

Reviews and Abstracts

Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xiii+ 369 pp. ISBN: 0521651697 (hardback), \$70.00; 0521657040 (paper), \$26.00.

Reviewed by: **Alex Marshall**, CEP Visiting Faculty Fellow, Buryat State University, Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, Russian Federation, veniukov@yahoo.co.uk, alex.marshall3@btopenworld.com

For a variety of reasons Central Asia appears to be a region of increasing strategic importance in the world today. The rise and fall of the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan, the search by external powers for new energy markets in the region, and the growing Western fear of and fascination towards Islamic countries in general have all played a part in Central Asia's recent rise to international prominence. In this regard a sweeping historical guide to "Inner Asia," which Svat Soucek defines as "seven countries: the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region...and the Republic of Mongolia" (p. x.) is obviously both scientifically relevant and a timely marketing exercise. Soucek takes the reader across a vast historical landscape, from the time of the Kök Türk dynasties of the 6th-8th centuries to the rise of the independent Central Asian republics after 1991. In doing so he covers in overview whole epochs to which individual scholars have, of course, devoted the work of their entire lifetimes. Therefore it goes almost without saying that the book is, at the very least, a masterpiece of concision. Soucek, in his knowledge of local languages and cultures, also displays an impressive level of erudition. From the sources used in this work it is evident that he is fluent in, at the very least, Uzbek, English, German, French and Russian. At times however the sheer depth of knowledge on display here becomes an obstacle to the pleasure of the general reading experience.

Soucek is a bibliographer, and therefore it is natural that the origins of terms and place names is for him a particular field of expertise. If you have ever wanted to know the meaning of *yurt* (p. 42), *qaghan* (p. 43), *agyz* or *bir* (p. 305) or a host of other Turkic words and expressions you will find the answers here. We are even given a superfluous explanation of the origins of the name Stalin, and a treatise on the spelling of the Soviet ruler's original

Georgian name (p. 282). However, at times such attention to *every* linguistic detail hampers the narrative flow of the work. In addition the detailed and useful geographical overview of the region given by Soucek at the start of his work (pp. 1-45) is almost incomprehensible without access to an adequate map. The maps provided in the book are shoddy in this regard, and although Soucek to his credit points readers in the direction of better and more detailed maps elsewhere, they may be left feeling rather short-changed by a chapter that they cannot use effectively without access to external materials.

This book is a demanding read, and as of necessity the chapters are not always chronological, the narrative jumps are sometimes jarring. For example, having completed a chapter on Central Asia in the 1990s, the reader may be thrown by Soucek beginning his next chapter with a study of events in Xinjiang since 1758 (pp. 262-3). The book covers a great deal of cultural ground, again reflecting Soucek's literary background, and poets, scholars, and artists as diverse as Ibn Sina (or Avicenna, 980-1037), Mir Ali Shir (or Nava'i, 1441-1501) and Sadriddin Ayni (1878-1954) each receive a detailed biography that, again, interrupts the narrative flow. On the other hand the book is extremely weak as military and diplomatic history for while the conquests of the Arabs, Mongols, Timurids and Russians each receive fleeting attention, no coverage is given, for example, as to *why* nomadic military organization was for so many centuries superior to that of its sedentary counterparts. One is told *what* a succession of conquerors did but there is no impression given as to *how* or sometimes even *why* they acted as they did. This can leave the reader with a bland impression of a long succession of military dynasties, each almost indistinguishable from the next.

There is also a more serious underlying question as to the intended audience for this book. As it stands, I feel strongly that the book, despite many admirable qualities, falls between two camps and satisfies neither. As a general guide and introduction it is unlikely to attract the ordinary reader or tourist to the region, being both too dense and too scholarly for most tastes and lacking illustrations or photographs. Yet as a work of reference for the academic it is also flawed, mainly by the very small number of footnotes used and by the "select," i.e., criminally short, bibliography with which either Soucek or his publisher chose to end the work. In addition, the works cited in the footnotes cannot invariably be correlated to the bibliography, always a source of intense irritation to the academic reader. As a work of reference for the academic, the work comes across as rather disorganized — is this a genealogical history, a cultural history, or a lexicon of the Turkic languages? At times it comes across as a diluted blend of all three and more.

