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Non-Western Educational Traditions: Alternative Approaches to Educational Thought and Practice. By Timothy Reagan. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996. 192 pages. \$18.50 paper.

Non-Western Educational Traditions is an interesting and informative book, though much too brief and general. Timothy Reagan makes a valiant attempt to bring to light the educational thoughts and practices of seven non-Western cultures: traditional African, Aztec, Pre-Columbian North American Indian, Chinese, classic Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic. Rather than fall into mainstream education scholarship by focusing exclusively on Western educational beliefs and practices, Reagan's purpose is to begin discussion and understanding of other approaches to education.

To tackle such a diverse and extensive set of world cultures in 192 pages is bold. Reagan does acknowledge that his book is broadly conceived in form and substance. He is correct in describing his book in this manner. Nevertheless, the book presents a general, broad overview of several ancient and remarkable educational tenets.

Certainly, books that focus on indigenous or non-Western perceptions and conduct of education and life are rare amidst the numerous books on Western educational thought and practice. Reagan, however, draws attention not only to "traditional" or "informal" educational practices of these cultures, but also examines their distinct educational goals, beliefs, and life philosophies. I draw attention to the word *informal* in the preceding sentence because education in indigenous settings did take place in *formal* ways not often understood by Western academic minds.

In describing these educational life domains, the author emphasizes what an educated person might be like. The author argues that these people—who often were teachers—transmitted specific core values to young students, which often focused on individual and community standards of conduct and behavior. Often these teachings became the impetus for certain edification methods.

Some of the values revealed in the book were universal: respect for people, character development, community responsibility, and ethical conduct. Although these values might be universal, the methods of value transmission were often different. In some societies, such as the Aztec and Chinese, formal schools were established as centers of value transmission. Yet in others, education occurred in "informal" ways—through teaching sessions and social events.

In each chapter, Reagan explores the foundation of traditional educational thought and practice. At the end of each chapter, a list of questions for reflection and discussion are provided. Chapter one addresses the issue of ethnocentrism, introduces the concept of tradition and the importance of oral tradition, and establishes a framework for the necessity of the work. In chapter two, Reagan offers insight into traditional African education, including the significance of oral and moral tradition, the process of initiation, and the vocational aspects of education. Using Aztecs as a case, chapter three offers an analysis of Meso-American educational experience through a

description of the cultural, religious, and intellectual world of the Aztecs. The author provides a list of the core values that an “educated person” would possess and describes the role of the family in Aztec society. The chapter concludes with a short discussion of formal schooling in Aztec society. Chapter four is a short examination of education in pre-Columbian North America with an emphasis on ten core American Indian beliefs and a focus on the purpose of education, which centers on spirituality and is communal in nature. The author also describes the role of language, rituals and ceremonies, oratory, and games in the education of children. In chapter five, Reagan presents Chinese educational heritage, focusing on the role of Confucian thought in traditional Chinese education, as well as the imperial examination system of the past.

Chapters six and seven focus on two related Indian subcontinent cultural and religious traditions: Hindu and classical Indian and Buddhist educational traditions. In chapter six, Hindu education is analyzed within the Vedic tradition, with attention to the role of (1) *Shruti*—the revered body of text; (2) *Smrti*—the body of religious literature; and (3) the Sanskrit language. In the next chapter, the author provides an overview of Buddhism with specific mention of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Reagan concludes with a short discussion of traditional Buddhist monastery education.

In chapter eight, the author notably depicts Islam—one of the world’s three great monotheistic religions—as part of non-Western educational philosophies. He justifies this inclusion because Islam has been consistently misperceived as “alien” and “different” in the Western world (p. 121). Reagan further argues that it should be included “for no other reason than to encourage a more accurate understanding of both Islam and the place of Islam in our own heritage” (p. 121). Reagan presents an overview of Islam by first turning attention to the life of Muhammad, the prophet; he then summarizes the central beliefs of Islam and the role of *Qur’an* in Islamic life. He concludes the chapter by discussing the religious context of the educational philosophy and practice of Islam.

In the last chapter Reagan reveals seven broad themes common to the various cultures addressed: (1) an emphasis on education, as opposed to the formal schooling practiced in Western society; (2) community-based and communal education; (3) the importance placed on civic education; (4) an emphasis on vocational education; (5) the family is central to educational practice; (6) language is nuclear; and (7) morality and spirituality are a crucial part of educational development.

I offer three overall concerns. First, Reagan’s book does not focus on contemporary non-Western educational beliefs or on how traditional beliefs and practices still survive in many of these cultures. Rather, he centers on traditional educational thought and practice. When a book focuses solely on traditional ways, no matter how strongly one might argue for diversity, there is the danger of stereotyping and placing indigenous peoples in the past rather than the present. Next, Reagan stereotypes Western ways just as he boxes in traditional non-Western methods. The author would have done much better to present a larger comparative study that makes explicit his assumptions

about Western educational thought. He then could have used this explication as a sounding board to build understanding of educational practices—both modern and traditional—around the world. Finally, I have concerns that while Reagan argues for the inclusion of Islamic educational thought and practice, I question its relevance to non-Western cultural studies. Fundamentally, Islam is one of the important religious foundations in Western educational thought and practice. Despite these concerns, this book is recommended to those interested in a broad, general, cross-sectional perspective of traditional non-Western educational philosophies and beliefs.

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The Oklahoma Basic Intelligence Test. By D. L. Birchfield. Greenfield Center, NY: The Greenfield Review Press, 1998. 184 pages. \$14.95 paper.

American Indian writers, both published and unpublished, have long complained that editorial expectations and Euramerican literary demands force compositional concessions that are inappropriate for American Indian writers. Such concessions often negate an American Indian work's spiritual and intellectual integrity. Finally, a breakthrough. *The Oklahoma Basic Intelligence Test* conforms not to Euramerican literary requirements, but to Choctaw literary principles, and it succeeds beautifully. That Birchfield's work was actually published represents a breakthrough for American Indian writers. Of course, the volume's release by a press dedicated to promoting American Indian works—not a mainstream press—is not surprising. The book has neither plot nor character development, neither climax nor denouement; it is too casual for a scholarly piece and too scholarly for the general reading public; its thematic line is difficult to follow and harder to contextualize. After all, what does Larry McMurtry have to do with Bud Wilkinson and an anthropomorphic catfish? Why should Chuck Norris cringe?

At first glance, Birchfield's *Oklahoma Basic Intelligence Test* appears to be a collection of unrelated essays, fishing stories, hunting tales, poems, letters, histories, literary criticism, and social commentaries. The essays range from judgments regarding the superiority of the split T formation to Pushmataha to the Texas Rangers; from the particulars of the Treaty of Camp Holmes to concerns with the accuracy of America's foremost dictionaries to the Cross Timber. Despite the ostensible discontinuity, all the parts of this work are thematically related and structurally integrated into an American Indian literary composition. Nearly each chapter represents one essential part of an American Indian narrative work.

The book's controlling metaphor is trot-line fishing and a significant amount of Birchfield's text is given over to detailed accounts of his setting trot-lines in the Muddy Boggy River in southeastern Oklahoma. It is interesting to note that following the thematic line of this work is somewhat like running a trot-line on a dark night with a sorry lantern. Structurally and