Throughout the book, questions of evidence and context teach students how to read source documents critically, and also to ask what additional evidence is needed to form more solid conclusions about Japan. In order to interpret it, readers must turn to a list of sources in the back of the book to find when (and often who) created it. Second, many teachers will benefit from doing further reading related to the topics covered in this book. An annotated bibliography, bibliographic essay, or even a list of suggested further readings would be extremely useful. Third and finally, certain sections of editors’ introductions have not been updated, and documents of certain sections, particularly “nature and pollution,” have not been updated much since the 1974 edition. Given important developments since that time, this section should have been revised.

These suggestions aside, I highly recommend this anthology. Paired with a good textbook about Japan, students and teachers will finish this book not just more knowledgeable about Japan, but better equipped to learn about “foreign” cultures in the future.


Through Indian Eyes
5th Edition

By Donald J. Johnson and Jean E. Johnson

Reviewed by Marc Gilbert

The most important criteria for selecting classroom materials that support teaching a subject as diverse and complex as Indian civilization should be the degree to which they offer a coherent vision of their subject. A lack of vision may undermine student confidence, and may hinder their ability to examine complexities that lie beneath the “big picture.” These complexities yield the most accurate knowledge of a culture and offer the best opportunities to build learning skills, and clear foundational material is paramount. Ideally, solid materials provide both this necessary baseline and at least a glimpse of the more accurate and revealing depths that instructors and students can explore.

For more than twenty years, the authors of Through Indian Eyes have succeeded on both counts, offering a superb text for high school and introductory college courses addressing Indian family life, religion, history, and economy. The revised fifth edition adheres to its predecessors’ evocation of the grandest and most inclusive of all conceptualizations of Indian civilization—that developed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. An able historian, as well as the first Prime Minister of independent India, Nehru adopted an accessible view of Indian society that stresses the continuity and underlying unity of cultural traditions, the grandeur of relatively tolerant indigenous empires, the challenges and contributions to an Indian identity arising from the British rule, and the central role played by democratic principles in India’s struggle for independ-
Corporation that makes India the world’s third largest producer of steel.

The greatest change in the fifth edition is the addition of material on developments in India since 2000, including fuller discussion of India’s adoption of neo-liberal economic principles and treatment of India’s accelerating role in the world economy, has raised its status from timeless treasure to timely resource.

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Gender, Sexuality, and Body Politics in Modern Asia

Key Issues in Asian Studies, No. 1

By Michael Peletz

Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2007


Reviewed by Jan Bardsley

This informative booklet by Michael G. Peletz, Gender, Sexuality, and Body Politics in Modern Asia, can serve as the model for this Association for Asian Studies series. An accessible, well-argued text, the booklet will aid instructors in taking up sensitive and often controversial issues in their undergraduate and advanced high school classrooms. Most importantly, students will learn that sexuality, gender, and body politics are not fixed, not somehow “more natural” in one location than another, and not to be taken for granted. They will see that approaching modern Asia through this lens not only sheds light on the experience of Asian people, but also makes students aware of their own beliefs as having a history. Certainly, this booklet can engage students in questioning the politics and power of definition itself.

In fewer than one hundred pages, Peletz takes on three topics: “Dynamics of Gender and Sexuality,” “Bodies, Pleasures, and Desires: Transgender Practices, Same-Sex Relations, and Heteronormative Sexualities,” and “Bodies on the Line.” He explores each theme with examples that vary across countries in South, East, and Southeast Asia, using as his references the most influential scholarship in English. While Peletz guides his reader to see certain commonalities in regions of Asia as created by geography, religion, colonial experiences, global markets, and so on, Asia does not emerge as a monolith. Indeed, one of the many strong points about the booklet is the way Peletz manages to focus and develop his thematic essays in a lively way while offering such variety.

In the “Introduction,” Peletz invites his reader to consider issues involved in defining Asia as well as gender, sexuality, and sex. Chapter Two, “Dynamics of Gender and Sexuality” introduces the concept of gender ideologies, showing how they are often inflected, legitimized, and naturalized through religious practice, familial structure,