

Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China

Edited by

GLEN PETERSON, RUTH HAYHOE,
and YONGLING LU



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Introduction

Glen Peterson and Ruth Hayhoe

Educational pursuits run like a rich thread through the social, cultural, and political fabric of China's turbulent twentieth century. The century opened with educational reform as the cornerstone of an ailing effort by the last imperial dynasty to save itself and the country from collapse. In 1902 the Qing government decreed the creation of a modern public school system for the first time in China's history. The Qing dynasty fell in 1911, but "saving the country through education" (*jiaoyu jiuguo*) became the rallying cry of several subsequent generations of Chinese social and political reformers. Critics of this embrace assailed what they considered to be a naively optimistic faith in the "omnipotence of education" (*jiaoyu wanneng*) to solve China's myriad problems, and they seem to have had history on their side. China could only be "saved" through the fires of political and social revolution, at least as far as its ability finally to stand up and establish itself as an independent socialist nation. Still, when one looks back to the period of the 1920s and 1930s, it is hard to escape the conclusion that many of the most innovative developments, in terms of new ideas and institution building, occurred within the world of education. Liberal and conservative educators like Tao Xingzhi, Liang Shuming, and Yan Yangchu (James Yen), who led the great mass education experiments of the 1920s and 1930s, are prime examples of such creativity. Communist revolutionaries also embraced education. As Suzanne Pepper has recently shown, the link between education and political radicalism spanned the century, culminating in the Cultural Revolution vision of education as the "training of revolutionary successors" (*peiyang wuchan jieji jieban ren*).¹ In recent years China's post-Mao leaders have accorded education a central role in their quest for rapid modernization, from Deng Xiaoping's call for education to "face modernization, the world and the

future” in the early 1980s to Jiang Zemin’s slogan of “science and education to revitalize the nation” (*kejiao xingguo*) in the late 1990s. Long regarded as a civilization that placed a high value on education, China in the twentieth century has continued to uphold the primacy of education in economic, political, social, and cultural life.

This study seeks to build upon the foundations created by several existing works on the history of Chinese education in the periods preceding the twentieth century. Especially noteworthy are two recent major studies, one on the formation of the Neo-Confucian educational tradition in the Song period (960–1280) and the other on the role of education in late imperial China. Wm. T. De Bary and John Chaffee’s aptly titled compilation, *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, underscored the wide-ranging influence that Song Neo-Confucian educators such as Zhu Xi (1130–1200) had upon Chinese cultural life, influences that were to last through the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties.² Ever since the era of Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.) Chinese thinkers had stressed the importance of education as a means for self-cultivation and recruiting “men of talent” to administer the affairs of the state. The value that Chinese culture traditionally placed on education, both for self-enlightenment and the service of the state, was greatly strengthened following the appearance in the Song dynasty of a revived metaphysical strand of Confucian moral philosophy incorporating elements of Daoism and Buddhism, known as *Daoxue* (Studies of the Way) and today as Neo-Confucianism. Within a century the influence of this new brand of philosophy grew well beyond the realm of Confucian academicians. Elevated to state orthodoxy during the succeeding Yuan dynasty (1280–1368), it was eventually internalized by tens of thousands of civil service candidates. In combination with the Ming (1368–1644) institutionalization of the civil service examination system, Neo-Confucian education affected cultural attitudes toward literacy and learning at all levels of society. Its universalistic claims also exerted a profound normative influence on the construction of the family, of gender roles, and of social attitudes toward female education. Historians have only just begun to investigate the significance of these latter aspects of the Neo-Confucian legacy.

The question of what sorts of Neo-Confucian education actually emerged after the Song period is taken up by Benjamin Elman and Alexander Woodside’s splendidly conceived volume, *Education and Society in Late Imperial China*. The volume seeks, in the editors’ words, “to probe beneath the educational ideals enunciated by Neo-Confucian philosophers and get a more precise historical glimpse of how education actually was practiced in China from 1600 until 1900.”³ Accordingly, the contributors to this volume were concerned not only with the detailed workings of classical education but also with identifying

the multiple forms of education that were available beyond the elite competition for examination success and literati prestige, for commoners, women, and non-Han minority peoples.

Our understanding of the history of Chinese education before the twentieth century is heavily indebted to these two major complementary studies. Thus far, however, there have been no studies that attempt to do something similar for the history of education in China's tumultuous twentieth century.

This book seeks to fill that gap with a multidisciplinary study of the history of education in China from 1900 to the closing years of the century. Our decision to take the twentieth century as the focus of inquiry is based on the major transformations in educational thought and practice that occurred at the turn of the century. The 1902 and 1904 school regulations formally dethroned the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy in education that had prevailed since the Song period.⁴ The abolition of the centuries-old civil service examination system in 1905 destroyed the structure of the old education system. Thus, within the space of a few years following 1900 the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy that had been the foundation of Chinese education for more than seven centuries was swept away. In its place rose a complex new pedagogy that stressed universal literacy and education's role in the creation of the modern Chinese nation.⁵ Since then every national government in China has looked to modern education to perform the essential tasks of nation building: the creation of a unified, loyal, and economically productive citizenry.

If the existence of an optimistic faith in education's power to forge the modern nation has been a permanent feature of the twentieth-century Chinese view of education, it is also true that there has been an equally pervasive, more or less permanent sense of dissatisfaction with the actual state of education in each succeeding period. This dissatisfaction has often been based on a trenchant critique of the alleged inherent failings of modern schooling, ranging from allegations of its imported nature, urban bias, and elitist character to charges of chronic underfunding and even deliberate official neglect. Indeed, this critique fueled a steady stream of educational reform thought and action that began almost from the moment modern schools were introduced at the turn of the century and continues down to the present. The year 1900 thus marks a logical starting point for this study, as the point in time at which Neo-Confucian education was discarded for a modern model that has ever since served to enchant and disillusion in roughly equal measure. We leave it up to future historians to decide whether the close of the twentieth century also represents a turning point in the history of Chinese education.

