

Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model

BOOK REVIEWS—CHINA 775

appendix includes maps of Yunnan Province and an identification of each of the twenty-five ethnic minorities in Yunnan, which gives such information as alternative names for the group, approximate current population, defining characteristics, traditional dress, as well as comments on architecture, and linguistic and religious practices. A glossary of Chinese characters appears near the end of the book (the only place where any characters are provided), followed by an extensive bibliography and an index.

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Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model. By SUZANNE PEPPER. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. ix, 610 pp. \$59.95.

Suzanne Pepper's long-awaited study is the first comprehensive attempt by a Western scholar to write the history of China's modern educational revolution from its early twentieth-century origins down to the 1990s. Few if any Western scholars are more suited to undertake this daunting task than Pepper, whose influential chapters in the *Cambridge History of China* and other writings have shaped a generation of scholarship on contemporary Chinese education. Nearly twenty years in the making, this book represents the culmination of that scholarly effort.

Pepper believes that the Maoist educational revolution of the early 1970s should be viewed in historical perspective as representing "the culmination of an evolving critique almost as old as China's modern school system itself" (p. 518). Rather than being the epitome of good or evil, Mao's educational revolution was firmly rooted in a tradition of educational reform thought and practice that stretched back to the turn of the century and was directed against the perceived negative effects of modern schooling in China. These included the creation of an urban-oriented elite divorced from rural realities, an elitist disdain for manual labor not unlike that of the former Confucian gentry, infatuation with "world trends" and Western models, and the mechanical copying of those models without regard to their suitability or relevance for China. By the 1930s the critique counted adherents all along the ideological spectrum including communists, rural reconstructionists, and even the League of Nations. Moreover, the solutions they advocated were all broadly similar: decentralized, locally-oriented and -financed schools, flexible standards, and curricula geared to the genuine educational needs of the rural majority. Pepper reconstructs the evolution of this critique, showing how the same debates that tore through society at large were also reproduced within the CCP itself, both before and after 1949, in the form of an ongoing struggle over "regular" versus "irregular" schooling.

The book is comprised of three parts. Part 1 traces the origins and development of radical educational reform from the turn of the century through the Republican period to 1949. This section includes discussions of the late Qing educational reforms, the Nationalist school system and the rural reconstruction and communist alternatives. Parts 2 and 3 address the post-1949 period. The thirteen chapters contained here constitute an expanded and vastly more detailed treatment of the themes and issues Pepper first raised in her contributions to the *Cambridge History* volumes. Part 2 examines the introduction of the Soviet educational model as a manifestation of continued "mechanical copying" from abroad, which in turn bred

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