Cantonese food]), North (Beijing, Shandong), West (Sichuan, Hunan), and East (Shanghai). The concluding chapter on diet and health is a concise introduction to traditional Chinese medicine, including the importance of nutrition, specific foodstuffs (including examples of those which are classified as *yin*, *yang*, or neutral), and herbs as they all relate to the five elements (fire, wood, earth, metal, water) and an individual's *qi*, or vital energy. Unfortunately, however, even though the book was published in 2004, several of the websites listed in the resource guide are no longer available.

*Food Culture in India*, Colleen Taylor Sen's contribution to the Food Culture Around the World Series, portrays a colorful portrait of the cuisine of an "extremely diverse country" (p. xiii). Indeed, she opens her introductory chapter by likening any attempts to describe Indian food to the ancient Indian tale about the elephant and the six blind men (each of whom touched a different part of the animal and therefore formed contradictory conclusions about its nature).

Diversity is manifested through the languages, geography, climate, and religions of India; such diversity has directly affected the subcontinent's foodways. "Defining and describing a typical Indian meal is a daunting task in view of the enormous physical, climatic, ethnic, and religious diversity of a country of 1 billion people," Sen admits (p. 81). In her extensive chapter on typical meals, she subdivides the subcontinent, describing regional differences in detail. In general, however, a "typical" Indian meal, if there is one, involves a staple grain (rice in the South and East, bread made from wheat in the North) accompanied by protein-providing boiled pulses (beans, peas, and lentils) called *dal*. Depending on religious restrictions, relatively small amounts of meat, fish, and vegetables accompany a typical meal, which is rounded out by condiments (such as fruit and vegetable chutneys, pickles, and yogurt) that both complement the flavors and effectively provide essential vitamins and minerals.

Sen does a laudable job describing the religious origins of certain dietary prescriptions for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, and Parsis (pp. 29–34). Her section on the "cultural interface" during British rule (1857–1919) and its effect on Indian cuisine, along with that from previous European contact (pp. 19–27) is also well presented and documented. Sen returns to the British legacy in her chapter on eating out and introduces her readers to Kundan Lal, a Pakistani refugee who opened a restaurant in New Delhi in 1947 (the Moti Mahal) and subsequently introduced the tandoori style of cooking in India and created the recipe for chicken *tikka* (p. 134). Sen describes the reverse cultural exchange with the United Kingdom, where "Indian food has totally permeated the gastronomical culture" (p. 136). This point is corroborated in Laura Mason's *Food Culture in Great Britain* (in the same series), as a senior politician apparently described chicken *tikka masala* as "Britain's national dish" in 2001.<sup>2</sup> In Sen's concluding chapter on diet and health, she introduces the basic principles of *ayurveda* (Sanskrit for "science of life"), the ancient indigenous Indian system of medicine that includes numerous rules for diet and eating.

How does one do justice in a single volume to the food culture of such ancient and complex civilizations as, especially, China and India? (As a student of Japan, I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that writing encyclopedically about Japanese food seems as if it would be easier than doing so for the cuisines of either China or India, despite the scores of "local specialties" [*meibutsu*] in Japan that Ashkenazi and Jacob conveniently omit from their presentation.) The most important point to remember about the books in this series, then, is that

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<sup>2</sup> Laura Mason, *Food Culture in Great Britain* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 164.

they are introductory reference works: They highlight what the authors believe to be the most salient features of a particular food culture, and the attempts at coverage result in cursory treatment of many subjects. One could argue, of course, that the food culture of China, say, or India, would actually better be described not monolithically, as these books attempt, but as networks of food *cultures* brought together somewhat arbitrarily by present-day political boundaries and borders. But to do so would imply that the books in this series somehow miss the mark, and I do not believe that to be the case. Instead, these books provide a wealth of information that would be ideal for travelers interested in the food cultures of their Asian destinations; “foodies” in any country who desire greater background knowledge of these three ethnic cuisines; high schoolers working on food-related projects; or students in introductory college-level area studies, anthropology, or geography courses who are curious as to how history, the physical environment, agriculture, technology, religion, conceptions of health and nutrition, and other circumstances have affected and continue to affect the food cultures in three key Asian countries: China, India, and Japan.

**Timon Screech, *Secret Memoirs of the Shoguns: Isaac Titsingh and Japan, 1779–1822*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 256 pp. ISBN: 070071220X**

**Reviewed by William Fleming**

Isaac Titsingh is an important figure in the history of Western engagement with Japan. That he has until now been largely overlooked in English-language scholarship is a puzzle that can not be completely explained. One likely factor is the unfair tendency to dismiss the Dutch in Japan as a horde of intellectually uncurious traders, concerned with little beyond mercantile activities. This bias is encouraged by the fact that many of the greatest names in the history of the Dutch in Japan—Kaempfer, Thunberg, Siebold, and so on—are not Dutch at all, but rather those of Germans (and a Swede). These better-known figures were not merchants, but physicians who had obtained positions in the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) out of their own initiative and a desire to see and to catalog the world outside of Europe.