Turning from general definitions to more specific questions concerning the meanings of education, we have found it fruitful to conceive of education

in terms of its constituent activities. The best way to grasp the significance of these activities in the changing contexts of the twentieth century is to begin by locating them on the broader historical canvas of Chinese educational thought and practice. In their introduction to *Education and Society in Late Imperial China* Woodside and Elman refer to the “three inexhaustible categories of ‘teaching’ (*jiao*), ‘learning’ (*xue*) and ‘culture/literature’ (*wen*)” that made up the corpus of educational pursuits in the late imperial period.⁶ Teaching, in the late imperial context, referred to the production of a classically educated elite and to the socialization, through exhortation and ritual, of commoners. Learning, as Tu Wei-ming had earlier pointed out, encompassed a complex set of “interrelated visions” involving poetic, political, social, historical, as well as metaphysical forms of knowledge.⁷ Social distinctions also pervaded late imperial conceptions of learning. Thus, this vision applied mainly to the classically educated elite, while elite-prescribed definitions of commoner learning emphasized the acquisition of essential notions of moral order and ritual obligation. Written culture in the late imperial context encompassed all aspects of elite literary behavior, ranging from the literary and stylistic standards of bureaucratic communication and the proper use of examination prose to elite anxiety over the corrupting influence of popular novels and the infiltration of Daoist and Buddhist vocabulary. To what extent did educational activities in China after 1900 resemble these categories?

Teaching remained a category of central concern to twentieth-century educators as well as to political leaders and revolutionaries. Indeed, teaching was invested with a new and even greater significance in the context of twentieth-century pedagogy and its association of universal education with the goals of national wealth and power. The officially understood premise of teaching was transformed from the former Confucian one of producing and reproducing a classically educated elite and of socializing commoners to one of creating a disciplined and economically productive citizenry for the modern nation. At first glance, the association of universal education with national power—including the requirements of state building and of revolutionary politics—would seem to have lent renewed impetus to the Confucian pedagogical notion of the “unity of teaching and politics” (*zhengjiao heyi*). As the essays by Nina Borevskaya and Ningsha Zhong and Ruth Hayhoe in this volume clearly show, however, the history of Chinese education in the twentieth century is also replete with repeated demands and strivings for educational autonomy and for the separation of education and politics.

Learning was also cut loose from its Neo-Confucian moorings after 1900. Neo-Confucian theories of learning, with their emphases upon rote memorization, group discussion, gradual accumulation and digestion of ancient textual

knowledge over years, and the internalization of moral truths were gradually displaced by the appearance and growing popularity among educators and academics of modern theories of learning psychology, introduced from the West and later from the Soviet Union. In addition, there also took place what may be described as the disenchantment of learning, as Neo-Confucian understandings of the nature and accumulation of knowledge were gradually displaced by the twentieth century's growing emphasis on secular learning, utilitarian knowledge, and vocational study. Finally, education as a process involving the acquisition and transmission of written culture was subject to sustained attempts to change and destabilize its received meanings since 1900. The social and cultural prestige of classical learning—not to mention its usefulness as the means to an official career—was fatally undermined by the abolition of the civil service examination system in 1905. The residual status of classical learning was further eroded, at least among China's more educated urban citizens, by the root and branch condemnation of an undifferentiated Chinese "tradition" espoused by Chinese intellectuals during the May Fourth period.

Finally, serious analysis of the twentieth-century fate of traditional written culture must also take into account the varying cultural projects of the diverse political regimes that have ruled China this century. It is well-known that traditional written culture was denigrated in socialist China and that its academic study, greatly diminished after 1949, could occur only within the limited confines of a strictly Marxist framework. What may be less well-known, however, is the extent to which, as shown by Zheng Yuan in this volume, successive political regimes in the first half of the century continued, despite otherwise widely varying ideologies, to uphold the cultural claims of Confucianism, as expressed in their respective school curricula. And yet, taken together, the essays that make up this book make it abundantly clear that the twentieth century in China has been marked above all by the absence of cultural consensus. Seen from a historical perspective, the creative tensions in Chinese education over the past one hundred years have been firmly rooted in the century's profound and continuous sense of cultural uncertainty, questioning, and contestation on the part of individuals, social groups, and states.

The idea for the present volume originated in early 1995 as a result of a lecture that one of us, Ruth Hayhoe, gave at the University of British Columbia. In the discussion that followed she suggested the need for a comprehensive volume on twentieth-century Chinese education that would complement the recently published study of *Education and Society in Late Imperial China* edited by Elman and Woodside. There was immediate agreement on the need for a study that would illuminate the complex relation between "educational theory and actual processes of education, learning, and socialization" as well

as providing a historical portrait of the role that education has played in twentieth-century China, in a way that aspired to achieve what Elman and Woodside had done for the imperial period.⁸

Too often, the role of education in twentieth-century Chinese history has been seen mainly as a derivative of politics and studied mainly by political scientists. This may be understandable, given the importance that Chinese political leaders have attached to education throughout the twentieth century and the strength of the belief that educational revolution must accompany political revolution. Nonetheless, it has served to obscure the dynamic aspects of education as a social and cultural force in its own right. This book tries to avoid a reductionist tendency that regards education as a mere reflection of politics and societal conditions or which treats education simply as socialization. Our approach to the study of education is closer to the one advocated by the American historian Bernard Bailyn in his classic study of the formative role of education in early American society. Bailyn described education as constituting “the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across generations” and called for an approach that recognized education’s “elaborate, intricate involvements with the rest of society.”⁹ Accordingly, this book locates education firmly within the context of the broad issues that have enlivened China studies in recent years: issues of gender representation and identification, Sino-foreign cultural interactions, dichotomies of state/society and of public/private, and the question of “inside” versus “outside” voices in the writing of history.

