

Tomoko Aoyama's "Japanese Literary Responses to the Russo-Japanese War," and David Wells's "The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Literature," echo the general consensus of the book that the war had a profound but varied impact on the literary communities of both countries. Aoyama observes that Mori Ogai, in his *Verse Diary*, distanced himself from the war writings of the time. Tayama Katai's *Diary of the Second Army Corps at War*, however, is more representative of the increasingly nationalistic and promilitary mood of the nation. Wells reaches the fair conclusion that the rich array of literary and ideological paradigms that emerged in reaction to the war—i.e., patriotism, apocalyptic symbolism, psychological analysis, and oppositional realism—testifies to the war's profound impact on the Russian historical and cultural consciousness.

In "Easts and Wests Befuddled: Russian Intelligentsia Responses to the Russo-Japanese War," Adrian Jones develops arguably the most fascinating theme of this collection: To most educated Russians of the nineteenth century, "East and West were metaphors for young and old, future and past" (p. 134) and they saw Russia as an "East" on a Hegelian path of "imitation, opposition, and supersession" vis-à-vis the West or Europe (p. 140). However, the shocking defeat by Japan shook this conception from its foundation. Suddenly "an East was besting a West, but it was neither *their* East nor *their* West. Instead, Japan suddenly seemed the better East" (p. 143).

This reviewer's impression is that, with the exception of a few Russian economists who have advocated a "Look East" policy for their reform, most Russian intellectuals have shown little interest in the contemporary political, economic, social, and cultural discourses in Japan. Their search for a post-Soviet identity does not seem to call forth their historically deep interest in Japanese culture and society. In "The Russo-Japanese War and Japan: Politics, Nationalism, and Historical Memory" by Sandra Wilson, the reader hears another familiar refrain, that there was in Japan "no universally accepted attitude to the war," some seeing it as desirable, some as inevitable, and a few as a disaster (p. 162).

As for the contemporary relevance of *The Russo-Japanese War*, the volume urges readers to examine whether the Cold War and its demise had as profound an impact on the intellectual discourses in Russia and Japan, as did the Russo-Japanese War. It furthermore offers a multidisciplinary approach useful in examining the impact of the war at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as current Russo-Japanese relations.

TSUNEO AKAHA

*Monterey Institute of International Studies*

## SOUTH ASIA

*Asian Children at Home and at School: An Ethnographic Study.* By GHAZALA BHATTI. New York: Routledge, 1999. xii, 292 pp. \$75.00 (cloth); \$24.99 (paper).

Ghazala Bhatti's research took place among fifty Bengali, Indian, and Pakistani families in the U.K., and in the school (Cherrydale) that served them. Her book is

about “how ‘race’/ethnicity, social class and gender combine to produce marginality for Asian children in a secondary school” and is “an account of the circumstances in which many Asian children struggle today and the obstacles they have to overcome in order to survive with dignity in an unequal society” (p. 4). Compared with other studies which focus on Asian children in school, Bhatti’s perspective is usefully holistic: considering education in its broader sense of processes that go on both at home, in school, and in other social contexts, she draws out the perspectives of two generations, their understandings of education and schooling, their struggles with the present, and their aspirations for the future.

The introduction presents key issues facing Asian families in the U.K.: encapsulation, myth of return, and ethnic minority children in school. The weight of the introduction is, however, a justification for an ethnographic approach, and it neglects to focus sufficiently clearly on the educational issues that the ethnography will illuminate. The result, I feel, is that the whole book does not fully transcend its origin as a Ph.D. thesis, and in leaning towards prolific detail does not quite strike that difficult balance between detail and analysis.

The first two substantive chapters discuss Asian parents’ two worlds (country of origin and the U.K.) and education and employment. Similar ground is covered in other studies to which Bhatti refers, and a sharper focus around which to hang the ethnographic detail would have benefited coherence. Parents’ motivations for getting good education for their children and their expectations from school do, however, emerge very clearly, as do the straitened financial circumstances of many of these families, and the worrying lack of contact between parents and school which clearly contributes to a continuous mismatch of expectation on both sides.

