

Ethnic Cultures of China

EDUCATION

FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES

By Xia Shiwu



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

中国少数民族教育: 英文 / 夏仕武著; 王国振等译.
北京: 五洲传播出版社, 2007.8
(中国民族多元文化丛书)
ISBN 978-7-5085-1164-1

I. 中... II. ①夏... ②王... III. 少数民族教育—中国—
英文 IV. G759.2

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2007) 第 137088 号

EDUCATION FOR ETHNIC MINORITYES

撰 文: 夏仕武

图片提供: 吴东俊、范继文、张秀科、陈 剑、喻志勇、赵艳志、姜宝成、安 东
朱万昌、孙 军、刘天远、李培锋、张恺欣、陈 斌、武全旭、龙 涛
李景录、程 洁、沈祥辉、王仲林、陈晓东、骆文刚、袁景智、刘 健
张国军、左小明、黄 亮、章 轲、周雪峰、普拉提·尼亚孜、朱正华
刘世阳、解海龙、潘松刚、文振效、任玉勇、钟 清、张海峰、宦 玮
尹栋逊、桑 青、吴海森、张 斌、都市时报、CFP

英文翻译: 王国振等

责任编辑: 何 云

装帧设计: 孙思宇

出版发行: 五洲传播出版社 (北京海淀区莲花池东路北小马厂 6 号 邮编: 100038)

网 址: www.cicc.org.cn

印 刷: 北京嘉彩印刷有限公司

开 本: 787 × 1092 毫米 1/16

印 张: 7.5

版 次: 2007 年 8 月第一版 第一次印刷

印 数: 1—3000

书 号: ISBN 978-7-5085-1164-1

定 价: 88.00 元

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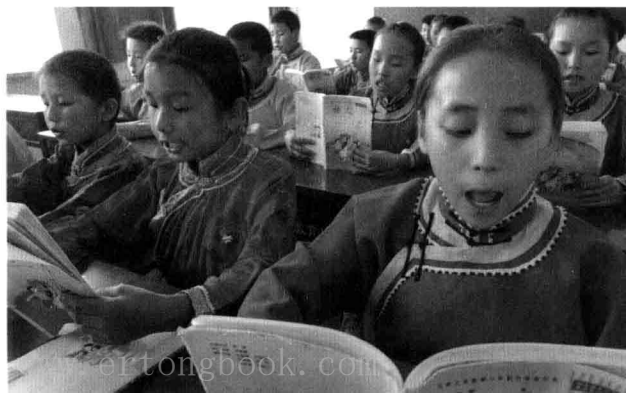
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**GENERAL SURVEY OF THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATION
CHAPTER I FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES**



The People's Republic of China is home to the Han and 55 smaller ethnic groups. In China, education for ethnic minorities (EFEM) is an important part of the education system.

I. Education for Ethnic Minorities Historically

Education is an important social phenomenon which emerges and develops in conformity with the needs of society. Its characteristics and development are restricted by the features of different ethnic groups and different societies. Because China's ethnic minorities experienced different social and natural conditions during their history, there arose complicated and diverse forms of education for ethnic minorities with different levels and varying characteristics.

Although the modern system of education was in use before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the number of schools was small or they were sometimes open and sometimes closed. The family education and social education featuring teaching by personal example as well as verbal instruction were the main forms of the education for ethnic minorities, while some ethnic minorities featured monastery education centered on religious culture.

1. Family Education and Social Education

Family education and social education are non-organizational education, mainly focusing on the knowledge and skills required to meet needs of production, living and social activities. Family education refers to teaching by personal example as well as verbal instruction inside the family, in the knowledge and skills of plowing, hunting, weaving, and cooking. Social education is a group activity in which the young learn from the elders the knowledge and skills such as shooting arrows, fighting with weapons, religious activities, the customs of marriage and funeral, familiarity with the surrounding area and building houses. The content of family education and social education varies due to the different levels of development of various ethnic groups.

