

## STUDYING CHINA IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS: A BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

By Leonard S. Kenworthy

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The study of China, with special emphasis upon the contemporary scene in the People's Republic of China, certainly merits a high priority in American schools today, for a variety of reasons: China is the largest nation on our globe, the homeland of one-fifth of the entire population of our planet; it is a world power whose decisions affect all of us powerfully; its civilization covers over 4000 years of history; and it has made outstanding contributions to the world in a wide variety of fields. Even though we may disagree with its form of government and economy, it behooves us to help young people to understand China and its people—our neighbors in an increasingly interdependent, international community.

Fortunately, the current détente between the United States and the People's Republic of China and the visits of increasing numbers of Americans to that part of our planet have resulted in the appearance of publications which can help enormously in the complex task of understanding that contemporary giant. Librarians, school administrators, and classroom teachers might well ask themselves whether their knowledge of China is as current and accurate as possible. For example, how many of the volumes in their school libraries bear a 1972, 1973, or 1974 copyright?

This article suggests several new books, booklets, and other sources for updating of information. In addition, a few comments on curricular placement and emphases will be made. It is hoped thereby to assist readers in obtaining recent and reliable resources for the study (by students *and* adults) of the People's Republic of China, as well as of historic China.

In recent years some schools have done a creditable job in helping students study China, especially in area study courses at the ninth and tenth grade levels.

But a large number of schools have erred in presenting only China's past and not her present or in approaching contemporary China as "the enemy." When China has been studied at the elementary school level the Chinese have all too often been portrayed as "quaint" or "different."

As social scientists we need to help students to study the Chinese as they would any group—as men, women, and children with the same needs as

people everywhere but as people who meet those needs in similar and in different ways from ours because of such factors as their geography, their history, their values, and their education. The emphasis should be on *why* even more than on who, what, and where.

I have some hesitation in recommending the study of contemporary China in the early grades because of the difficulty American children have in coping with the central concept of communism and because of the lack of adequate elementary materials on present-day China.

By the sixth or seventh grade, however, they should be able to cope with the concept of communism in an elementary way, and so be ready for an introductory study of China. (Emphasis should be upon the contemporary scene but with enough history to help them understand the present.)

Students in the ninth and tenth grades should be ready for more extensive and intensive area studies programs on the Sinitic region (which includes Japan and Korea and adjacent areas) with much more emphasis on history than in earlier courses.

### Some Recent Materials for Teachers on China

Fortunately there is now a wealth of special materials for teachers on China and on the People's Republic of China. Especially helpful are two packets and two curriculum guides.

The most extensive (and also the most expensive) of the guides is *A Starter Kit on China*, prepared by the Center for War/Peace Studies in New York City, but sold by the Social Studies School Service, 10,000 Culver Boulevard, Culver City, California 90230. It includes a copy of *Intercom* magazine on China-U.S. Relations, a map, a statement on teaching strategies, and other useful materials.

Another resource packet has been produced by Orbis Books and the Friendship Press and stresses how the Chinese see themselves—and us. Although produced by two religious groups (the Maryknoll Brothers and the National Council of Churches), it contains much useful material for schools. This *China Pac* is sold for \$4.95 and may be ordered from Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545. It is primarily for secondary school and college teachers.

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introduction and practice of other components of IGE.”<sup>2</sup> Teachers and students are grouped in units at the classroom level. The unit leaders and principals form the Instructional Improvement Committee at the building level, and a System Policy Committee is made up of building representatives to oversee IGE district-wide.

The units, usually multi-age and multi-grade, are comprised of three or four teachers, an aide, and 100 to 125 students. The unit leader plans with the other unit team members the instructional program for each child, and the team members are assigned groups of students with whom they work. The instructional groups may change from day to day or extend over longer periods of time. The MUS organizational structure is basic to the use of IGE materials though MUS can function without IGE materials. However, the extent of instructional planning required of the unit team members to provide alternative materials is extremely burdensome.