Soucek's judgment is also less certain with regard to contemporary events, and a Russophobic tone creeps into parts of the work. In treating the

notoriously corrupt and egoistic President Niyazov of Turkmenistan, Soucek notes Niyazov's adulation of Kemal Ataturk and comments, without irony, that if he [Niyazov] "...sincerely emulate[s] his Turkish hero, he will secure himself an honourable position in Turkmen and world history" (p. 282). This is both to take Niyazov's own pretensions far too seriously and to assume that Kemal Ataturk himself was an admirable figure wholly worthy of emulation, something more than a few scholars and commentators would be willing to question. Economic corruption is also treated as a product of the Soviet Union rather than as perhaps an endemic part of Central Asia's hierarchical society, and Russian loan words are described as "tongue-twisting" for Central Asians (p. 233) compared to Turkic and Iranian ones, evidence again of a subdued Pan-Turkic tone in the work. Overall, however, it is the organizational flaws and the sense of a book being trapped between trying to capture two audiences that most detract from what one feels could otherwise have been a major landmark in the field, but which is, in its existing form, an intellectually dazzling but rather unfocused curate's egg.

Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. viii + 533 pp., bibliography, index. ISBN: 0195136187 (cloth), \$49.95; 0195165438 (paper), \$30.00.

Reviewed by: **Gerard J. Libaridian**, Visiting Professor of History, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., USA, glibarid@umich.edu

The Politicization of Islam is a monumental work by one of the most respected scholars of the Ottoman Empire. In this volume Kemal H. Karpat explores delicate changes and intricate relations in the perception of empire, state, religion and identity within Islamic communities in places as varied and as far as the Ottoman Empire, Russia and Africa. In so doing, the volume also traces the evolution of the search for political legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire, from the dynastic to the nationalist, while exploring the role of religion in the process.

The volume has two main arguments. First, that Islam was politicized not as a response to colonialism, but primarily because of a grass roots movement that found in religion a source of inspiration for regeneration, self-renewal, and progress. By using religion in that fashion the faithful changed religion itself. Although by the end

of the book he recognizes the critical role of the challenge the West represented to Islamic societies, Karpat ascribes a central role to the rise of middle classes and spread of capitalism as well as of intellectuals in the fluid progress toward the idea of nation-state. The second argument is that Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the main actor of this work, also thought of Islam as a religion based on tradition as well as freedom of thought, a religion capable of inspiring regeneration, and thus promoted it as a basis of Ottoman legitimacy and a vehicle for Ottoman policies. In essence, though, there is one story line: the role played by religion in the transformation of Ottoman power into Turkish power.

The author makes important distinctions in the process. He argues, for example, that while in the Ottoman Empire Islamism was used by the state in

search of new bases of legitimacy, in Russia Muslims did not see themselves as part of the state and their exploration of religion served the purpose of changing society. Most importantly, he refuses to separate in real life what in intellectual terms can be and have been defined as distinct directions: Ottomanism, Islamism, Westernism, and Turkishness. Thus he is able to identify the different stages in the development of Turkish nationalism from 1865 to 1936 without forcing a purist model. Islamism, he argues, provided a psychological content to Ottomanism which, in turn, failed to provide an answer to the fundamental problem of the survival of the empire. Hence the recourse to Turkishness.

Karpat weaves his facts and interpretations with the eye of a master, and if occasionally he must stretch them to see the larger pattern, by and large his design is provocative and has validity. This is the kind of work which, even if not completely successful or always accurate in its details, is still valuable since it has a system of thinking to offer and challenges many notions held by social scientists on Islam and the Ottoman Empire. Given the current issues in the international arena, the book should also interest policy makers still trying to decide what to make of Islam.

The work has a number of problems. On a technical level, the documentation is not consistent. Some sections are footnoted in detail, while whole segments roll by without a single reference. Apparently written over a long period of time, the work is also an uneven one. While in the first parts Karpat provides almost a full picture of the interaction between ideas and events, in the latter part, beginning with the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, he resorts to a more limited intellectual history.

Secondly, the work is replete with imprecise and confusing terminology. The author's repeated characterization of Abdul Hamid's state as "modern" — many totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century also qualify as "modern" in many ways — and use of terms such as "globalization" and "counterterrorism" may be intended to evoke sympathy for his interpretation today, but only at the cost of intellectual integrity, historical accuracy, and conceptual precision.