The Ewenkis living on the riverside of the Erguna, in Inner Mongolia lived on nomadic hunting. The young men went hunting with elders from childhood, and


mastered the skills of hunting by practicing. Riding and shooting are important skills for the Xibes, so the children were taught to ride and shoot the bow simultaneously. Some children would get the bow of elm and cattle tendon as a present when celebrating their 10th birthday.

The young Jingpo people who lived in semi-tropical mountainous areas with flourishing forests had to go into the forest alone with a slingshot and knife and conquer beasts of prey. The children at the age of six or seven needed to learn the skills of shooting the slingshot and using the knife from their elders. Mongolian men learn horse riding, arrow shooting and wrestling from a child. The teenagers along with their fathers and elder brothers engage in farming, hunting and herding and master the knowledge of engaging in stockbreeding. The Hui people, populous and widely distributed, work in various economic industries. The educational content for them includes farming, farm tools manufacturing, building, transportation, business, Islamic food and drink and fur processing.

Before the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Gaoshans in Taiwan lived by farming and fishing. The young girls learned weaving and gathering from their mothers, while the young boys learned the skills of farming, hunting, fishing, constructing and offering sacrifice to gods or ancestors. The family and social education for the Yaos was taught by the elders' oral instruction and own example. The young Yaos imitated and learned the skills of hunting, fishing, growing crops and making pottery by practice. The clan culture was passed on through singing and dancing.

The epic, folk songs and stories of various ethnic minorities are the important carriers passing on their cultural heritage. The *Epic of King Gesar* is a heroic epic produced and developed on the basis of rich folklores such as ancient Tibetan myths, stories, poems and proverbs, serving as the vessel carrying forward the religious beliefs of relevant communities, native knowledge, folk wisdom, heritage and native language. For hundreds of years, the epic artists have played the role of narrating the history, conveying knowledge, standardizing behavior, preserving community and determining lifestyle, thus influencing members of the Tibetan ethnic group. The *Manas* is a heroic epic of the Kirgiz, as well as an encyclopedia for studying the language, history, folk customs and religion of the Kirgiz. It is a traditional custom of the Kirgiz that when having a get-together during festivals, people invite *Manasqi* (the folk singer singing the *Manas*) to sing the *Manasqi*. While enjoying the singing





of the Manas, people gained relevant knowledge and education. The New Century, the epic of the Jingpos, depicts the evolvement of humankind and the struggles between humans and nature and society, implying various philosophic theories. The rich stories about building houses, raising crops and going hunting, sum up the experiences of the Jingpo ancestors. The Jingpo women and men are taught the historical and cultural heritages from childhood. The New Century of the Bai, the Migration Epic of the Hani and the Ashma of the Yi also have similar functions. The people of all ethnic groups gain knowledge while enjoying the singing of the singers and poets, being edified by the culture of their own ethnic group.

2. Formal Education

Formal education is the outcome of human ideology developing a system of organized education. Many different forms of formal education arose during its long historical development. Old-style private schools emerged originally and free private schools, prefecture schools, county schools and academies of classical learning subsequently. The times at which these schools emerged varies among the ethnic groups. Some of them focused their teaching content on the language and culture of their own ethnic minorities, some on Chinese and the culture of the Han, some on both of them and some concurrently on the language and culture of other ethnic minorities. The schools were run by the government, the local people, or a communal.

The activities of schooling for Mongolians started in the 13th century, but originally it was only one on one tutoring. During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), the Yuan Emperor Shizu set up the Mongolian language study and Peking Mongolian Study, recruiting the children of Mongolian families at all stratum. During the Yuan Emperor Shundi's reign, doctors, assistants, and professors were added as teachers. Besides the Mongolian language, the Mongolian schools also set up the courses of mathematics and history with the Role Model of Emperor, the Essentials of the politics during the Zhenguan Period, the Five Classics and the Four Books in Mongolian as the textbooks.