But not all of the Dutch traders in Japan were focused on profits alone. Isaac Titsingh stands out in this regard. Titsingh was fond of writing that true happiness could only be obtained by the pursuit of learning, and that he had nothing but disdain for money. While his life did not entirely measure up to his rhetoric, Titsingh did use his three terms as factory head [*opperhoofd*] on Deshima to collect writings by Japanese authors on their country's history and culture (many of which he had translated for him by the Nagasaki interpreters) and to accumulate an impressive collection of artifacts that was the envy of many who later saw it. Titsingh's noble goal was to use these primary materials to write a study of Japan and its people, culture, and history from a Japanese perspective. Upon his return to Europe, however, progress proved difficult, and the incomplete product of his labor was to be published only after his death.

Recent work by a number of Dutch scholars has made available many materials pertaining to Titsingh, bringing greater attention to this neglected figure. Timon Screech's latest book performs the valuable service of bringing together in a single volume several previously published translations of Titsingh's writings, as well as one new one. The bulk of the book is taken up by reprinted sections from Frederick Shoberl's 1822 English translation of Titsingh's *magnum opus*, *Beschrijving van Japan*, translated as *Illustrations of Japan*. This is followed by a reprinting of Cynthia Viallé's translation of Titsingh's so-called "Secret Diary," originally

published as part of the *Deshima Diaries* series edited by Viallé and Leonard Blussé. This journal, kept separately from the official daily logs [*dagregisters*], contains discussions of various trade-related matters, as well as a record of the failed negotiations to construct a shogunal fleet under Dutch supervision. The last chapter presents a new translation, by David McKay, of Titsingh's brief "Philosophical Discourse," an introduction to Western philosophy intended for one of his Japanese correspondents, but likely never actually received.

While only one of the primary works is presented for the first time, Screech improves upon the previously published translations by touching up rough patches and providing limited, but helpful, commentary. That he makes available a good portion of Titsingh's *Illustrations* for the first time since its original publication is alone deserving of our appreciation. But Screech's main contribution to scholarship comes in the form of a seventy-page introduction to the translations. In this biographical sketch, Screech follows in the footsteps of earlier Dutch scholarship by Frank Lequin, author of a biography in Dutch entitled simply *Isaac Titsingh (1745–1812)* (2002). Though he makes a grand case for the newness of his material, Screech's work overlaps greatly with this earlier biography, and a large part of what is new has been based on a single readily available source, the *Deshima Diaries*. Still, Screech's biography is more compelling and complete than Lequin's, and it is informed by an easy facility with Japanese sources that Lequin, by his own ready admission, did not possess. If he does not add considerably to our knowledge of the facts of Titsingh's life, Screech does help us interpret them by providing a broader context, explaining such things as the formalities of the court journey and the role and organization of the college of interpreters, and by shedding light on the Japanese side of the story.

Screech writes that questions of which and how many books Titsingh relied on for his writings "have never been asked," and that he takes the "first ever steps" in this direction. His investigations yield important results. But it should be noted that Screech's claim to groundbreaking scholarship was no longer valid by the time his book came to press. A group of scholars based primarily at the Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo released an impressive volume early last year entitled *Oranda shōkanchō no mita Nihon* [*Japan as seen by the Dutch factory head*], devoted almost entirely to Titsingh. Most of the volume is taken up by Yokoyama Yoshinori's meticulous Japanese translations of Titsingh's complete letters with Japanese correspondents, accompanied by copious notes in which he identifies nearly all of the

numerous Western and Japanese books presented to and by Titsingh, including those used for his *Illustrations*. Matsukata Fuyuko's contributed essay "examines which sources Titsingh selected for his studies and why," covering the same ground (and more) as Screech. All the same, Screech's facility with Japanese materials allows him to identify works which Lequin did not, and as such he is the first to present these findings in Western scholarship.

Screech's writing is peppered with misspellings of key Dutch terms, from "opperhoofft" (*opperhoofd*) for the head of the Deshima factory, to "hofeis" (*hofreis*), the latter suggesting a bowl of *kakigōri* served up by a shogunal attendant, not the official delegations to Edo that were a condition of the continued Dutch presence in Japan. More puzzling is the rendering of the caption to an illustration of an airship appearing in Morishima Chūryō's famous *Kōmō zatsuwa* as "Luftschip," a chimera-like word, half-Dutch, half-German, apparently of Screech's own invention. In fact, Chūryō's katakana label is a fairly unambiguous rendering of the Dutch *luchtsloep*, or airship. To be fair, these sorts of infelicities are not uncommon in English scholarship on *rangaku*. After all, the chapter devoted to the subject in the estimable *Sources of Japanese Tradition* contains equally egregious errors (the very words yielding the acronym VOC being misspelled therein). A consultation with a Dutch dictionary would serve to correct these errors. As is, troublingly, the reader is forced to question the writers' facility with Dutch materials.