Our treatment of these themes has been guided by two considerations. One is the need for a genuinely multidisciplinary approach. It is simply not possible to explore the richness of a society’s educational experience without involving a range of disciplines, each of which is capable of illuminating a different aspect of that experience. It is a curious artifact of the institutional development of educational studies as the academic adjunct of professional institutions for teacher education that has led to a situation in which specialists in Chinese education tend to interact among themselves or with other comparative education specialists. By contrast, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians of modern China tend to interact with one another within the institutional frameworks of area studies, since this has been the institutional basis for modern China studies. This volume seeks to transcend those boundaries by fostering a cross-fertilization among scholars in a range of disciplines. It presents the perspectives of seven education specialists, seven historians, three sinologists, two sociologists, and one political scientist drawn from three continents and eight countries, thus representing a whole range of intellectual traditions. Furthermore, we have endeavored

to include a mix of senior academics and younger scholars who are just establishing their reputations in the field.

The question of voice has increasingly come to the fore in recent years, and this volume encompasses many facets of it—the differences between approaches to scholarship in capitalist and socialist societies, among European, North American, and Chinese academic traditions, between mainstream and feminist approaches to inquiry. The group of authors who worked together on this volume represent a rich eclecticism of perspective, with many overlapping threads: three Chinese Canadians and three Anglo-Canadians; three Europeans from Denmark, Norway, and Scotland; two Chinese from the Mainland and two from Hong Kong; three Americans; one Japanese; and one Russian; and eight women among the eighteen contributors. A further distinction might be drawn between outsiders studying modern China and insiders who grew up within socialist China or the Soviet Union. One unforgettable moment in the deliberations that took place at the second of the two conferences held to develop the chapters in this volume may illuminate the difference in perspective between insider and outsider. Glen Peterson was in the process of presenting a detached analysis of the character of some of China's literacy campaigns of the 1950s, distinguishing with gentle irony between socialist rhetoric and the actual achievements of the events. At that point Nina Borevskaya, a distinguished Sinologist from the Russian Academy of Sciences, whose essay appears in part 1 of this volume, burst forth with the comment that it was not easy for outsiders to reconstruct the social and political atmosphere of literacy campaigns. People were deeply enthusiastic and idealistic over literacy activities in both the Soviet Union and China, she insisted.

Our effort to integrate educational problems with broader themes in twentieth-century Chinese social, cultural, and political history also informs a conscious commitment on the part of the volume's contributors to transcend the "1949 barrier" that continues to bisect the study of modern Chinese history. While the communist revolution of 1949 constitutes a major watershed in modern Chinese history in crucial respects, especially in the realms of state building, economic development, and China's relations with the world, it is our view that recent research has shifted the focus toward previously unnoticed continuities between the pre- and postrevolutionary periods in areas such as popular culture and beliefs, political culture, and patterns of reform.¹⁰ Ironically, however, this recent line of inquiry continues to reflect conventional historiography in certain key respects. There is a tendency, in particular, to compare late imperial China with the communist period while largely ignoring the republican era, the latter having been relegated either

implicitly or explicitly to the status of “interregnum” between the fall of one centralized bureaucratic state and the rise of another, even more powerful one. By contrast, this book takes the view that the republican era is of crucial importance for understanding the history of education in post-1949 China, as well as for the twentieth century as a whole. Thus, each of its three sections seek to traverse the century in terms of themes and issues raised. In addition, many individual essays, including those by Borevskaya, Ding, Hayhoe and Zhong, Peterson, Ross and Thøgersen, are explicitly concerned with bridging the 1949 divide.

We have not attempted to offer a comprehensive view of all aspects of education’s role in Chinese society during the twentieth century. Such an undertaking would be difficult, if not impossible, within the confines of a single volume. Rather than seeking an exhaustive treatment of the subject, we have restricted ourselves to three themes that reveal the significance of education for the construction of social, cultural, and political identities in twentieth-century China: Sino-foreign interactions, state-society relations, and gender representation and identification. Each of these themes is the focus of a separate section within the volume. Each section begins with a brief introduction that discusses the theme and ties together its constituent chapters.

Part 1, “Sino-Foreign Interactions in Education,” offers a variety of fresh and innovative approaches to a theme that has long been recognized as being of central importance in the history of modern Chinese education. As Douglas Reynolds observes in his introduction to part 1, the twentieth century has been singularly an age of internationalization for China, when the country has had to reinvent itself for the first time in its history according to outside rules, whether European, American, Japanese, or Soviet. Nowhere has this search for an appropriate identity and development model been more urgently felt—and more fiercely contested—than in the realm of education. And yet, if the six essays that make up this section make one thing perfectly clear, it is that the process of cultural borrowing is one of selective change and adaptation, in which foreign ideas and institutions not only changed China but also became Chinese. The subtle nuances of this process are brilliantly captured in Nina Borevskaya’s opening essay on the “search for individuality” in Chinese and Russian pedagogy during two critical periods in the twentieth-century history of both countries: the 1920s and the 1980–90s. The comparative approach proves to be highly illuminating in Borevskaya’s detailed depiction of the efforts of Chinese democratic educators to develop alternatives to Confucian pedagogy. She begins with a delicate comparative analysis of state Confucianism and the Russian Orthodox tradition of Christianity. While she finds Confucian orthodoxy basically unfriendly to the concepts of individual, sub-

ject, personality, and individuality that underlay liberal progressivism, Russian orthodoxy had already been softened by elements of European Renaissance thought long before the October Revolution. By contrast, Chinese liberals introduced the humanistic individualism of Rousseau and Kant only as a part of the campaign to discredit state Confucianism in the late Qing and early Republican periods.