The formal education of the Dong started during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The History of the Song Dynasty, Volume B, recorded: During the reign of the Northern Song Emperor Shenzong Xining (1068-1077), Yang Guangjian, a large and influential family in Chengzhou, asked the Court for instructions on establishing

schools. The Court approved the instructions on operating schools. In the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties, many prefecture schools, county schools, and academies of classical learning were run in the Dong-inhabited areas. These schools mainly taught the Han culture in the Chinese language of the Han.

The development of formal education for the Yaos was fairly uneven. School education emerged in either the Western Han (206 BC-25), the Song Dynasty (960-1279) or the period of the Republic of China (1912-1949) respectively in some Yao-inhabited areas. The rulers of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) adopted the policy of “initiating education, establishing schools”. The Yao children could be enrolled in these schools. In the 20th year of Qing Emperor Daoguang's reign, Wuyuan Academy of Classical Learning was set up in Pingdi, a Yao-inhabited area.

The Miaos had no written language, so school education was taught in Chinese. In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), private schools were built in places where the Hans and Miaos lived together, for the purpose teaching Confucian learning. In the 44th year of Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign, free private schools were set up in the Miao-inhabited areas of Hunan Province. Later the number of free private schools increased gradually, cultivating many xiucai (one who passed the imperial examination at the county level in the Ming and Qing dynasties) and juren (a successful candidate in the imperial examinations at the provincial level in the Ming and Qing dynasties).

In the fifth year of Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign (1666), Zheng Chenggong set up the “community schools” for the Gaoshans to teach them the Han culture. After unifying Taiwan in the 22nd year of Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign (1683), the “community schools” witnessed a development, which invited the Hans to teach the Confucian learning. Later, the Governor of Taiwan Province Liu Mingchuan set up schools which reformed teaching content. Besides the Confucian learning, Mandarin and other knowledge were also taught.

The old-style private schools existed in Denghong Prefecture of Yunnan Province in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). They taught two forms of writing, Chinese and the Dai language, but the students were mainly the children of the upper class. The cultural education for the Dais was taught in the monasteries. In addition, the villagers combined to hire a person with a good Dai language level to teach their children to read and write. And they delivered the produce as the tuition fee after the autumn harvest.



The early school education was non-modern education.

3. Monastery Education

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, various ethnic minorities had their own long standing religious beliefs. And there were close connections between education for ethnic minorities and religion.

Islamic religious belief has spread in China for 1,300 years. By the turn of the 20th century, there were 10 ethnic groups, i.e. the Hui, Uygur, Kazak, Dongxiang, Kirgiz, Salar, Uzbek, Tajik, Tatar and Bao'an believing in the Islam. Islam exerted a good influence upon education for these ethnic groups. Mosque education is the earliest, longest lasting and most influential form of education in the history of Hui education. With the imam who has skill in teaching as the teacher, the Mosque recruited students and conducted teaching at three levels, i.e. elementary school, high school and college. Children above six years old are recruited to learn Arabic language, Alcoran and the basic knowledge on Islamic doctrine, which is called the "elementary school"; in high school, young people learn the Five Pillars of Islam (the testimony of faith, prayer, giving Zakat), fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Makkah), etiquette, and Islamic doctrine; the graduates from the "elementary school" are recruited by the large and medium-sized mosques and taught Arabic, Persian, philosophy, literature, Islamic doctrine and Alcoran by the Imam with a high level of knowledge, to be cultivated as full-time religious personnel; this is the "college". The Uygurs were believers of Buddhism originally and converted to Islam after the 16th century. Therefore the education for Uygurs was influenced by Buddhism and Islam in the early days, but mainly Islam later. The sutra schools in the early days mainly taught religious knowledge and cultivated full-time religious personnel, and started to add cultural knowledge in the late 19th century. The main form of traditional education was the mosque education in Dongxiang history. In the 1st year of Qing Emperor Xuantong's reign (1909), the Dunde Private School, Zhengxing Private School and Dunmu Private School were set up in the Dongxiang-inhabited Zhamochi and other areas. During the period of the Republic of China, those schools were changed to the elementary schools. Around 1870, Islamic sutra schools were set up in the Kazak-inhabited areas, which, besides the religious courses, also taught history, geography, mathematics and other courses.