This leads us to another problem which at first might seem marginal but is, in fact, integral to the argument. As is the case in his previous works and that of others of his generation, Karpat is unable to come to terms with the question of the relations between the Ottoman state and non-Muslims and non-Turks. He prefers the simple model that counterpoises the inherent legitimacy and security needs of a state to the "nationalism" and pro-Western sympathies of minorities. If the purpose of Islamism was the survival of the empire, how could non-Muslims feel at home, so to speak, in the new empire? If, at the end of the day, the grievances of the non-Muslims were seen solely as a problem created by Western imperialist powers and the repressive machine of the state, whether under Abdul Hamid II or the Young Turks, what can we make of the "modernity" of the Ottoman state? Karpat often crosses the line between understanding state policy and defending it. In his zeal to reconcile his overall argument with the behavior of the Ottoman state before and during World War I, for example, the author recognizes values such as "dignity and aspirations" when characterizing the actions of Muslim groups who are seeking change in Russia, but only "revolt" and threats to national security when it is Christians or Armenians who are seeking change in the Ottoman Empire. Would it be possible to write a volume on the Soviet Union without referring to the Gulag, on South Africa without apartheid, and of Nazi Germany without the Holocaust? Coming to terms with Ottoman policies toward the various non-Muslim and non-Turkish segments of Ottoman society on the basis of a historical analysis of all aspects of their relations will result in a far better Ottoman and Turkish history.

The author has made a valuable effort and contribution in understanding the process of politicization of Islam. He has certainly proven that Islam was not the dead-end and locked religion many Western writers have made it out to be. Yet it is not all that obvious that the politicization of Islam is the same as the Islamization of politics, not at the end of the Ottoman period, anyway. That is the question that this volume raises.

Sechin Jagchid, *The Last Mongol Prince: The Life and Times of Demchugdongrob, 1902-1966*. Bellingham: Centre for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 1999. xxvii + 480 pp., map, bibliography, index. ISBN 0914584219 (paper), \$50.00.

Reviewed by: **David Sneath**, Director, Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit; University Lecturer, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom, ds114@cam.ac.uk

Prof. Jagchid's long-anticipated biography of the Inner Mongolian leader, Prince De (Demchugdongrob), is an exhaustive personal account by one of the Prince's inner circle.

The Last Mongol Prince charts the turbulent and ultimately tragic political career of Prince De, who emerged from the slow disintegration of local princely power following the collapse of the Qing dynasty to lead the Mongolian Autonomy Movement and head the administrative body for Inner Mongolian self-rule — the Mongolian Political Council of 1934-36. The Council disintegrated in the face of internal division and Japanese military advances, some elements to fight the Japanese, and others such as Prince De, to seek an accommodation with them. At that time it still seemed possible that a viable Inner Mongolian political entity could emerge, albeit at the price of some Japanese influence. But with the establishment of Mengjiang, the Japanese protectorate in Eastern Inner Mongolia, it became increasingly clear that despite the various reformulations of the government he headed, Prince De and his Mongolian administration had little real autonomy.

Prof. Jagchid is at some pains to defend Prince De from charges that he was a willing puppet of the Japanese, taking every available opportunity to illustrate the distance between the prince and his erstwhile allies. He emphasizes, for example, the Prince's rift with Kanai Shoji, the first Japanese Supreme Advisor, his disdain of the Japanese-sponsored term Moko or Mengjiang, and the secret negotiations he sought to open with Chiang Kai-Shek in 1940.

Although in retrospect the impossibility of real autonomy from Japanese control appears starkly obvious to us, Jagchid shows that at the time this was not clear. For a moment, with the establishment of the Mongolian Autonomous State (1941-45) and the replacement of Kanai Shoji with a less disagreeable Supreme Advisor, it seemed as if Prince De could actually win a measure of genuine autonomy from the Japanese. But the Soviet advance into the Japanese satellite states in 1945 shattered Prince De's administration, and he found himself

forced back into an alliance with the Chinese Guomindang against the Communists. Despite rounds of desperate diplomacy, by 1949 the Prince ended up in western Inner Mongolia under the protection of the Ma family warlords. But the anti-Communist alliance that the Prince had established fragmented, and he fled to the Mongolian People's Republic, where the pro-Soviet authorities soon arrested him and sent him to China as a war criminal. The final chapter sees Prince De disappear into the obscurity of the Chinese penal system until his release in 1963 and his death three years later.