Borevskaya explores fascinating parallels between the progressive movements that arose in Russia and China in the 1920s. She makes the point that, while the revolutionaries claimed a concern with the liberation of individuals and the development of personality, it was the progressive educators in both societies who created alternative pedagogies that could realize this goal. In Russia they gained considerable state support in the first decade after the revolution, losing it soon thereafter, while in China they blossomed in the anarchic period of warlord rule. Both were sympathetic to social and collectivist concerns but were undermined by traditions that only too easily led to the cementing of collectivism and totalitarianism.

In the second half of her essay Borevskaya uses this backdrop to examine the experience of China and Russia in the 1980s and 1990s, as educators grappled with new opportunities and social demands in very different sets of circumstances. The greater freedom for social and educational experimentation in the Russian context has made possible an alternative source of pedagogical ideas to Chinese educators, which they have debated alongside the European and American theories introduced in recent years. The concepts of personality, subject, and individual and individualization are thus revisited in the context of an evolving pedagogy in both China and Russia through a wide-ranging discussion of recent Chinese- and Russian-language writings on education in both societies. The ways in which differences in cultural heritage and social conditions have affected the educational expression of these concepts constitutes an intriguing set of conclusions to Borevskaya's essay.

If Western students of Chinese education do not often have the opportunity to hear Russian voices, the same may be said of Japanese voices on the subject. In his essay Yutaka Otsuka provides a rare glimpse into Japanese and Soviet Russian involvement in Chinese higher education. Complementing Borevskaya's chapter without duplicating her philosophical focus on the "search for individuality," Otsuka's essay sets out to examine institutions inherited by Japan after the creation of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932. His primary focus is a richly documented case study of the Harbin Polytechnical University (HPU), now known as the Harbin Institute of Technology. HPU was founded by the Soviets in 1920 to provide personnel for the Chinese Eastern Railway, which connected Manchuria to Russia under an

agreement originally signed between the czarist Russian and Qing governments. The school was run along Soviet administrative and curricular lines, used Russian as the language of instruction, and had a predominantly Russian study body. HPU fell under Japanese influence in 1932 and was under direct Japanese control for a period of eight years, from 1937 to 1945. During this time the language of instruction changed to Japanese, and the proportion of Japanese instructors and students increased significantly. Following the end of World War II, the school reverted to joint Sino-Soviet management for five years, from 1945–50. When the Soviet educational model was formally adopted by China in the early 1950s, HPU was designated a national model because of its long experience as a Soviet-style technical institution.

Despite its status, in Otsuka's words, as an "imposed form of educational cooperation," HPU's period of Japanese tutelage reveals some interesting contrasts with the earlier period of Soviet control. For one thing, the proportion of Chinese graduates rose from 19 percent during the initial Soviet period to nearly 47 percent during the period of "Japanization" from 1932 to 1945. Whether this reflected a greater sense of educational responsibility toward its colonial subjects on Japan's part or simply a difference in strategies of dominance or of Japan's tighter control over Manchuria is, of course, an open question. But it does caution us against accepting at face value HPU's subsequent root and branch condemnation (made in 1952, at the height of official enthusiasm for the Soviet model of education) of the Japanese period as one of wanton destruction and deterioration.

Douglas Reynolds's comparative study of Christian mission schools and Japan's Tō-A Dōbun Shoin (East Asia Common Culture Academy) in Shanghai complements Otsuka's essay by illuminating another example of Sino-Japanese educational cooperation and at the same time widens our lens of inquiry into Sino-foreign educational interaction by bringing into focus the role of Christian missions. As the son of American educational missionaries in China and the author of a major study of Japanese influences, educational and otherwise, on the late Qing reforms to state and society, Reynolds offers a deeply personal assessment of the origins, development, and long-term legacies of these two examples of foreign educational influence. Tō-A Dōbun Shoin was founded by Japan's Prince Konoe in Shanghai in 1899–1900 with the intention that it provide joint education for Chinese and Japanese students, centered around the Japanese language, in Chinese classics and Western subjects. The school was a manifestation of Konoe's conviction that Chinese and Japanese were fated to become the sworn enemies of whites as the world marched toward an inevitable struggle for supremacy between "the white and yellow races." The ideal for a joint education for Chinese and Japanese was abandoned within a year, how-

ever, and a subsequent effort to reintroduce the ideal in the late 1910s and early 1920s also failed, for reasons that Reynolds discusses. He details the process by which Tō-A Dōbun Shoin, as a foreign educational institution on Chinese soil, gradually became more and more *foreign* while simultaneously distancing and insulating itself from the revolutionary currents and struggles swirling in China from the early 1920s.

As a consequence of these developments, Tō-A Dōbun Shoin Daigaku (the school was elevated to university status in 1939 in anticipation of Japan's war-time and postwar needs) did not leave behind a core group of Chinese students, staff, or "converts" because Chinese were almost nonexistent in its operations. Its legacy thus ended up not in China but outside of China, in Japan, among its Japanese students and staff, for whom the school remains an object of affection and remembrance. By contrast, Reynolds argues, the legacy of Christian mission schools is alive and well *inside* China, although still largely subterranean. Ironically, as Tō-A Dōbun Shoin was becoming more foreign and more insulated from its Chinese environment in the 1920s through the 1940s, Christian mission schools were becoming more indigenized and more Chinese during this same period. Chinese attacks on foreign mission schools prior to 1949 served to accelerate an indigenization process already under way, which led to Chinese leaders assuming positions of greater authority and influence, which in turn gave them a greater stake in the future fortunes of mission schools. The resurgence of "Christianity fever" in China in recent years owes much, in Reynolds's view, to the indigenization of mission schools before 1949.