Tibetan Buddhism, a branch of Chinese Buddhism, was believed originally in

the Tibetan-inhabited area and later spread among the Mongolians, Yugu, Moinba and other ethnic groups. Starting from the 7th century, Tibetan Kings Songtsam Gambo attached importance to passing on and learning the Buddhism classics. In the early 8th century, the construction of the Samye Monastery, the first one for Buddhism Sutra, was finished, and monastery education witnessed great development gradually. A style of study characterized by delivering, debating, writing and practicing sutra sprung up after the monastery was constructed in 1074. In the early 13th century, Sapan Kundgaval of the Saskyapa Sect wrote specialized publications expounding doctrines and summing up the experience of monastery teaching. In the early 15th century, Tsongkhapa constructed the Gaden Monastery and created the Gelugpa Sect, and his disciples built the Zhaibung, Sera, Gaden, Tashihunpo and other monasteries and made reforms in the sutra studying system. In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the local government of Tibet set up schools specially for training the monk officials in Lhasa. Later the monastery education for Tibetans also exerted influence upon the Mongolian, Moinba and other ethnic groups. Starting from the mid-16th century, monastery education rose among the Mongolians as Tibetan Buddhism spread in the Mongolian-inhabited areas. This kind of education featured training monk officials through the monastery and cultivating lama scholars through “Zhacang” (academy of classical learning). The number of people who learned, studied and translated the Tibetan sutra increased gradually. Therefore, new headway had been made in the private schools where Mongolian and Tibetan languages and medicine were taught. Influenced by the Tibetans, education for the Moinba was instituted in the Tibetan language. From the time when Tibetan Buddhism was introduced into the Menyü area in the 11th century, the Moinbas received the monastery education and religious intellectuals were cultivated.

The Dai and other ethnic groups believe in the Hinayana Buddhism. Before the 1950s, monastery education was one of the main forms of education for the Dais. Especially in Xishuangbanna, Menglian, Gengma and other areas, most of the children had to go to the monasteries to serve as monks, and learn the Dai language and religious creed of Buddhism for a period ranging from several months to several years or even longer. These monks were the intellectuals of the Dai, divided into the “du” (Buddha), “dulong” (great Buddha), “kupa” (tutor) and other classes. The education for the Blangs had close links with their belief in Buddhism. The children went to the monastery to learn the sutra and Dai language. Some were promoted to



the Buddha after mastering the Dai language and sutra, thus becoming the intellectuals of the Blangs.

In the modern times, the western missionaries went into the areas inhabited by ethnic minorities to spread the Christianity and Catholicism, exerting some influence upon the education of ethnic minorities. Some missionaries created alphabets for the ethnic minorities that had none, translated the Bible in the new writing, compiled the schoolbooks and cultivated a number of intellectuals. In 1899, a British priest ran a Miao school in Anshun, Guizhou Province, the first mission school for the Miaos, mainly instructing in the Chinese of the Han. In 1905, British priest Burgly set up a mission school—Guanghua School in Shimenkan, Weining, Guizhou Province. He and some Miao intellectuals designed the phonetic letters of the Miao language—later called the Burgly writing of the Miao language, in which the Bible and other Miao literature were published. In the 1940s, western missionaries created the alphabet of the Jingpo language in the Jingpo-inhabited areas and ran schools. Starting from 1922, they ran three mission schools in Dengge, Kalan and Lulan to teach the writing of the Jingpo Language.

II. Emergence and Development of Modern Education for Ethnic Minorities

Modern school education emerged in the early 20th century with new reforms characterized by abolishing the imperial examination and running of the schools.

