cultural context and the professionalism of his Bulgarian colleagues. Unfortunately, funders do not often pay for follow-up studies to analyze and evaluate to what extent new approaches have been sustained, nor do we find such a discussion here. In Cuba, Antoni Kapcia reports, a mutually beneficial collaboration among university academics and the government continues, as in the Soviet era, to be marked by constant readjustment and a modicum of tolerated dissent.

Bernadette Robinson and Catriona Bass offer thoughtful analyses of educational change in Mongolia and the Tibetan Autonomous Region respectively. They consider policies and their consequences in their historical and social setting. By discussing higher education in the context of education at all levels, they illustrate the interconnections among them, pointing out that drastic reductions in funding at the school level mean fewer students prepared to enter higher education. In the Tibetan Autonomous region, language issues and cultural policy are particularly important. At the end of the 1980s Tibetan-language elementary schools were created to further Tibetan culture. They were not, however, supplemented with a complete and integrated Tibetan-language system of education at higher levels. The result is that Tibetan students are at a disadvantage when competing for places in secondary schools and universities where Chinese is the language of instruction. Ironically, in China itself, in the border areas where there are large numbers of ethnic Tibetans, an integrated system of Tibetan-language schooling was created enabling a growing number of Tibetans to gain higher education. In the last few years, however, those achievements have been threatened by a continuing funding crisis and the Chinese government's increasing reliance on patriotism rather than communist ideology as an integrative ideology.

Taken together, these essays illustrate that educational policies often lead to unintended or unexpected consequences that depend on social and political forces over which educators have no control. Policies that encourage competition and "market forces" in higher education, for example, have distinct social consequences when only a few are prepared to engage in that competition. This collection of papers also suggests that understanding the social and human implications of educational policies requires insights from both comparative education and area expertise, as well as specific knowledge of what is happening on the ground. Context is all.

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Svat Soucek. A History of Inner Asia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xiii, 369 pp. $69.95 (cloth); $26.00 (paper).

This is an ambitious attempt to compress much of Central Eurasian history into a book described by the author and publisher variously as an "accessible" or "topical" introduction and a "comprehensive survey." It covers from the seventh century down to the present and focuses on the region now defined by the borders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia and the autonomous region of Xinjiang in China. The book addresses a long-felt need for a reliable and accessible short history of that region. Would that it had succeeded in providing one.
Dr. Soucek brings to his task enviable linguistic qualifications. His is very much a traditional historical-philological approach, sensitive to nuances of linguistic differentiation in this complex region, ensuring scrupulous accuracy in details about the multiple renderings of place names and the facts of political history, and enabling him to comment at some length on selected writers and literature. His deliberate decision largely to ignore archaeological material is one of the weaknesses of the book though; his cultural horizons rarely step meaningfully beyond the evidence of the written word. Indeed, his idea of history is a narrow one. While writing the social history of the subject might well be premature, it would not have been difficult to expand meaningfully on the economic history, which is one of the main reasons why the region should interest us.

What we find here then is very uneven and very much in need of an editor. One of the book’s virtues is its attempt to view the history of the region from within, rather than, in the first instance, from the standpoint of the empires that impinged on it from the outside. Yet, when those empires become important, this approach then deprives us of a clear understanding of how their priorities elsewhere may have led them to deal with Central Asians the way they did. For some of the impenetrable early political history, Soucek’s book will be a rewarding, if still not very accessible guide. There are some inspired vignettes on writers, and some incisive interpretations on such questions as the impact of Russian colonialism. Yet the book as a whole (does the topic really dictate that this be so?) lacks clearly articulated themes. Too often chapters lack meaningful introductions or conclusions; generalizations, where they do appear, often are sandwiched into the middle of a chapter. It is somewhat curious that the closer the narrative gets to the present, the more expansive and looser any generalization becomes, and often unsupported by systematic exposition. The last chapter entitled “Summary and Conclusion” is neither, but rather an epilogue bringing the narrative to the present.

At times Soucek’s selectivity is questionable. It is salutary to open the chapter on the Mongols by indicating that there is controversy over whether their impact was positive or negative. The implication here is that he will offer some balance. Yet while noting in passing the positive, all his extended examples and the conclusion of the chapter point one-sidedly to the negative. The chapter is primarily an extended discussion of Mongol politics, with a few choice quotations at the end to illustrate their destruction of urban centers such as Merv and tar them with the unproven assumption that they should be blamed for spreading the Black Death to Europe.

His discussion of religion is curiously one-dimensional, lacking in any real effort to communicate the dynamics of conversion and the varieties of religious practice. He has deliberately chosen to begin with the advent of Islam, with whose history he is quite at home, but one result of that decision is that other religions never get their due. Compounding this problem is the fact that the author seems to be as little interested in anthropological literature as he is in the work of archaeologists; thus he cannot see beyond dated approaches to “shamanism” and other manifestations of “popular religion.” While his account is laudatory in its attention to the important topic of sufism, we cannot really understand its role in the processes of conversion. Soucek’s limitations as a historian of religion are evident in his summary assessment of the Islamic