The theme of indigenization is also taken up by Ryan Dunch in his pioneering study of the Anglo-Chinese College (ACC) in Fuzhou. Founded by American Methodist missionaries in 1881 with a gift from a wealthy Chinese merchant and recent convert, Zhang Heling (whose contribution was reflected in the school's Chinese name, Heling yinghua shuyuan), the ACC grew into the largest mission school in China and the largest school of any kind in Fujian province by the early 1900s. The school became a target of the anti-Christian and nationalization movements of the mid-1920s, was forced to close in 1927, but reopened in 1928 with its administrative structure and teachers and staff overwhelmingly Chinese. Within a few years the ACC regained its status as one of the largest and wealthiest schools in the province and continued to flourish for the next two decades, attracting numerous sons (the school began to admit girls for the first time in 1940) of the political and commercial elite as well as those of prominent Protestant families. The school was absorbed into China's new educational system after 1949 and in recent years has been generously revived with the financial support of alumni at home and abroad. Dunch suggests that the history of the ACC relates closely

to our broader understanding of the relationship between education and social and political change in modern China. He argues that the ACC and mission schools in general were “harbingers of modernity” on many levels. The ACC produced a disproportionate number of republican China’s growing urban professional elite of educators, civil servants, managers, Western-style physicians, and church workers. Most important, the ACC embraced a modern concept of the nation in which students were educated to play a role in the transformation of China and therefore to locate the meaning of their lives in relation to the nation. This ethos of patriotism, with its emphasis on service and self-sacrifice, was a value that missionaries, Chinese Christians, liberal modernizers, and Communists alike could all agree upon, while at the same time the appeal was sufficiently general for it to be translated into multiple and radically different frameworks for action.

Whereas Dunch focuses his attention on a single American mission school, Dan Cui examines the full range of British Protestant educational activities in China against the background of the turbulent politics of the 1920s. Cui sees the 1920s as marking the turning point in what she calls the “nationalization” of Christian mission education. While commitment to eventual Chinese control had long been affirmed by many foreign missionaries, the principle of Chinese leadership was realized when mission schools became swept up by the consuming fires and passions of Chinese nationalism in the 1920s. The fact that this occurred at the same time as the entire British Protestant mission enterprise itself was changing from within, as evangelism receded and was replaced by a social gospel commitment to developing education as a means of reforming and improving society, made it possible for mission schools to identify themselves as legitimate and loyal partners in the pursuit of national progress. Interestingly, Cui also uncovers a whole realm of informal British Protestant educational pursuits that remained all but untouched by Chinese nationalism during this period, which included such activities as public hygiene campaigns, public lectures, amateur societies, and the establishment of China’s earliest modern museums. Such activities were immensely popular among both elite and illiterate audiences who flocked to consume British religious and cultural influence on subjects as diverse as modern Western labor-saving inventions, Scottish orphanages, and Shakespeare’s England.

The twin forces of nationalization and internationalization are taken up by Gang Ding in the final chapter in part 1. Ding takes the same two time periods as Borevskaya does—the 1920s and the 1980s—but approaches them in a different way. His central question revolves around the process of educational borrowing. Under what conditions were foreign influences able to be

integrated within China's evolving educational reforms and have a genuine impact on the process of change? His answer is that it was only when Chinese educators drew upon and transformed positive elements in their own heritage, such as the patterns and pedagogy of the Neo-Confucian *shuyuan*, that they were able to graft progressive elements drawn from American, European, or Russian experience into their own practices. Nationalization, or the conscious building of national identity through education, was therefore an essential precondition to successful internationalization. Conscious efforts to preserve or revive Confucian tenets were not, in Ding's view, merely a political device to bolster the legitimacy of successive post-imperial regimes (as Zheng Yuan suggests in his essay) but a genuine cultural effort to adapt the past to the needs and challenges of a China whose future was necessarily and inextricably intertwined with international influences.

Part 2, "State and Society in Chinese Education," examines the diverse interactions between China's modern state structure and various societal forces in the realm of education. Zheng Yuan's essay traces the evolution of curricular patterns, from the time of the first modern education system, legislated in 1902, up to the beginning of the Communist era in 1949. His careful and detailed account elaborates a concept of "conservative reform" or "authoritarian modernization," illustrating how Confucian values and the texts that communicated them repeatedly found their way back into the curriculum, in spite of an avowed republicanism after 1911. On the surface this was a matter of national pride and cultural loyalty, yet underneath the surface it could also be explained as a calculated strategy of beleaguered rulers to make use of a Confucian orthodoxy that had succeeded over centuries in ensuring a compliant and subservient populace. This point was as true of Chiang Kai-shek's (Jiang Jieshi) Nationalist regime as of the Manchu rulers, the Beijing warlords, and even the Japanese imperialists.

In illustrating this position, Yuan carries forward an intellectual perspective that probably found its fullest expression in the May Fourth Movement and which has been widely held to by intellectuals on the Chinese Mainland since 1949. Possibly one of the reasons for the tenacity of this perspective lies in the fact that it also explains a great deal of what took place in education under Chinese socialism. While Confucianism may have been openly repudiated and attacked, the classics of Marxism-Leninism were given a parallel position in the curriculum at key junctures. No mention is made of the post-1949 period in this essay, yet a passionate sense of critique running through the chapter hints at this kind of interpretation. Yuan's interpretation of the uses of tradition contrasts sharply with Gang Ding's argument that it was precisely the willingness to draw upon and transform positive elements in the

Confucian heritage that enabled Chinese educators to integrate foreign experience into their own practices successfully. Meanwhile, Borevskaya provides a different but equally compelling counterfoil to Yuan's theme of conservative reform, with her detailed depiction of the efforts of Chinese democratic educators to develop alternatives to Confucian pedagogy. The historical problem of "Confucian tradition" and its modern fate is a genuine one that continues to fascinate and confound scholars.