1. Modern Education in the Late Qing Dynasty

In 1903, the government of the Qing Dynasty promulgated and implemented the Regulations for Presented and Ratified Schools. The Regulations for Presented and Ratified Schools, consisting of a series of regulations on education such as the Regulations for Presented and Ratified Higher Primary Schools, the Regulations for Presented and Ratified High Schools and the General Rule for Presented and Ratified Vocational Schools, marked the beginning of China's pre-elementary education, elementary education, secondary education and vocational education. However, running state-owned vocational schools in the border areas started in the 1930s. By the end of 1936, there were eight state-owned vocational schools in the ethnic

minorities inhabited border areas.

In 1905, the government of the Qing Dynasty sent out an imperial decree to abolish the imperial examination system for selecting competent people and require the initiation of schools at all levels and of various types to educate the children. A number of schools were set up in those ethnic minorities inhabited areas, marking the beginning of the development of modern education for ethnic minorities.

In 1908, the Qing Emperor Guangxu issued the Regulations for Manchu and Mongolian Higher Schools, marking the beginning of independently-run higher education for ethnic minorities. The document stipulated that the classes in both the Manchu language and Tibetan language be divided into the preparatory class and official class. The students in the preparatory class learned for two years while those in the official class learned for three years. The students who finished the preparatory courses could enter the official class. After a while other classes were added and the students in these classes needed to learn for three years. It also stipulated, "Tuition fee and boarding expenses are free for the students in the preparatory class, official class and other class."

The Korean ethnic group initiated modern education in the 1920s. In 1906, Ruidian Free Private School, the China's first Korean one, was set up in Longjing of Yanbian City. Later the first Korean high school and normal school were established in 1912 and 1913, respectively.

The initiation of modern schools in the Dai-inhabited areas, Dehong and Yunnan Province dates back to the early 19th century. In 1905, a school was set up in Xincheng, Yingjiang, Dehong Prefecture. In 1910, elementary schools opened in Nandian.

In around 1905, the academies of classical learning for the Zhuangs were converted into schools. Reform was made in the aspects of educational system, teaching content and teaching method according to the needs of modern society.

The academies of classical learning in the Bouyei-inhabited areas were also changed into schools around 1905. Chinese, mathematics, history, geography and other courses were added. In around 1911, a number of elementary schools and high schools were established in the various areas. In 1913, the first high school for the Bouyei was built in Duyun.

Modern schools for Tibetans began in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China. In 1907, Zhao Erfeng divided the school districts in remote Sichuan, set up the Chinese mandarin schools and elementary schools, and recruited





the Tibetan children. In 1908, the Qing Government added the course of Tibetan language in Mongolian and Manchu colleges. During the period of the Republic of China, the School for Mongolian and Manchu was established on the basis of the college, college training the advanced talents of the Tibetans. In 1916, the “Moinzikang” medical bureau initiated in Lhasa a system combining medical treatment, scientific and technological research and teaching.

As a whole, the number of the schools for the ethnic minorities in the late Qing Dynasty was few. Furthermore, only the children of minority noblemen were enrolled in the schools to study, while the doors of the schools were closed to children from poor minority families. Even in the late Dynasty, school education still had not become mainstream education in the ethnic minorities inhabited regions. The form of education for ethnic minorities still was linked to religious education and education on production and living.

2. The Development of Frontier Education during the Period of the Republic of China

During the period of the Republic of China (1912-1949), especially the period of the Nanjing national government (1927-1949), the education for ethnic minorities, being regarded as the frontier education, witnessed development to some degree. At the end of March 1912, the Government of the Republic of China led by Sun Yat-sen changed the Education Department of the late Qing Dynasty into the Ministry of Education and set up the Department of Mongolian and Tibetan Education subordinated to the Ministry of Education in charge of the cause of education for ethnic minorities. In the next year, the Ministry of Education of the Government of the Republic of China issued the Regulations on Mongolian and Tibetan Schools which aimed to increase the knowledge of the Mongolian, Tibetan and Qinghai peoples and to promote their cultural development. The Regulations served as the program of action under which the government pushed ahead with the frontier education and running of border schools.