Prof. Jagchid, son of a senior princely official, was one of the first generation of Mongolian intellectuals to be university-educated, and he joined Prince De's staff in the late 1930s. As an eyewitness to many of the events he describes, Jagchid is the perfect guide to the twists and turns of the political history of the time.

In 17 chapters and 480 pages Jagchid details the maneuverings of the Prince and other players in the political arena: the succession of councils, committees, and governments; their declarations, treaties, and speeches. Despite its forensic detail, the book's style is accessible and each chapter is divided into a number of clearly titled subsections so that the reader can quickly locate events and persons in the text. It draws upon Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian sources, as well as the author's own documents and recollections, although often it is not clear which of these is being referenced at any given time. There are inconsistencies in the spellings of some names, but these are usually resolved in the index, and this allows the volume to be used as something of a political who's who of the period.

The story has many villains, such as Kanai Shoji, the scheming Japanese Supreme Advisor, Fu Zuoyi, the Han chauvinist warlord, and Li Shouxin, the opportunist Tumet Mongol, a former bandit leader who became a senior figure under the Japanese. For all his faults Prince De is presented as an authentic, if ultimately tragic, Inner Mongolian hero — proud to the point of obstinacy, but by the same token resolute and unbowed in the face of the

storms that rocked and eventually wrecked the various political platforms he struggled to construct.

This biography is also, in part, Sechin Jagchid's own political memoir. The reader is drawn into his strongly colored personal memories of the characters, many of whom we see staring at us in the few, but revealing, photographs at the beginning of the book. Through this biography Jagchid presents the wider history of what he sees as the tragic failure of the Inner Mongolian self-determination

movement, and his analysis contains persistent echoes of the rousing political rhetoric of the struggle itself. This is a rich and indispensable source for students of the history of the region. Its value lies in both the unparalleled detail with which it documents the life of a fascinating figure at a crossroads in Inner Mongolian history, and in the way that it so well represents a particular political perspective on the history of Inner Mongolia.

Erika Weinthal, *State Making and Environmental Cooperation: Linking Domestic and International Politics in Central Asia*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002. ix + 274 pp., map. ISBN: 0262232200 (cloth), \$60.00; 0262731460 (paper), \$25.00.

Reviewed by: **Peter C. Bloch**, Land Tenure Center and Department of Forest Ecology and Management, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., USA, pcbloch@facstaff.wisc.edu

The five former Soviet Central Asian countries have a difficult geography: they are landlocked; their continental climate tends to extreme temperatures and low rainfall; and the bulk of their land area is composed of desert, mountains, or windswept steppe. The principal source of sustenance of the sedentary population for over two millennia has been the rivers flowing through the region, the Syr Darya, the Amu Darya, the Zarafshan, and a few others. The first two are the principal tributaries of the Aral Sea, whose ecological crisis is the centerpiece of Erika Weinthal's book. Weinthal, who teaches Political Science at Tel Aviv University, shows how the new governments opted for cooperation rather than conflict over how to mitigate the desiccation of the Aral Sea, how they reached out to international partners to assist them both strategically and financially, and how the process assisted them in constituting viable independent states in a relatively short time.

The first chapter describes the Aral Sea crisis and introduces the fundamental propositions of the book: internationalization of the crisis played a major role in determining the nature of the emerging states, and also enabled the resolution of potential disputes over the allocation of water among uses and countries via cooperation rather than conflict. Chapter 2 is an overview of "international riparian politics." It puts the Aral Sea basin into global context by comparing other major international river basins in terms of the relative interests and strengths of upstream and downstream states and predicts the types of cooperation implied by these characteristics. Her hypothesis is that upstream and downstream

nations in the Aral Sea basin have "offsetting asymmetries" (as do the Indus and lower Mekong basins) and therefore require third-party intercession to induce cooperation.