The power of the Chinese state to shape educational patterns and practice is approached from another perspective in Glen Peterson's essay on "peasant education" (*nongmin jiaoyu*). Focusing on the rural literacy campaigns of the 1950s, he examines the nature and results of the state-led effort to transform the economic and social structures of China's villages through education. Viewing literacy campaigns through the lens of state-society relations allows Peterson to discuss the ways in which official conceptions of the uses and significance of literacy clashed with popular expectations. Whereas official goals for spreading literacy in the countryside were closely related to the perceived educational requirements for the successful implementation of collectivized agriculture, villagers often tended to value literacy for different and contending reasons: as a means of escaping agricultural labor and as a skill for evading and challenging state authority. In the long run, Peterson argues, the genuinely empowering effects of literacy may have resided in these unintended uses and consequences as much as in the economically and politically restricted uses envisioned by state educational planners.

The disjunction between the official aims of schooling and the actual processes by which communities and individuals learn and apply skills is also the focus of Stig Thøgersen's detailed examination of career patterns in a single Shandong village over the course of the twentieth century. Using a wealth of personal interviews and documentary evidence, he makes a strong case that formal schooling has played only a marginal role in the transmission of economically relevant skills in the village for most of the twentieth century. Instead, traditional modes of learning through participation and apprenticeship, though ignored or despised by successive generations of educational reformers, remained an essential means by which teachers, medical practitioners, artisans, and managers acquired their knowledge and skills. Interestingly, however, most families have nonetheless continued to value their children's participation in general academic schooling. Why should this be so? Chinese educational reformers have tended to label the academic aspirations of rural youth and their families as irrational or "feudal." But Thøgersen sees this apparent contradiction as the manifestation of a historically rooted cultural consensus that talented persons (*rencai*) are best identified through

academic tests, even when the job concerned demands little or no academic preparation. Strong school performance is viewed by villagers as a prerequisite to being selected for skilled jobs within the village as well as for higher education.

The sweeping reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 have had a sizable impact upon educational developments in China during the past two decades. One reason for this is that the reforms view educational institutions in many ways as enterprises, and many of the decision-making powers and fiscal responsibilities that have been handed over by the central state to individual enterprises have been similarly devolved to educational institutions. The final two essays in part 2 are concerned with the opening up of private spaces that are not under the immediate or direct control of the Party-state as a result of this process of devolution. In their examination of university autonomy in modern China, Ningsha Zhong and Ruth Hayhoe explore the significance of the concept of “university autonomy” that emerged in China since the 1980s. They draw an important distinction between *zizhiquan* (autonomy as independence, or self-governance) and *zizhuquan* (autonomy as self-mastery, or the authority to take initiatives). They argue that the former term most closely resembles the Western ideal of university autonomy, which evolved in the medieval period from the conception of separate spheres of state versus religious and civil authority. Protracted conflicts over the boundaries between the spheres led, in the West, to an emphasis on negative freedom defined in terms of constitutional or legal guarantees against state interference. By contrast, the latter term, which Zhong and Hayhoe say occurs more frequently in the Chinese literature, derives from Chinese epistemological traditions and is related to a longstanding Chinese concern over the autonomous person, and their ability and responsibility to take action within the larger whole of society and state, for the good of that whole. The distinction between the two conceptions forms the basis for the authors’ understanding of the emergence of university autonomy in contemporary China.

In the twentieth century, university autonomy as *zizhuquan* (self-mastery) has acquired three levels of meaning. At the outermost level, self-mastery is defined in terms of national sovereignty in the face of Western and Japanese imperialism; the second level concerns relations between universities and the central state; while the third concerns practical expressions of autonomy by individual institutions in areas such as recruitment, fees, external consultancies, and other initiatives. Whereas the issue of national sovereignty of educational institutions was resolved by the revolution of 1949, Zhong and Hayhoe argue that developments during the reform period since 1978, especially the 1995 Education Law, which granted universities the status of “legal

persons" (*faren*), have resulted in considerable increases in university autonomy in the second and third spheres. Concrete examples of this trend are provided by way of case studies of three universities in Sichuan province.

Relative autonomy is also the focus of David Chan and Ka-Ho Mok's study of the recent resurgence of private education in post-Mao China. They begin by tracing the policy of educational decentralization from its beginnings in the 1980s to the Education Law of 1995, which affirmed the need for local authorities and individual institutions to create "multiple channels" of educational funding outside the state sector. This legitimated the reappearance of private education in the People's Republic of China for the first time since the early communist government abolished private schooling in 1952. While there has been a rapid and steady growth in the number of private schools at all levels—primary, secondary, as well as tertiary—such schools vary tremendously in terms of their quality and ability to attract students. They include highly elitist schools that charge exorbitant fees and provide the most modern equipment as well as shoddily run and poorly equipped operations out to make a quick profit. Significantly, the authors argue that, while "privatization" and "marketization" are clearly observable trends in recent years, a genuine "internal market" for educational services does not yet exist in China. For various reasons the private sector remains very much on the periphery of the educational system. The state, meanwhile, continues to wield enormous influence and power over the extent and pace of privatization through its crucial ability either to extend or to withhold certification of private schools.