Perhaps this is nitpicking. But in addition to one's obligation to caution readers of these and other mistakes, it seems fair to point out such errors given that one salient feature of the book is its tendency to nitpick. Screech makes various jabs at other scholars, such as following the "Deshima" in the title of the invaluable *Deshima Diaries* with a snide "*sic.*" But the reading for the place name was not standardized at the time, and "Deshima" can not be considered problematic. Who is to say we shouldn't use the preferred Dutch spelling, "Decima"? Elsewhere, Screech takes scholars to task for referring to Matsura Seizan by that name when referring to his "younger days." Are we not allowed, then, to speak of the young Mark Twain? Shouldn't Screech be more concerned with his own more significant factual errors, such as when he states that the Dutch were required to make the court journey once every five years after the 1790 trip, when in fact they made it every four years thereafter? Or when he presents as fact the very disputable assertion that Hiraga Gennai was poisoned in his prison cell by Makino Nariyoshi?

Details aside, the book's greatest shortcoming is its failure to make full use of Titsingh's collected letters. Numbering an even three hundred, these missives are the most important resource available on Titsingh, and they have been dutifully collected and published by Frank Lequin, albeit without annotation, as *The Private Correspondence of Isaac Titsingh*. It is disappointing that Screech chooses to include only preexisting translations (with the single aforementioned exception) and not even excerpts from these fascinating letters. His introductory essay, too, while drawing on them at times, would have benefited from a closer look at these materials.

To take but one example, the letters paint a more complete and nuanced picture of Titsingh's relationship with one of his most intriguing Japanese correspondents, the *daimyō* Kutsuki Masatsuna. Masatsuna was a learned polymath whose facility in writing Dutch was the object of admiration not only of *rangaku* scholars such as Ōtsuki Gentaku, but of Titsingh himself. Screech writes that "since childhood, Masatsuna's great love had been numismatists." It seems a *sic* is in order. Masatsuna's love was, in fact, for coins, not (insofar as we know) for their collectors, although he held the greatest admiration for Titsingh. While Screech claims that details of when these coins were given are unknown, Titsingh's letters clearly trace several specific exchanges of coins. Titsingh busied himself collecting coins in India immediately upon his arrival there after being reassigned from Japan, and he assembled an attractive selection of local currency, which he sent to Masatsuna in 1784. The *daimyō* received this package enthusiastically and wrote to express his excitement and gratitude the following year. An additional package arrived shortly thereafter, and Masatsuna wrote a second letter, requesting Dutch coppers, as well as coins from India, Russia, Turkey, and Africa.

Titsingh went to great lengths to acquire those specimens in which Masatsuna expressed interest. When a local numismatist died in Chinsurah in February of 1787, Titsingh vowed to outbid all competitors to acquire his impressive collection for Masatsuna. In return, the *daimyō* sent Titsingh a considerable number of coins, including varieties of valuable gold *ōban* and *koban*, and samples dating as far back as the Genroku period (1688-1704) and from as far afield as Sado Island and China. Titsingh used a catalog of Chinese and Japanese coins authored by Masatsuna, received as a gift, to identify these coins as best he could. In exchange, Titsingh sent the *daimyō* an attractive edition of Gerard van Loon's four-volume *Beschrijving der*

*Nederlandschen Historiepenning* [*An Account of Dutch Historical Coins*]. This work was to assist Masatsuna in his own writings on Western coinage.

The interest of the letters extends beyond numismatics. Where the *dagregisters* give useful factual information, the letters portray Titsingh as a real human being with a real personality. Titsingh complained to Masatsuna and others of the draconian restrictions that were placed on his movements and activities in Japan, and of the indignities heaped on him by bureaucratic restrictions. Despite his professed love for Japan, he struggled under these limitations. Titsingh begged Masatsuna to use his political clout to bring about a change in the shogunal government's severe policies, and he lamented Masatsuna's inability to see the outside world for himself. Masatsuna could but nod his head helplessly, replying, in romanized Japanese, "*tokaku ukiyo wa mama naranu*" ("things in this world never go as one would like").

But Titsingh was careful to draw a distinction between official policy and the generally friendly treatment he enjoyed at a personal level. And his optimism is evident throughout his letters. He often wrote of his noble goal of learning for learning's sake, informing Masatsuna, in a phrase that he repeated in more or less the same form in letters to other correspondents, that "I scorn money, as it can not fulfill my passion for learning." (It is ironic, then, that thanks to Masatsuna's particular interest in numismatics, discussions of coins occupy much of their correspondence.)

One Japanese biographer of Masatsuna, Koide Susumu, has described Titsingh's final letter to Masatsuna as a love letter. This may overstate the matter, but on reading it one does encounter a palpable sense of emotion and of longing, if not for Masatsuna himself (who was already dead at the time of its writing), then for what he stood for: a Japan to which Titsingh could not return. That a cross-cultural friendship could sprout from the infertile terrain of Japan's policy of self-imposed isolation, and that a correspondence was permitted at all, was remarkable enough. Later arrivals in Japan, such as Hendrik Doeff, expressed incredulity that it had even taken place at all. Although I would like to have seen greater attention given to this remarkable, occasionally touching, correspondence, it can not be denied that Screech has given us an important work, filled with useful biographical information and the first annotated translations of any of Titsingh's works outside of Japanese scholarship. Most of all, the book has the potential to bring Titsingh more of the attention that he deserves.