

evidenced in a statement David M. Lampton (President of the National Committee on the U.S. and China) makes in his essay: "We have a window of opportunity of perhaps a decade or two in which to build confidence, bilateral relations, and integrative regional and global regimes" (p. 63). Teachers should stress the importance of building U.S. knowledge of China in order to avoid the coming storm. Within the context of these essays, teachers and students should read current articles or books on Sino-U.S. relations.

Greater China raises other issues that teachers and students should grapple with, e.g., human rights and China, economic pressures in Sino-U.S. trade, and Taiwan's future. These subjects are not fully covered in *Greater China*, but there is enough information given on them to facilitate class discussions, which is perhaps the most appropriate use for this book. ■

Shelton Woods

SHELTON WOODS is an Assistant Professor of Asian History at Boise State University. He earned his M.A. in Chinese History from California State University Northridge, and in 1994 he received his Ph.D. from UCLA in Southeast Asian History. His e-mail address is: swoods@sspafac.idbsu.edu.

The Confucian Continuum

Educational Modernization in Taiwan

Edited by Douglas C. Smith

NEW YORK: PRAEGER, 1991
XXII + 453 PAGES

The *Confucian Continuum* provides a fairly complete look at the system of schooling used in Taiwan. It is ideal for courses in comparative education and as a resource for teachers seeking to explain Asian approaches to study and learning. The Chinese and foreign authors of the articles are resident scholars, members of the national or provincial academic hierarchies, or people, such as the editor, with a long-term interest in Chinese education. After an integrative opening chapter, the book includes separate chapters with elementary, secondary, post-secondary, vocational, and special education. There are also chapters dealing with the preparation of teachers and with moral and civic education.

Smith's opening essay examines the historical roots of the modern system of formal education, making wide-ranging comparisons between the underlying Chinese values and those prominent in the

West. Subsequent authors likewise attempt to cover everything in their purview, e.g., a detailed accounting of facilities (number of blackboards and lavatories as well as new classrooms), curricula and goals at each level, the student-teacher ratio, and the growing numbers of students admitted to the higher levels of schooling.

One of the most important differences between American schools and those in Taiwan is the grueling preparation required to get into college. The chapter on secondary education shows how the highly competitive Joint College Entrance Examination encourages Taiwanese high school students to focus their attention on classroom lectures and to memorize everything from mathematical formulae to fine points of English grammar. High school teachers might present the content of this chapter to prompt student discussion and essays on the differences between a student's life in Taiwan and those in countries like the United States. College and university instructors could fruitfully assign this chapter in their classes. For instance, the students in a comparative education course might compare the tracking system in Taiwan, which separates "academic" students entirely from their vocational-technical peers at the end of junior high school, with approaches found in other countries.

The final chapter, "Moral and Civic Education," may provoke the most interesting student discussions, given the ongoing debate in America over values education and "political correctness." Teachers of the ninth grade and up could have their students take the "moral judgment test" in Appendix A and then compare their results with that of Taiwanese ninth graders.

Most authors begin their chapter with a post-1949 history of the subject they are presenting. For that reason, each chapter may be read separately. When the book is read in its entirety, however, this historical background becomes repetitious. Teachers using individual chapters should also be aware of some editing problems. For instance, the section on secondary teacher preparation is included in the chapter on secondary education, rather than in the chapter on teacher education. Students may find the chapter on special education confusing. Instead of beginning with a history of the subject, it starts with a three-page biography of Confucius in which no mention is made of special education. And in the middle of the chapter on vocational and technical schools, rather than in the opening chapter, is a very clear and illuminating diagram of the entire school system (p. 242).

Despite these minor defects, this book's comprehensive treatment of so much of the school system makes it an important resource, especially for those wishing to compare Asian and Western education. Of course, much has changed in Taiwan in the last few years. For instance, educational television no longer "dominates the airwaves" (p. 53) and "concern about the environment" (p. 53) rarely seems to leave the school compounds. As these changes take place, Confucian ideals come in conflict with outside pressures and create the challenges Taiwanese educators will face in the coming decade.

Monty Vierra

MONTY VIERRA has been teaching English as a foreign language in Asia for over nine years.