relationships.

WANG Xiaoli
South China Normal University
E-mail: wxl.scnu@gmail.com

DOI 10.3868/s110-005-016-0022-8

清末劝学所研究：以宝山县为中心 [*A Study of the Late Qing Dynasty Education Exhortation Office: The Case of Baoshan County*]. 高俊 [Gao Jun]. 上海，中国：上海辞书出版社 [Shanghai, China: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House], 2013. 278 pp., (paperback), ¥45, ISBN: 978-753-2640-13-3.

Although many studies of late Qing educational reforms have touched on issues of the Education Exhortation Office (*quanxuesuo*), Gao Jun's case study of the *quanxuesuo* in Baoshan county near Shanghai offers interesting details regarding this type of educational administrative organ and its activities in the locality during the first decade of the 20th century.

Gao's book suggests that the establishment of the *quanxuesuo* was one of the most important projects of the late Qing New Policy Reform because it represented an unprecedented extension by the state of its educational administrative system below the county level. According to Gao, the Baoshan *quanxuesuo* made a great contribution to leadership in modern Chinese educational circles, and its practices offered a positive example to many other *quanxuesuo*. By using archival materials from Baoshan county as well as local archives nationwide, Gao's book provides specific information, such as the organizational process and financial condition of the institution. It also describes some activities of the Baoshan *quanxuesuo*, such as reforming traditional private schools (*sishu*), supervising local educational affairs as well as pedagogy, promoting social educational programs, and collaborating with the local education association (*jiaoyu hui*). However, for the most part the book discusses this county institution from a top-down national perspective and only uses the

case of Baoshan to substantiate issues at a national level. This narrative style downplays the particular features of Baoshan's case, making readers wonder why the study is necessary if Baoshan is no different from any other county.

This problem has probably arisen due to the historical documents used by the author. There is no question that the documents from the Baoshan *quanxuesuo* contain interesting information and have considerable value. However, the book presents them in a way that suggests these documents are not numerous or rich enough in content to support an entire book. In many cases the author has to resort to materials from other provinces to explain the Baoshan case and to prove that Baoshan was no exception from the national trend, thus weakening the book as a case study.

A more significant problem of this book is the lack of integration with existing scholarship. In the past two decades, a large number of excellent publications, in both Chinese and English, has emerged on modern educational reform from the late Qing to the Republican period, but these publications are not discussed in this book. For example, Sally Borthwick's work on the reform of the traditional private school from the late Qing to the 1950s, Ruth Hayhoe's work on China's particular experience in establishing modern education throughout the 20th century, Helen Chauncey's work on local elite activism in building modern schools, Robert Culp's study on the role of civic education in modern schools in shaping student politics, Elizabeth VanderVen's case study of the Haicheng educational administration in northern China, as well as my own work on the role of teachers' schools in social transformations from the late Qing to the Republican period are not referenced. A few English-language works are cited, almost as a kind of decoration for the book, but all are from the 1970s and the early 1980s and thus do not reflect more recent scholarship on late Qing educational reform. Even the most important works in Chinese scholarship, such as Guan Xiaohong's excellent study on the Qing Ministry of Education (*xuebu*) and Sang Bing's study of new schools and student activism in the late Qing, are not mentioned.

As a result, the book reads like categorized documents collected sporadically from various locations nationwide, and thus fails to engage in the academic debates that the above-mentioned works address. For example, many scholars have demonstrated the establishment of educational administration and modern schools at the local level as a dynamic process between Qing state-building

efforts and the local elites' resistance and collaboration with the state. In fact, this book could make a very important contribution to this debate since Baoshan is located at the edge of the Shanghai metropolis and was strongly influenced by Shanghai's urban culture, possibly making Baoshan's situation different from either inland rural areas or the urban areas that existing scholarship addresses. Instead, Chapter 6, which discusses the relationship between the Baoshan *quanxuesuo* and the county educational association, paints a rosy picture of this relationship and attributes this harmonious relation to two brothers from one family, the Yuan family, who dominated and led these two institutions respectively. It totally omits any analytic discussion of the possibly absorbing story behind this family's domination over the local educational association and the administrative organ during a critical period of social and historical transformation.

The book presents some information that might interest certain readers. For example, the financial resources of Baoshan *quanxuesuo*, the records of annual staff payments, teachers' pedagogical plan documents and the observation of classroom teaching at local schools offer details on the local educational administration and school teaching at the time. Though informative in some ways, this book is not indispensable to the study of late Qing educational reform.

Xiaoping CONG
University of Houston
E-mail: xcong@uh.edu