Part 3, "Gender Representation and Identification," takes as its focus a theme that has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years. The role of education and schooling in the construction, representation, and transmission of gender identities remains surprisingly understudied despite the obvious centrality of the school as a primary socializing agent in modern societies. Readers will find much that is new in these essays that embrace the entire sweep of the twentieth century, from Paul Bailey's and Sarah Coles McElroy's efforts to probe the early 1900s debate over women's education to Mette Halskov Hansen's analysis of the gendered effects of Chinese state schooling on minority girls in Yunnan in the 1990s; Heidi Ross's illuminating account of how a tradition of social activism has defined the students and alumni of a Shanghai girls' school for more than a century; and Ping-Chun Hsiung's wide-ranging analysis of the women's studies movement in post-Mao China.

Despite a growing effort in recent years to "bring women in" to the social and cultural history of modern China, surprisingly little attention has been focused on the subject of women's education and its relationship to nation

building and the construction of modern identities. Educational reform, specifically the creation of a national school system, was hailed by the ailing Qing dynasty and its officials as a means to consolidate dynastic rule and by educators and gentry reformers as the means of overcoming the backwardness of China's peasant cultures and building a cohesive and economically productive modern Chinese nation. Yet the 1904 regulations for a national school system contained no provision for the education of girls; indeed, its leading architect argued that establishment of formal education for girls outside the home would be a national disaster. In 1907 the Qing government cautiously sanctioned separate female education at the primary level and lower normal schools (secondary education for females was officially introduced in 1912, while female tertiary education was not sanctioned until 1919).

Focusing on elite discourses, Paul Bailey makes clear that the "project" of women's education during the late Qing and early Republic was not at all clear; on the contrary, there was spirited, freewheeling debate and a plethora of contending and contradictory images and notions. Arguments for and against women's education were limited and delimited by received notions of innate gender difference, while at the same time shifting notions of femininity were constantly being challenged and reconfigured. While Bailey dissects the anxieties expressed by elite (mostly male) commentators in the debate over the nature, purpose, and extent of women's education in the early twentieth century, Sarah Coles McElroy approaches the growth of women's education during this period from the perspective of women as active subjects. McElroy looks at the origins and development of one of the earliest products of the elite discourse on women's education, the Zhili First Women's Normal School founded in Tianjin in 1906. Despite the reformers' ambivalent attitude toward female education and the extremely small proportion of girls who actually received formal education during this period (less than 5 percent of the school-age population in 1912), the new educational opportunities for women did contribute, in McElroy's view, to a gradual but significant transformation of Chinese society. Through their attendance at institutions such as the Zhili First Women's Normal School, elite women gained not only academic knowledge and professional training but also a new understanding of their role in Chinese society. The promoters of female education, including the founder of Zhili First Women's Normal, may have sought to train better mothers and more efficient housewives to nurture the Chinese nation while preserving traditional female virtues. But many women who studied at the new schools came to reject the traditional moral and social code and enlisted themselves instead in the struggle for greater social equality—in the name of revitalizing the Chinese nation.

Heidi Ross approaches the conjunction of women's education, personal transformation, and national rejuvenation from a somewhat different perspective. Like McElroy, Ross is also interested in understanding how women have appropriated nationalist discourses on female education for their own purposes. But, whereas McElroy views this process through the lens of an early-twentieth-century women's school sponsored by a member of the gentry elite, Ross examines the collective spirit of social purpose that infuses the history of a leading former mission school, the Shanghai McTyeire School for Girls. Founded by American Methodist missionaries in 1892 to provide a liberal education to young women of "well-to-do" Chinese families, the school's development as well as the lives of its several generations of graduates have been shaped by missionary, republican, and socialist goals for the education of young women. Ross traces the multiple interpretations of social service and cultural identity that have emerged from this history as expressed in the reminiscences of overseas alumni and interviews with the school's present leaders, both of whom are involved in an effort to preserve the school's ethic of community service by providing funding and teaching staff for a project to enhance educational opportunities for young girls in the poorest areas of Jiangxi province. The ways in which the school's institutional and financial goals and the personal search for self-definition and community of alumni living in China and abroad conjoin to define the relationship between education and social responsibility has a close resonance with the school spirit described in Ryan Dunch's essay on the history of the Anglo-Chinese College.

A unique feature of the section on gender representation and identification in education is our decision to place the discussion of minority issues alongside that of gender, in order to highlight how minority issues often parallel those of gender relations and women's position. Mette Halskov Hansen's case study of minority education policies in China's southwest shows the ways in which state schooling for minority girls works to reproduce conflated notions of gender identity and minority stereotypes. Minority girls' encounter with a state education system that emphasizes Chinese language, atheism, modernization, and nationalism and which also transmits an "eroticized, exoticized, and feminized image" of non-Han peoples is, Hansen argues, a profoundly alienating experience. While participation in the state education system is a key means of achieving social mobility and gaining higher status in Chinese society, state schools also instill feelings of cultural inadequacy and inferiority. Not only are non-Han ethnic groups associated with cultural and economic "backwardness," but such backwardness is often presented in school texts as being directly connected to female practices and behavior, including female shamans and sorcerers, traditional costumes, illiteracy, and

early marriage. The increasing commodification of minority cultures in the reform period is also having an effect on minority education, as schools increasingly educate minority girls for jobs as exoticized “folk” entertainers, hostesses, and other types of service provider in the burgeoning tourism industry whose consumers are mainly Han Chinese. Hansen’s essay is a powerful reminder that educational opportunities for women cannot be understood apart from the larger cultural, political, and economic contexts in which they are embedded.