Weinthal presents the theory of state-making via environmental cooperation in Chapter 3, and then illustrates how it has worked in the case of the Aral Sea basin in Chapters 4-7. Her primary method was in-person interviews, with about 150 key informants with expertise in water management, agriculture, and energy. These included both nationals and foreigners in non-government organizations (NGOs), governments, and donor agencies.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how agriculture has contributed both to the catastrophic drop in water quality and quantity in the Aral Sea basin and to the political priorities of the new states. Specifically, the cotton monoculture of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan imposed by the Soviet Union and maintained after independence both as a major earner of foreign exchange and as a means of social control, is singled out as the principal culprit in the ecological crisis. Chapters 5 and 6 are the core of the book, describing in detail the processes by which inexperienced governments, donors, NGOs, and researchers developed agreements on water-sharing, international decision-making, and the "side payments" which Weinthal argues were essential lubricants in the negotiations process.

Chapter 7 takes the story to the present, demonstrating that the early agreements — which had essentially been thrust on the governments by

necessity (and the World Bank) — were not sustainable, and that a new set of negotiations would be required to perpetuate the peaceful and rational management of the Aral Sea basin. Weinthal identifies three “negotiation sets”: 1) water management per se; 2) tradeoffs between downstream water and upstream hydroelectric energy; and 3) water, energy, and agriculture, highlighting the importance of water-intensive cotton to the downstream states of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Chapter 8 presents the conclusion that international actors including NGOs, the World Bank and other international agencies, and bilateral donors, played a crucial role in preventing interstate conflict over water resources. Yet Weinthal does not argue, as an anti-globalization advocate might, that these organizations compromised the sovereignty of the five emerging nations. Rather, she sees them as valuable partners in building the capacity of new states to deal with resource management issues.

It is unfortunate that the book makes for somewhat difficult reading. It is quite repetitive, using the same phrases several times in a paragraph

and tens of times in a chapter. The writing is also awkward at times; for example: “Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as upstream riparians...did not behave similar to Slovakia in East-Central Europe that unilaterally diverted water from the Danube” (p. 123) or “the Central Asian governments, in their unsettling physical and political situation...” The book would have benefited from a stronger edit by such a prestigious publisher.

In spite of its editorial flaws, this is an important book, contributing both to the emerging social science of Central Asia and to the international understanding of how nations and outside actors can work together to solve resource-management problems if there is a modicum of good will on most sides. In the past there have been few violent international conflicts whose primary or explicit cause was water resources. In the world’s thirstier future there may be many, unless some of the negotiating approaches identified by Weinthal in the Aral Sea basin story are applied to them before it is too late.

Mar’iam Iandieva and Adam Mal’sagov, eds. *Ingushetiia i Ingushi, Vol I.* Nazran: Memorial and Moskva: Zerkalo, 1999. 496 pp., 16 illus. ISBN: 5888790230. **Mar’iam Iandieva and Bersnak Gazikov, eds. *Ingushetiia i Ingushi, Vol II.*** Moskva: Novaia Planeta, 2002. 686 pp., 18 illus. ISBN: 589776008x.

Reviewed by: **Wolfgang Schlott**, Professor of Cultural and Literary History of Slavic Languages University of Bremen, Research Institute for Eastern Europe, Bremen, Germany, schlott@osteuropa.uni-bremen.de

It is part of the sorrowful heritage of the Soviet regime that small ethnic and national minorities have had hardly any possibility to bring forth autonomous historical research. However, a group of Ingush scholars within the Moscow society “Memorial” have published two volumes of scholarly work dealing with more than a thousand years of Ingush history. Motivated by the fact that a missing written historiography has to be assembled from various sources (history of literature, history of culture, political history, ethnological texts), the editors justify their methodology, pointing to the “permanent danger of extermination to which Ingush people are being exposed by deportation, genocide and by division and shift of territory” (vol. I: 3). The first volume covers over 1,000 years, ending in 1917. It consists of five chapters introduced by a survey on the ancient and medieval history of the Ingush and their relationship to the Chechens in the north of the Caucasus. It is striking that most of the introductory sections concern essential information

on general items like origins, ethnological facts and population statistics from different sources, thus demonstrating how the research was carried out. Among the most interesting questions is when the Ingush population, together with the Chechens, was converted to Islam (8th-9th centuries; vol. I: 254-264).

The second chapter deals with the history of the conquest of the Ingush territory by the Russian Empire. It describes in six chronological steps the formal acceptance of Russian citizenship (1744), punitive expeditions against Ingush rebels, attempts to Christianize the local population, colonization by the Cossacks, the Revolt of Nazran (1858) and national commemoration of the conquest by Russia. It is a striking feature of Ingush history that most of the people (roughly 270,000 as of 1980) living in the region suffered from malnutrition due to having too little arable land, owing to permanent expulsion from their homeland. This continuing battle for survival is the subject of the fourth chapter.

