

from individuals, and group discussions or school lessons, which enable the reader to get a direct sense of the ideas and thinking of students, teachers, parents and officials in both regions. The author gave particular attention to the views of women, finding them somewhat more open in discussing their ideas. She also talked to people of all ages, gaining some valuable insights into history from the memories of older teachers, officials and parents. The perspective revealed in the title – essentially a critique of the efforts of the Chinese state to assimilate minorities into the mainstream – runs through the whole book. However, it is not imposed but allowed to emerge from the historical depiction of educational policies, and the personal accounts of individuals and groups talking about their educational experiences and views.

The book should be of great interest to China specialists, comparative educationists and all those interested in issues of minority education and culture. The first chapter and conclusion provide an admirable bridge between the general literature relating to history and policy of minority education and the exquisitely detailed insights possible in such carefully etched case studies. It is a highly valuable addition to the literature.

RUTH HAYHOE

*Education in Tibet: Policy and Practice since 1950.* By CATRIONA BASS. [London & New York: Zed Books in association with Tibet Information Network, 1998. xvii + 300 pp. Hard cover £45.00, \$65.00, ISBN 1-85649-673-2; paperback £15.95, \$25.00, ISBN 1-85649-674-0.]

*China's National Minority Education: Culture, Schooling and Development.* Edited by GERARD A. POSTIGLIONE. [New York & London: Falmer Press, 1999. xii + 421 pp. \$65.00. ISBN 0-8153-2223-2.]

With recent books and Hollywood films once again creating international interest in the fate of Tibet, the two volumes under consideration provide a welcome scholarly perspective on educational policy and practice in that region and, more generally, among China's minority nationalities. Both books are important, pioneering contributions to the existing literature.

Although the author modestly labels her effort as a "preliminary study" and a practical handbook lacking "a theoretical treatise or an over-arching conceptual theme," *Education in Tibet* is a study that is likely to become a benchmark reference for any further work on the subject. As Bass notes in her preface, it has been impossible to conduct detailed field research on education in Tibet. In addition, most of the basic documents, particularly those relating to culturally specific education, are routinely classified for internal use. Having worked in the Lhasa City Government Education Department and the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, as well as at a university in Wuhan, Bass is in an excellent position to offer insights and basic data on education in Tibet, and to compare that region with other

parts of China. The book has many strengths, including interview data with Tibetans, Han Chinese and Westerners who have worked in the region over the past 12 years; the presentation of a variety of published and unpublished documents and statistical data; and some fascinating analyses of the debates that have marked the contention over education in Tibet over the past 50 years. The book essentially consists of two parts, with the first four chapters providing an overview of Chinese educational policy and practice in the 1950–98 period and its implementation in Tibet, and the far more extensive second part offering detailed analyses of each level of education, covering such crucial areas as funding, enrolment and retention, curriculum, medium of instruction, and so forth.

The book is particularly valuable in describing the evolution of policy during the reform period. After an initial strategy that accepted the need for minority areas, including Tibet, to develop their own education programmes, the resurgence of nationalist unrest in the region in 1987 led to a reverse course under which the traditional culture, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, became linked in official discourse to nationalist separatism. Thus, Tibetan culture was viewed as both a hindrance to economic development and a threat to security. By the 1990s the primary goal of education for Tibetans had become “to guarantee the unity and territorial integrity of China.” Such a political climate led inevitably to the gradual reduction of the concessions that had earlier been given to Tibetan cultural distinctiveness.

Indeed, for this reader the most prominent recurring theme is the primacy of political considerations over economic or educational ones throughout the 50 years, leading to a series of ironic policy consequences. Even when educational development took place, it often contributed to the erosion of an educational system intended specifically for Tibetans. For example, the Maoist strategy of emphasizing “quantity” over “quality” in education, particularly during the Cultural Revolution, should have been a boon to educational development in Tibet. However, because of the policy’s politicized interpretation that mandated a focus on “class struggle,” all concessions to culturally specific education for China’s nationalities were abolished. Even the relative economic success of the 1990s, which led to increased educational funding, improved teacher training, higher enrolments and so forth within Tibet also brought in increasing numbers of Han Chinese, whose children needed to be accommodated within the school system.

Although Postiglione and his contributors cover a wide range of topics, the basic focus – what state schooling does to ethnicity and development and the relationship between policy and practice – is broadly congruent with Bass’s monograph. Both volumes are consistent in questioning official claims that ethnic minority schools adequately represent ethnic minority culture and both suggest that a multicultural education can further improve understanding between Han Chinese and other ethnic groups, as well as making state schools more attractive to ethnic communities.

Postiglione’s volume brings together some of the leading scholars from

anthropology, education and political science who have studied China's ethnic minorities, along with recent Ph.D.s who have done fieldwork in previously understudied regions. It is divided into three sections – cultural challenges to state schooling, educational disparities and case studies of ethnic minority schooling – and the varied methodologies range from grounded field research and national cross-county quantitative surveys to standard documentary research. Two of the chapters – Janet Upton's study of the development of modern school-based Tibetan language education based on fieldwork in Songpan county, Sichuan province and Regie Stites's overview of national minority language policy – are of particular relevance to the issues raised by Bass, and likewise show that solutions to educational problems have been and will presumably continue to be shaped by the politics of ethnic identity.

The strength of Postiglione's volume is its broad coverage. Mette Halskov Hansen puts it well in her chapter on Chinese state education among the Tai in Sipsong Panna (Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province) when she notes the immense discrepancies in the various minority regions in terms of educational practices and local responses, with regard both to educational attainment and ethnic identity. We clearly have lacked the detailed knowledge that would allow scholars to go beyond the highly generalized descriptions one often sees in writings on minority education in China. These two books are a valuable step forward and should stimulate further research in this important area.

STANLEY ROSEN

*The Final Years of British Hong Kong: The Discourse of Colonial Withdrawal.* Edited by JOHN FLOWERDEW. [Basingstoke: Macmillan; and New York: St Martin's Press, 1998. xx1 + 258 pp. £45.00. ISBN 0-521 56381-X.]

As the first part of the title suggests, this book describes the final years of Hong Kong as a territory under British sovereignty. The main emphasis is on the efforts of the last governor, Mr Christopher Patten, "to stand up for Hong Kong." Those efforts rapidly generated the now well documented clash of cultures and ideologies and, as far as the conduct of British foreign affairs is concerned, a profound and bitter disagreement between the governor and Sir Percy Cradock, the distinguished former British ambassador, who with others, had painstakingly negotiated the Sino-British treaty known as the Joint Declaration.

The first part of the book deals with the historical development of Hong Kong under British rule, to give the *mise en scene* that is essential to the understanding of what follows. It starts with descriptions of how Hong Kong came to be a British colony and brings together relevant aspects of political history from the 1840s up to the impact and repercussions for the transition of the suppression of the democracy movement in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

In the second part of the book, the author deals with the so-called