The following two chapters portray the children’s world, and their hopes for the future. Again, at the beginning, it feels like a lesson in ethnographic method and is occasionally banal: “some degree of attitudinal difference is normal during adolescence” (p. 120). Where Bhatti finds her stride, she reveals important details, like the relationship between day-dreaming in class and children’s perception that “the school was not interested in their parents’ culture and religion” (p. 114); children’s identity struggles around visits back home; the clash between children’s lived experience of schools and parental expectations; and the stresses of balancing their roles as Asian boys and girls growing up in the U.K. From the children’s voices emerge great distress and intense feelings as they negotiate their daily lives, particularly in the following (sixth) chapter which addresses the complex question of image and the “delicate art of balance” (p. 164). Other studies Bhatti cites have concluded somewhat overoptimistically that there is less racism than she finds and that children learn to cope: Bhatti’s ethnographic approach demonstrates clearly how lonely and unsupported these children are—she argues that they do learn to cope, but *on their own*.

From the two chapters on teachers a woeful tale emerges: of teacher insensitivity and the distress it causes, an absence of Asian role models or teachers children could really talk to about their problems and their futures, and teachers’ widespread unwillingness to discuss Asian children with the researcher. Teachers themselves commented on the “well-meaning, well-educated, predominantly male, liberal, middle-class ethos of the school” which had apparently “not stopped to take stock of its cultural, linguistic and ethnic composition since 1985” (p. 209) (only two years before the field work began.)

In her conclusion, Bhatti comments on how the majority of these teachers show “a remarkable lack of interest and support for Asian children” (p. 243) and that if her

sample is indicative of wider trends, Asian communities have invested their future in a country that has much to gain from them but is not sufficiently proactive in creating conducive circumstances for this to happen (p. 236). The voices we hear through Bhatti's ethnography are telling us that there is still a long way to go if schools are to play this role, and her research amply demonstrates a number of areas where action demands to be taken. The data are 10–12 years old, but the brief update Bhatti provides does not lend much optimism with regard to the pace and scope of change.

Throughout the book, Bhatti quotes various findings from other studies, but seems reluctant to contextualize her own findings sufficiently. Overall I am left with a sense that while the ethnographic detail is both useful and interesting, as a book, it is not quite well enough woven together to have the impact it might have made. Studies like this really do need to be read by teachers, people in education, and policy-makers: tighter editing would, I think, have made this book more accessible.

CAROLINE DYER  
*University of Manchester*

*The Sanskrit Epics.* By JOHN BROCKINGTON. Handbuch der Orientalistic (Handbook of Oriental Studies). Zweite Abtelling, Indien, Band 12. Series Editor J. Bronkhorst. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998. x, 596 pp. \$183.50.

This most welcome volume presents not only a staggering compendium of research on the Sanskrit epics done over the past two hundred years, but also the judicious, modestly argued evaluations of that research by a scholar whose intimacy with the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana* appears to be nearly matchless. If these two texts are the touchstones for the culture and ethos of premodern India, then this handbook is an indispensable guide to their worlds, replete with information on areas as diverse as geography, philosophy, religious practice, and social values, as well as highly focussed discussion on the metrics, textuality, transmission, and influence of the works themselves. The bibliography alone is a treasure that will assist students and senior scholars alike in their explorations of the epic Sanskrit corpus.

Brockington begins with an introduction which attempts to describe the epics in broad fashion as narratives, textual productions, and cultural documents. A section of this first chapter is entitled "The Relationship of the Epics to Vedic Literature," which to some may signal an underlying conventional history of Indian literature—a history in which epic literature must be placed in a Vedic context and in which the Sanskrit epics form the basis of non-Sanskrit versions. Yet many of the writers that Brockington appreciates do challenge this brahminic-colonial history. After an extremely useful second chapter on "The History of Epic Studies," the remainder of the book consists of parallel sections on the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*, with a chapter on the *Harivaṃśa* between them. The first chapter for each epic deals with matters of language, poetics and textual growth, the second with archaeological, political, geographical, and cultural aspects, and the third with religion and philosophy. The apparatus consists of bibliography, index of passages cited, and a general index containing both English and Sanskrit items.

This is a handbook, a central genre in an earlier era of scholarship. Yet the past century has seen the production of critical editions of the epics, comprehensive translation projects, and the application of a host of new methodologies to epic study.