Volume II is completely devoted to a rather restricted, but nevertheless decisive, period of Ingush history. It extends from the revolutionary events in 1917 to the middle of the 1930s, thus describing the ups and downs of post-revolutionary developments. This was the period in which the first "Mountain Republic" (*Gornaia respublika*) and the Civil War combined with the sovietization of Ingushetia to contribute to the annihilation of national identity and the beginning of the Stalinist terror. The editors divided this volume into four extensive chapters: the first two discuss the historical processes from 1917 to 1935, and the remaining two explain the delicate theme of Ingush autonomy as well as the activities of the Ingush in exile. Among the carefully compiled materials from different sources (periodicals, memoirs, letters, cultural magazines) the development of the events leading to the constitutional meetings of the North Caucasian Republic deserves attention, as the facts demonstrate the determination of the small ethnic groups to gain independence from the Russian empire after 1917. This evidence does not exclude that part of the Ingush population that supported the Soviets, a thesis which clearly unfolds in the chapter "The Ingush fighting for the Soviets in the Caucasus" (vol. II: 101-204). One document in particular, an article written by General Anton Denikin, in which the Ingush fighters were called "lanquenets of the Soviet regime," may attract the special attention of historians. What proved to be more cruel was the fate of the Ingush population under the Soviets from 1924 onwards, a period in which the territory was reduced (part of the eastern territory was taken over by the Ossetians, a people living east and south of Ingushetia), and the Soviet administration took decisive steps to suppress the North Caucasian peoples together with neighboring Chechnya.

A very extensive section (200 pages) is devoted to discussion of Ingush emigration in the late twenties when — owing to the increasingly harsh suppression under the Stalinist regime — a small proportion of the population succeeded in fleeing to Turkey or to Western European countries. One of the most astonishing escapes was successfully carried out by a group of prisoners on infamous Solovki Island in the northwest of the Soviet Union. Among them was the Ingush citizen Soserko Malsagov, who published his experiences in this extermination camp and his flight to Finland in *An Island Hell: A Soviet Prison in the Far North* (London 1925). This book was the first authentic documentation of the Gulag in the western hemisphere, where only suspicion and skepticism greeted those witnesses of the terror under the Communist regime.

Both volumes serve as an introduction to a historical process, which is presented with different sorts of texts and illustrated with a few photographs that have documentary value. This method seems excusable, since the editors did not have broad choice of scholarly elaborations of Ingush history. They deserve high praise for their different insights into various fields of social, political and cultural development. Some chapters can be used as guides to the history of a small Caucasian people whose intellectual elite is now reflecting — with the assistance of books like these — upon the reasons for their extremely difficult economic and social situation at the beginning of the 21st century, to which the neighboring Chechen-Russian war also contributes. Other parts of this publication may take over the function of an introduction to the contemporary epoch, when the Soviet regime controlled scholarly research by preventing Ingush scholars from working on their own history.

J. P. Mallory and Victor H. Mair, *The Tarim Mummies, Ancient China and the Mystery of the Earliest Peoples from the West*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. 352 pp., 44 maps, 17 tables, 146 illustrations (including 13 in color), 2 appendices, bibliography, index. ISBN: 0500-051011 (cloth), US \$50.00, Canada \$75.00.

Reviewed by: **Colin Mackerras**, Foundation Professor, School of International Business and Asian Studies, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, c.mackerras@mailbox.gu.edu.au

In 1994 the Tarim mummies "stalked into the world's pressrooms" (p. 7). What this meant was that extremely well preserved corpses dating from as early as 2000 BC came to light in the Tarim Basin in what is now Xinjiang in the far northwest of China

and were given extensive publicity throughout the world. These mummies had features that were quite Western; certainly not Chinese, and some appeared to have had blond hair. A whole host of questions emerged about who these people were, what

languages they spoke, and what their livelihood and technology was like. In particular, the question why Indo-Europeans should have lived in the Tarim Basin so long ago raised very large questions about cultural and ethnic diffusion across the great Eurasian continent.

