

BOOK REVIEWS



China

Adapting the Past, Confronting the Future

BY THOMAS BUOYE, ET AL.

ANN ARBOR: CENTER FOR CHINESE STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, 2002.

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In the Preface, *China: Adapting the Past, Confronting the Future* is described as the newest textbook on Modern China. To many readers, it may look more like a modified reader. There are six thematic sections, each introduced by a distinguished scholar. It is these long introductions that support the claim to be a text.

Thomas Buoye provides an introduction of more than twenty pages for the geography and history of China. This is not really adequate to cover a three thousand year span for one of the largest and most populous countries on earth. With so much to cover, even this brief overview must gloss over key areas. More than half is devoted to the past two hundred years. While there is a brief mention of the impacts of Confucianism, there is nothing on Buddhism or Daoism. Less than half a page is given to the entire tenure of the People's Republic. Greater attention is spent on Sino-American relations.

Each of the readings has its own brief introduction. They start with J. R. McNeil's notable article on China's environmental history and Dru Gladney's on the people of China. Unfortunately, the selections are too brief to cover the long sweep of China's past. There is one article on Confucius; this stands for all of China before 1800. A single document dealing with the Taiping Rebellion, if we exclude the Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States, takes us to the twentieth century. There is nothing at all on the People's Republic of China. The list of suggested readings at the end of the section is far too brief and many of the standard works are missing. For example, given the brevity of the space allotment to history, something like Fairbank, Reichshauer, and Craig's *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation* would seem to be a must.

Bruce Dickson has an easier task in his section on politics. He does a good job, given space limitations, in showing how China wavered between ideological purity and economic growth during the era of Mao Zedong. He traces some of the continuities from the old China and its present. More than half of his essay focuses on the period since the death of Mao.

The readings kick off with a long Andrew Walder article on the Beijing Spring of 1989. Though there seem to be a few errors in the account, it is probably as good a summary of those confused times as one is likely to find at the present. Stanley Rosen nicely sums up the course of Chinese politics since. Andrew Nathan's examination of human rights seems too polemical not to be countered with other views. In the same vein, Eric Eckholm's defense of the Falun Gong overlooks the crucial role played by religion in many of the rebellions of China's past. The section ends with examinations of the emerging business class, the rural village elections, and the continuing problem of corruption. The suggestions for further reading seem adequate.

Martin Whyte tackles society beginning in the late imperial period. From that start, he takes the reader through the early republic and the Mao era to the post-Mao social reforms. In just a few pages, he sketches the complexities of Chinese society as it enters a new century. Despite its brevity, Whyte's introduction does an excellent job of encapsulating a complex topic.

The associated readings examine such varied topics as household and village life. Zhang Xinxin gives us an interesting look at China's increasing divorce rate from the point of view of urban intellectuals. It abounds with interesting first-hand accounts. Whyte himself looks at the conflict in the People's Republic between human rights and the continued need for a strong family planning policy. There are also articles on how the globalization of culture is impacting China and on the resurgence of both religion and ancient traditions such as *fengshui* (necromancy) and *qi gong* (traditional breathing and healing exercises).

In the section on society, Whyte was allotted sufficient space to include materials on a variety of other subjects. Stanley Rosen reports on the changing roles of women in China's economy as it developed in the emerging market economy of the 1990s. There are two interesting articles on the growing material differences between urban and rural China. This has resulted in substantial migration into the cities and discrimination towards these rural newcomers; both are well covered. Whyte's suggested readings are extensive and provide more than enough for the average reader. This section is the gem of the entire volume.

Barry Naughton is responsible for the section on economy. In my opinion, this section is just too brief considering the major changes China has undergone in recent decades. The editor is also far more judgmental than the other editors. There are just too few articles to do justice to a complicated subject; the discussion on the role and future of state-owned enterprises is inadequate.

quate. Finally, the suggested readings are too few to give broad coverage to the topic.

Kirk Denton gives a rather short introduction to culture, the longest of the sections. Two good short stories by Lu Xun start off the readings, which cover a wide variety of literature. The one jarring note is Zhu Tianwen's essay "Fin de Siecle Splendor." In a work totally devoted to the People's Republic of China (except for historical works), there seems to be no reason to include this lone item from Taiwan.

Bruce Dickson returns as editor of a section assessing future trends for the People's Republic of China. Scholars such as Michael Oksenburg and Martin Whyte speculate on the prospects for continued economic growth and the possibility for the development of democracy. The book ends with a brief essay by dissident Wei Jingshen

It seems to this reviewer that *China: Adapting the Past, Confronting the Future*, though interesting, does not meet the usual standards one expects from a textbook. As good as the introduction to each section is, the sketchy nature of the appended readings requires too much prior knowledge from the readers. It expects too much from students who may lack the background to fill in the many gaps. That Thomas Buoye has also provided a short Study Guide, in a separate volume, does not solve this problem. Though it might make an adequate reader, I cannot recommend it as a stand-alone text. ■

ART BARBEAU is a Professor of History and Anthropology at West Liberty State College in West Liberty, West Virginia. He serves as an editor for *EAA*.

Zen is for Everyone

The Xiao Zhi Guan Text by Zhi Yi

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED FOR PRACTICAL USE BY MICHAEL SASO

HONOLULU: UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS, 2000

144 PAGES. PAPERBACK.

ISBN: 1-9294-3102-3

I wish Michael Saso would stick to Chinese materials in his writings. The text is Chinese, but his explanatory notes, which include information about Buddhism in India, are quite misleading for introductory students.

I teach a course titled "Eastern Thought" and was interested in using *Zen is for Everyone: The Xiao Zhi Guan* for my course as it pulls together many Buddhist concepts and presents them so students can see how these ideals relate together in a text significant to the practice of Buddhism. Zhi Yi (Chih I, 538–597) is the fourth master of the *Tientai* (T'ian-t'ai) school of Chinese Buddhism.

The text considers preparation for meditation practices, which allows the student to see the context of Mahayana thought within which Zen functions. The first third of the book is introductory. The student learns the rules of body and mind purification, proper dress and diet, the necessity of finding a quiet place for meditation, the ability to free oneself from extraneous worries, and how to choose a good meditation teacher. It

Resources for the Classroom

- *CHINA: Adapting the Past, Confronting the Future & STUDY GUIDE to CHINA: Adapting the Past, Confronting the Future*
- *Exiles at Home: Stories by Ch'un Ying-chen*
Trans. Lucien Miller
- *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884-1898*
Ye Xiaoping
- *Getting Around in Chinese: Chinese Skits for Beginners*
Hilda H. Tao

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