PLAN\* and IPI are amenable to a variety of school organizations and therefore can be implemented in a self-contained classroom as well as in an open setting. They do not demand team teaching or team planning; however, team planning would facilitate cost-effectiveness in the use of the materials. Many PLAN\* schools assign an aide to the computer terminal thereby relieving the teacher of sending the data for computer analysis at the close of the school day.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which the systems are responsive instructionally to the seven characteristics of individual differences. In actual practice, every teacher and school district makes some changes in the system used—rarely does a school use IGE, IPI, or PLAN\* exactly as designed by the developers. IGE encourages different outcome goals and there is room in portions of PLAN\* for differential outcome goals. IGE and PLAN\* tend to exploit differences in interest by working out a program of study for the student as well as suggesting optional modes of interaction. All the systems employ a variety of learning modalities, recognize differences in cognitive organization, build intrinsic rewards into the learning activities, and provide for differences in learning time

and pace for completing a task.

Essentially, the three systems serve as prototypes for individualized instruction and attest to the extent of research, development, dissemination, and continual evaluation that is necessary to provide teachers with the support that is needed if individualized instruction is to be more than a well-intentioned slogan.

Teachers, administrators, parents and other taxpayers, and students are left with some serious questions to ponder. What happens to the education philosophy espoused by a school system if a preplanned system of individualized education is adopted? Can instruction be individualized without the support of such a system? How much commitment and overload in time and energy can be expected of teachers and administrators? How many of the basic decisions about curriculum, instruction, and evaluation are the professional staff willing to delegate to an outside system? Does adoption of an outside system of individualized education detract from the benefits of involving the professional staff, parents, and students in educational decisions? Will the taxpayers assume the additional financial burden of increased expenses for materials, personnel, and reorganization of the physical facilities?

How much learning responsibility are the students willing or able to assume? Do the benefits of a relaxed learning environment outweigh the findings that there are no differences in achievement between individualized and group instruction? Does the emphasis on the “self” offset the need to learn to be a responsible member of a group? Is there any evidence that the teacher as a facilitator is any more effective in helping students to learn than the teacher as the director of instruction? Is self-directed learning encouraged by shifting the focus from the teacher to the instructional materials? And, most important, is individualized instruction just another innovation heralded as the final solution to all the problems of society? Or will it only fade away and be replaced by yet another innovation?

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2. Klausmeier, Herbert J., “IGE: An Alternative Form of Schooling,” in H. Talmage (ed.), *Systems of Individualized Education*. Berkeley, Ca.: John McCutchan Publishing Co., for January 1975 publication.

Last year the National Committee on China issued a booklet called *China: A Resource and Curriculum Guide* which may be obtained from the University of Chicago Press, 5801 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637 for \$3.00. It is reviewed in this issue on page 142.

*Studying China in Elementary and Secondary Schools* provides a wealth of background information, curriculum proposals and models, and a wide variety of resource materials. Written by me and published by Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10027, it sells for \$3.00.

The best way to keep up with new ideas and new materials for studying China is to subscribe to *Focus on Asian Studies*, a quarterly published by the Service Center for Asian Studies, Ohio State University, 29 West Woodruff Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210. A yearly subscription is only \$1.00 and the issues are worth much more than that to busy librarians and teachers. *Focus* includes bibliographies and reviews of recent print and audio-visual materials, as well as lists of classes, travel, summer sessions, and seminars in Asian studies.

Persons desiring to build a China collection of books will find much help in an article in the July, 1972 issue of *Library Journal* on "Sixty Good Books on China." Shorter lists of current material also appear in each issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

### Some Materials on China for Children

Despite my hesitations about teaching China studies in the earlier grades, some teachers may want to use some of the excellent books on the subject for individualized reading in the social studies and in the language arts programs. Twelve such volumes are listed in my recent booklet, *Studying China*. Four have been singled out for inclusion here as especially meritorious. A volume published by Walck in 1953, but still outstanding in its presentation of similarities and differences between American and Chinese children, is Yen Liang's *Tommy and Dee-Dee*. Another excellent paperback is the recent *Pandas in the Park*, a picture book about children, written by Audrey McKim and published by the Friendship Press. Audrey Topping's *A Day on a Chinese Commune*, printed by Grosset and Dunlap in 1972 is another fine book. Finally there is *The Chinese Knew*, by Tillie S. Pine and Joseph Levine, a simple and fascinating account of Chinese

inventions, issued by McGraw Hill in 1955 but still up-to-date and highly useable.