Many speculated that the Chinese were angry about the discoveries, because they seemed to show that Europeans had been in this part of the world long before the Chinese themselves. The cultural and ethnic influences appeared to have come not from China but from the west of the Eurasian continent. It is well known that such archaeological issues do indeed impinge on contemporary nationalisms. However, despite some obstacles Victor Mair did gain a great deal of cooperation from scholars of the region, and he is particularly enthusiastic about the Chinese archaeologist Wang Binghua. He also received help from Uyghur research associates.

The Uyghurs are the main Turkic people of Xinjiang. In recent times their relations with the Chinese have been distinctly unstable, and sometimes downright hostile. I visited the Xinjiang capital Urumchi in 1999 and saw a small selection of these mummies in the museum there. My impression was that both Chinese and Uyghur specialists regarded them as a matter of immense pride, not of suspicion, because this city and museum were home to such important archaeological remains. The fact is that it is the dryness of the climate there, and not the expert techniques found in such places as Egypt, that has preserved these corpses so well and for so long. As for the mummies in the museum themselves, my reactions were similar to those of others: absolute astonishment at the features and clothes of the corpses, plus amazement that they could last so well over so many centuries. Unfortunately, my experience was limited to the museum in Urumchi and I was not able to visit the sites much further east in Hami described so well in this book.

Specialists and scholars are one side of the story and they get high marks from the authors of this book. Unfortunately, these mummies have indeed become a source of rival cultural nationalisms, including those between the Chinese and the Uyghurs. One of the most famous of them has been called the "Beauty of Krörän" (p. 181). She was discovered north of Lake Lopnur, which is in Xinjiang not far to the east of Urumchi, and has been described by some Uyghurs as "the mother of our nation" (p. 182). Mair has quite a bit to say about the way some Chinese have mistreated the mummies,

probably out of pique for the message they appear to carry. However, he is also quite critical of "misguided" Uyghur nationalists who seize on the mummies "to demonstrate a more ancient claim to their territory than history allows" (p. 180).

The study concludes from the archaeological evidence, including that of the mummies, that the earliest culture of the region was at "the eastern linguistic periphery of the Indo-European continuum of languages whose centre of expansion lay much further to the west, north of the Black and Caspian seas" (p. 317). In other words, the corpses are indeed of people whose ancestors had come from further west, though not necessarily from as far as Europe.

The concern of this book is the diffusion of culture, language and technologies across the Eurasian continent. In this context of course China remains a paramount civilization. There are many references to technologies that originated in China, not further west. The book calls China the world's oldest surviving civilization, which is well known, and quite rightly adds that its contribution to world culture is "massive" (p. 33).

On the other hand, what the Tarim mummies show is that the prehistoric West did indeed make significant contributions to the ancient East. In the final page of text (apart from appendices, index, etc.), the authors sum up "the meaning of the mummies" as follows:

The Tarim Basin has been the arena for contacts between the East and West for some 4,000 years. Not only silk passed along its trade routes but also many of the inventions and ideas of the East. But it was not a one-way road and it also provided a conduit for plants, animals, technology and ideas to the East. Its earliest farmers brought the domestic sheep and wheat into the world of ancient China (p. 332).

What such a formulation does is to allocate immense significance to these mummies. It shows them as the earliest diffusers of the great cultures that contributed so much to shaping the world. Perhaps we have known about the significance of the region before. However, what this book does is establish through the finding and examination of so many mummies that they came from the West to the region, bringing with them such important aspects of livelihood as their textile traditions, languages and livestock. The cultural impact of the Chinese was no doubt enormous, but it shared influence with other

civilizations to an extent a Chinese nationalist might shrink from admitting.

This splendid volume combines the best features of a book aimed at the general reader and a highly academic contribution to scholarship. It is accompanied by magnificent pictures, some of them in color, and maps. Everything is signposted to make it easy for the reader to follow. Many of the chapters are written in conversational language easy for the "general" reader to follow. Though the thick documentation familiar in scholarly books and articles is missing, there is an extensive bibliography and it is quite obvious that both the authors have read widely on their subject. What is perhaps most important is that the second of the authors has undertaken so much field research on the Tarim mummies that the inside jacket of this volume calls him the "instigator of much of the recent research on the Tarim burials."

