

## **Adrienne Edgar. *Intermarriage and the Friendship of Peoples: Ethnic Mixing in Soviet Central Asia.***

**Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. xiv, 284 pages. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$54.95, hard bound.**

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Attitudes toward intermarriage, whether ethnic or racial, have long been used as indicators of social distance or distrust. In post-war America, some scholars offered the acceptance of racial intermarriage (which historically lacked legal state acceptance) as a litmus test for the abolition of racial prejudice. Starting much earlier, the Soviet Union attributed marriages across its many nationality groups as indicative of a powerful amalgamation process, somewhat magically leading to a single Soviet identity. In this excellent work, Adrienne Edgar takes an informative and insightful approach to the latter case, highlighting scholarly and political views on intermarriage in the Soviet Union. Employing detailed interview results from intermarried families in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, three core aspirations are addressed: an elaboration of studies concerning language and racial identities, a contribution to the verdant field of gender and family studies in Central Asia, and a desire to incorporate the intermarriages in the Soviet Union into comparative perspective. In discussions brimming with first-hand accounts, the focus is on the more mundane micro elements of performing proper behaviors for in-laws, identifying which language(s) to speak, which religious traditions to follow, and what to name the children. The results provide insights well beyond the ability of the magical elements to build an identity or destroy prejudice. Given current state-led denials of national existence, continued outbreaks of violence falling along ethnic lines, and rising tensions over the importance of titular nationalities in building new national identities, the book is both timely and engaging.

Two of this work's notable strengths are its reliance upon first-hand recollections of events, both large and small, and its clarity of continuity and change across time. Drawing upon the over eighty interviews, Edgar traces how individuals navigated familial reactions to entering and living through inter-ethnic marriages. Examples range from parents offering a neighbor's daughter as a better substitute "Russian" to their son's choice of a different bride (also ethnic Russian), to the reputational benefits of following local norms and dictates experienced by a Russian woman in Tajikistan, to the daughter who only found out of her father's ethnic identity after his death (Tatar not Russian). These personal insights uniquely portray the possibilities and restrictions in how individuals navigate identities. Including respondents from those who were married before WWII to those who were married well after independence is intriguing. It leads the reader to consider how ethnic status may shift or remain in place over time and feel the complexities of national identity construction for children of "ethnic mixing."

The first two aims of the book are convincingly and cogently met. Still, I wish to have a more attentive perspective with other countries. The US, whose census and entrance classifications of "ethnic and racial identities" in the early 1900s differentiated among numerous European "identities," comes to mind. Comparative work may add to integration insights and the discussion about how categories of ethnicity or nationalities are fixed by believed characteristics and which might be avoided, questioned, or hidden. The omission, however, does not detract but only opens later opportunities.

Carefully unpacking recollections from her respondents, Edgar highlights how the pernicious persistence of ethnic categorization colors views of the "other," even within families

of mixed identities. Constructed with rich data, the book provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of intermarried families in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. By taking a longer-term view, Edgar invited readers to consider how the salience of nationality persists socially and politically in the pronouncements and policies of these two states in the post-Soviet era. Engaging and thoughtful, it affords a unique opportunity to integrate the multi-ethnic Soviet experience with approaches to intermarriage and its link to the conceptualization of social distancing elsewhere. Future work, delving more deeply into the debates and discussions over insistence on a single categorization response and recognition (which categories are made official and which are not), can clarify the structural settings affecting the nationality labels and provide more context concerning which identities might be hidden or shed, and which cannot.

Edgar clearly states this work is not a demographic or sociological analysis. She provides valuable insight into how families navigate the intimacies of identity and highlights the importance of moving well past primordial clichés. This work's interdisciplinary insights are particularly useful to social scientists, demographers, and other scholars examining ethnic and racial identity, offering a fresh perspective and new avenues for research. Additional work on the third aim proffered, placing the experience of intermarriage in a comparative context, would be especially welcomed, and a good starting point would be found in this fine book.

## **Sheila Miyoshi Jager. *The Other Great Game: The Opening of Korea and the Birth of Modern East Asia.***

**Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2023. xvii, 602 pp. Notes. Index. Maps. \$39.95, hard bound.**

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The term “Great Game” is generally attributed to Arthur Conolly, depicting the mid-nineteenth century rivalry between the British and Russian empires in Central and South Asia. Sheila Miyoshi Jager's recent monograph focuses on a different “Great Game,” which unfolded in East Asia during the second half of the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries and involved both Russia and Britain, but also other western Powers as well as Japan and China. Jager places the struggle for control over the Korean Peninsula at the center of the narrative, illustrating the processes that led to the emergence of a new East Asian order following the gradual demise of China and the collapse of the Sino-centric order.

The monograph is divided into six sections, each further segmented into several chapters. The narrative commences with the 1860 Peking Treaty, which resulted in Russia, for the first time in its history, sharing a border with Korea. From there it guides the reader through the major conflicts of the second half of the nineteenth century involving European Great Powers, the US, Japan, and China, all directly or indirectly related to control over the Korean Peninsula. The narrative peaks with Japan's two-step colonization of the Korean Peninsula, following its victory over Russia in the 1904–05 “World War Zero” (David Wolff, et. al. eds., *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, 2006) and the emergence of the new East Asian order with Japan and the US in key roles.

While some historians may raise questions related to the depiction of certain events, for example, the reasons behind such a brief reference to the Battle of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War, which is often seen as synonymous with Russia's defeat, Jager's work