### Some Resources on China for Middle Grade Pupils

There are many books and booklets on China and on the People's Republic of China for the middle grades. They range from volumes on paper cut-out pictures to history, but include several which emphasize the present day scene or strike a good balance between the present and the past.

The story of rivers seems to be a favorite theme at this level—Margaret Rau's *The Yangtze River* and *The Yellow River*, both published by Messner, and Cornelia Spencer's *The Yangtze: China's River Highway*, published by the Garrard Press.

Others worthy of special mention in this brief list include the 1973 edition of John C. Caldwell's *Let's Visit China* (John Day), Robert Clayton's *China* (John Day), Walter A. Fairser's *Before the Buddha Came: The Story of the Earliest Civilizations of the Far East* (Scribner's), Lyn Harrington's *How People Live in China* (Childrens Press), and the 1972 edition of Cornelia Spencer's *The Land and People of China* (Lippincott).

Of course some middle school pupils can handle the more difficult books suggested for secondary school students.

The best textbook account for this level is the chapter on China in the Ginn book *Eleven Nations*, written by Bani Shorter and entitled "Already We Have Come Ten Thousand Leagues."

### Some Resources for Secondary School Students

Reluctant readers at the secondary level may use some of the books listed in the previous section. For average and advanced readers there is a wealth of pamphlets and paperbacks written primarily for high school students.

For example there are the two booklets reprinted from textbooks—Ethel Ewing's *East Asian Culture* (Rand McNally) and Leften S. Stavrianos and Roger F. Hackett's *China: A Culture Area in Perspective* (Allyn and Bacon). Oliver Bell's *The Two Chinas* (Scholastic) was revised in 1970 and is useful. So, too, is the inexpensive pamphlet in the Harvard Social Studies Project series: *China: Troubled Asian Giant* (American Education Press). More difficult but much more comprehensive is Hyman Kublin's *China* (Houghton Mifflin).

The most recent Foreign Policy Association booklets on China are Michael Oksenberg's *China: The Compulsive Society* (1970), and Doak Barnett's *Our China Policy: The Need for Change* (1971).

Almost every year the *Current History* magazine has a special issue on China which brings events in that land up-to-date.

Among the many other useful books are three which are especially noteworthy: Benjamin Appel's *Why the Chinese Are the Way They Are* (Little Brown), Deirdre and Neale Hunter's *We the Chinese: Voices from China* (available from Praeger in a paperback and reviewed on page 141 in this issue), and the Life World Library volume on *China*, with its wonderful color illustrations.

### Some Paperbacks for Better Readers

Space precludes more than the mention of seven of the many paperbacks written for adults on China which can be used by teachers and some secondary school students to enhance their background and

enrich their understanding of the Chinese. These include *China: Inside the People's Republic*, by the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (Bantam Books), William Hinton's *Iron Oxen: A Documentary on Revolution in Chinese Farming* (Vintage), the New York Times' correspondents *Report from China* (Avon Books), Harry Schwartz's *China* (The New York Times), Barbara W. Tuchman's *Stilwell and the American Experience in China - 1911-1945* (Bantam Books), Dick Wilson's *Anatomy of China: An Introduction to One Quarter of Mankind* (Mentor), and *A Treasury of Asian Literature* (Mentor).

These and many other publications should increase our knowledge and understanding of our 800 million neighbors in the country known formerly as China and now as The People's Republic of China.

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*Note:* Other recently published titles applicable to Asian studies can be found in the following issues of CAS: Vol. 12 No. 1, 1973: *Holiday in Peking* (for grades 3-7) and *A Day on a Chinese Commune* (for grades 3-7); Vol. 12 No. 2, 1973: *Honschi* (for grades 2-5) and *Before the Buddha Came* (for grades 6-10, covers China, Korea and Japan); Vol. 12 No. 4, 1973: *Bullock Carts and Motorbikes: Ancient India on a New Road* (for grades 8-12); and Vol. 13 No. 1, 1974: *Tales of a Chinese Grandmother* (for grades 4-12), *Tales of a Korean Grandmother* (for grades 4-12), *Why the Japanese Are the Way They Are* (for grades 7-9), and *Chou En-lai* (for grades 10-12).