The power of the state education system to construct social and political meaning looks much different in Ping-Chun Hsiung’s analysis of the women’s studies movement that has emerged in Chinese universities in recent years. Hsiung follows other scholars in suggesting that, while the CCP-led Party-state possesses immense “iron-fisted power” to defeat any overt challenges to its authority, its giant bureaucratic system is highly fragmented and inefficient in most of its routine operations. Advocates of women’s studies programs accordingly have sought to avoid open confrontations with state authorities while at the same time striving to “take advantage of cracks in the existing system and make their way into new territory.” The taking of new territory involves, in the first place, garnering institutional resources and funds to support the development of women’s studies programs in universities. But, more important, it also entails using such resources to construct autonomous institutional spaces in which the official definitions of gender equality and women’s liberation—a permanent feature of the official ideology—can be questioned and challenged and alternative routes to women’s emancipation set forth. This includes, for example, highlighting female subjectivity over the official emphasis on “objective” conditions for women’s liberation and the assertion of “femaleness” against the dominant discourse in which “becoming men’s equals” in practice meant denying and suppressing one’s femaleness and becoming identical to men. Hsiung’s focus upon the interplay of agency and structure underscores, as do the other essays in this section, the complex and unpredictable ways in which schools have contributed to and reflected gender identification and representation in twentieth-century China.

The preparation of this book has been greatly aided by two international conferences, which brought the contributors together for several intensive days of debate and planning. An initial conference was held at the University of British Columbia in September 1996. Eleven participants gathered over three days to debate the volume’s principal themes and objectives and to present preliminary versions of their respective contributions. A second conference convened exactly one year later, in September 1997, at the University

of Toronto. A total of thirty participants met for three days to present final versions of their essays and discuss the major issues and themes arising from the meeting. A special tribute is due to Yongling Lu for her work in organizing the Toronto conference and for her painstaking efforts in editing the present volume.

The Toronto conference benefited immeasurably from the enthusiastic participation of faculty and graduate students from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) and the departments of East Asian Studies, History, and Political Science at the University of Toronto and York University, who served as paper commentators and session chairs. We would especially like to express our appreciation to Pik-chun Liu, Chris Munn, Maire O'Brien, Qingzhi Zhao, Huiping Wu, and Feng Xu for their excellent work as conference commentators. We also wish to thank Jinghuan Shi, Timothy Brook, Daniel Culp, B. Michael Frolic, Joan Judge, Bernard Luk, Graham Sanders, and Jeffrey Wasserstrom for their insightful participation and comments throughout the Toronto conference and to Yu Li, Joanne Poon, and Norman Smith for logistical support during the Vancouver conference. At the University of Michigan Press, Ingrid Erickson and Marcia LaBrenz ensured meticulous editing and a smooth and humane publication process.

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NOTES

1. Suzanne Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th Century China* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Among historians, Paul Bailey was one of the first to locate the intellectual origins of the Maoist educational experiments of the 1960s in various strands of late Qing and early republican educational reform thought. See Paul Bailey, *Reform the People: Changing Attitudes towards Popular Education in Early Twentieth Century China* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990).

2. Wm. T. De Bary and John Chaffee, eds., *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

3. Alexander Woodside and Benjamin Elman, "Introduction," in Elman and Woodside, eds., *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 2.

4. For a detailed discussion of the 1902 and 1904 school regulations, see Hiroshi Abe, "Borrowing from Japan: China's First Modern Educational System," in Ruth Hayhoe and Marianne Bastid, eds., *China's Education and the Industrialized World: Studies in Cultural Transfer* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1987), 57–88. See also Douglas R. Reynolds, *China, 1898–1912: The Xinheng Revolution and Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1993).
5. Sally Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China: The Beginnings of the Modern Era* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983); Bailey, *Reform the People*.
6. Woodside and Elman, "Introduction," 3.
7. Tu Wei-ming, "The Sung Confucian Idea of Education," 142, cited in Woodside and Elman, "Introduction," 4.
8. Woodside and Elman, "Introduction," 3.
9. Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 14.
10. For a thoughtful critique of the "1949 barrier" in Western scholarship on modern China, see Paul A. Cohen, "The Post-Mao Reforms in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Asian Studies* 43, no. 3 (1988): 519–41.

Contributors

Paul Bailey is Reader in East Asian History, University of Edinburgh.

Nina Y. Borevskaya is Leading Researcher, Institute of the Far East, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow.

David K. K. Chan is Associate Professor, Department of Applied Social Studies, City University of Hong Kong.

Dan Cui has a Ph.D. degree from the London School of Economics and is currently affiliated with the Joint Centre on Asia Pacific Studies, University of Toronto, and York University.

Ryan Dunch is Assistant Professor, Department of History and Classics, University of Alberta.

Gang Ding is Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Educational Science and Technology, East China Normal University.

Mette Halskov Hansen is Associate Professor, Department of East European and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo.

Ruth Hayhoe is Director, Hong Kong Institute of Education, formerly Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Ping-Chun Hsiung is Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto.

Sarah Coles McElroy earned her Ph.D. degree at Yale University and has recently taught at Yale University, Boston College, and Smith College.

Ka-Ho Mok is Associate Professor, Department of Public and Social Administration, City University of Hong Kong.

Yutaka Otsuka is Professor in the Graduate School of International Development, Nagoya University.

Glen Peterson is Associate Professor, Department of History, University of British Columbia.

Douglas R. Reynolds is Professor of Chinese and Japanese History, Georgia State University in Atlanta.

Heidi Ross is Associate Professor of Education and Director of Asia Studies, Colgate University.

Stig Thøgersen is Associate Professor of Chinese Language and Society, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Aarhus.

Zheng Yuan is Professor, Department of Education, South China Normal University.

Ningsha Zhong received her Ph.D. degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, and is currently affiliated with University of Toronto.

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