After the Nanjing Government was founded in 1927, it formulated some policies on the education of ethnic minorities. In June 1929, the Kuomintang (KMT) held a meeting in Nanjing. It adopted a resolution on Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs, which stipulated the setting up of the frontier schools and administrative organs, the appropriating of the educational funds and the preferential treatment given to the

students. In February 1930, the Ministry of Education of the Nanjing national government established the department of Mongolian and Tibetan education specially in charge of administering the education of ethnic minorities near the frontier. The Nanjing national government also promulgated three acts to promote the education of ethnic minorities and give assistance to the schools for ethnic minorities. After 1939, the Nanjing national government set up the state-owned frontier schools to develop the frontier education. By 1946, the Nanjing national government had set up or reorganized state-owned frontier schools at all levels, including 34 state-owned elementary schools, 14 state-owned frontier normal schools, eight state-owned frontier vocational schools, two state-owned frontier high schools and three state-owned frontier technological academies to cultivate the teachers for the middle schools near the frontier. In total it set up 61 state-owned schools within eight years.⁽¹⁾

The period of the Republic of China saw the development of education for ethnic minorities to some degree, laying the groundwork for the development of school education in the ethnic minorities inhabited areas after the founding of the People's Republic of China. In the early days of the Republic of China, learning encouragement centers and some provincial schools were set up in the Dai-inhabited areas of Denghong, Yunnan Province, "schools" in Gengma areas, more than a dozen elementary schools in Xishuangbanna, the No.12 Banna High School by Xuanwei Jie, and the Fohai Simple Normal School in Fohai. In the 1930s, Guangxi introduced the "education for special tribes" among the ethnic minorities, promoting the development of education in Guangxi. In 1938, a state-owned elementary school was established in Lhasa, Tibet. Later, the number of the elementary schools increased in Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and other areas.

As a whole, the level of education for ethnic minorities still was not high during the period of the People's Republic of China. Take the education of Xinjiang as an example. When the People's Republic of China was founded (October 1, 1949), among more than four million people in Xinjiang there were 180000 students from ethnic minorities receiving education in nine high schools and one college, or 4.5 percent of the total population of Xinjiang, making its illiteracy rate over 90 percent. More than 95 percent of the Tibetans in Tibet were illiterate.

(1) Frontier Education System During the Republic of China by Zhou Xi, *Ethnic Education Study*, issue No.4 of 2000, P.31-32.





III. Education for Ethnic Minorities after the Founding of the People's Republic of China

After the People's Republic of China was founded, education for ethnic minorities was seen as an important part of its overall educational cause. According to the reality of the education of ethnic minorities, a series of policies and measures on developing education for ethnic minorities were formulated.

First, establish and perfect the administrative organs of education for ethnic minorities. The Departments of Education for Ethnic Minorities were set up respectively under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. The sections of educations for ethnic minorities were established in the government at the local level. An administrative system for the education of the ethnic minorities was formed from the central to local governments.

Second, increase the funds for the education of ethnic minorities. Starting from 1951, the central finance set up the "Subsidy for the Education of the Ethnic Minorities" to give financial support to the development of education for ethnic minorities. The policy of subsidy is still in effect to this day.

Third, set up education of various types for ethnic minorities. The governments run elementary schools, high schools, normal schools, secondary vocational schools and colleges for ethnic minorities. In addition, boarding schools at the elementary and high school level were established. Excellent schools at all levels and of various types in inland provinces set up the Xinjiang and Tibetan classes, thus improving the education at all levels and of various types in Xinjiang and Tibet and cultivating excellence.

Fourth, adopt teaching methods fitting in the characteristics of the minority students. The minority students concurrently learn the Chinese language based on studying well their own language. The schools mainly for minority students may institute teaching the local languages. The ethnic minorities are allowed to compile the textbooks and teaching reference books in their own language and work has been strengthened of translating, publishing, printing and issuing the textbooks in the minority language.

Fifth, give policy consideration in the aspects of student enrollment and graduate assignation. Relevant departments of the State implemented preferential