The book is concerned not only with archaeology and ancient history, but also gives fascinating accounts of medieval history. One such case is that of Khotan, to the southeast of Qashghar. This city was the center of a politically powerful Buddhist culture for many centuries. The great Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Faxian visited Khotan in about 400 C.E. and noted its magnificent monasteries, one housing some 3,000 monks (p. 79). The people were "mild by nature and respectful" and lovers of literature (p. 80). Unfortunately, in the tenth century there was a major series of wars that simply wiped out this civilization. The victors were the Muslims, and the city remains strongly Islamic to this day, despite the onslaught of twentieth-

century secular ideologies. I visited Khotan in 1999. Where the Buddhist culture once flourished there is now virtually nothing but desert. Several people expressed to me the hope that some day either international or Chinese government agencies will give the region enough money to carry out an archaeological excavation on a scale large enough to find the ancient Buddhist civilization. Perhaps they will even find the remains of the enormous monastery that so impressed Faxian.

Another feature of this book is the occasional "boxed" snapshot. These are both interesting and good summaries of a particular aspect of history. One among many of them concerns the great and famous medieval traveler Marco Polo. Many specialists have cast serious doubt on whether Marco Polo ever actually went to China and the book rehearses the arguments but comes to no definite conclusion. It does say that Marco Polo's book has much to tell us about Asian history whether he reached China or not, and that seems a sensible verdict to me.

Both from the point of view of scholarship and of production I find it very difficult to fault this book. It is a joy to look at and read, and to hold in the hand. And it certainly concerns a matter of great moment for the history of humanity. Despite the political sensitivities involved in this subject, the text is fair and balanced and the conclusion argued so effectively that it seems difficult to challenge. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in the cultural and linguistic origins of Eurasian peoples, whether the reader be an academic, student or "general reader."

Sigrid Kleinmichel, *Halpa in Choresm (H'ārazm) und Ātin Āyi im Ferghanatal: Zur Geschichte des Lesens in Usbekistan im 20. Jahrhundert, I-II.* ANOR 4. Berlin: Das arabische Buch, 2000. 2 vols., 363 pp. ISBN: 3860933019, € 24.60.

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The title of the book promises to introduce us to the figures of *ātin āyi* in the Ferghana Valley and the *halpa* in Khorezm, professional women who recite texts recorded in the Arabic script on ritual occasions, and thereby to allow us an insight into the history of reading in Uzbekistan in the twentieth century. The book more than fulfills its promise. The author, a turkologist with a primary interest in the literary output of the Turkic-speaking world, seeks answers to the following questions: What is the role

of the ritualized recital of texts in contemporary Uzbekistan? What are its antecedents? What relationships exist between texts, their readers, and their audience? The starting point reflects the author's literary interests, inasmuch as it focuses on the texts and their reception. However, her research methods go beyond the conventional methods of literary scholars. Dr. Kleinmichel has spent extended periods in Uzbekistan and employs methods borrowed from the social sciences, including

participant observation, interviews, the collection of life histories, and the recording and photographing of texts.

The two-volume work is divided into six main chapters. The first five chapters present the results of the fieldwork, while the sixth, which is almost as long as the previous five together, gives a detailed description of all the texts used by *halpa* and *ātin āyi* in modern Uzbekistan.

The difficult research conditions are described in the Introduction, which continues with a discussion of basic terminology and the comparative perspective. Although there is a great deal of overlap between the activities of *halpa* and *ātin āyi*, Kleinmichel is careful to tease out the many differences, which she attributes to different local traditions. The nomadic tradition of Khorezm stands in sharp contrast to the sedentary tradition of the Ferghana Valley. The texts in question and the activities of the women were ignored both by folklorists and literary scholars during the Soviet period, when there was an official ban on the ritualized public recital of these texts (often referred to as *halpachilik*). Texts in the Arabic script started to circulate openly again following Uzbekistan's independence.

Chapter 1 gives a description of how women can become *halpa/ātin āyi*. The typical elements of this process in Khorezm include a major illness (a characteristic feature of Central Asian shamanism), pilgrimages to holy places, spending the night in a cemetery, and initiation dreams. For women in the Ferghana Valley, an ability to read the Arabic script is perceived as sufficient qualification to become an *ātin āyi*. Chapter 2 analyzes the functions of the *halpa/ātin āyi* in daily life, of which the most important seems to be the recital of texts at commemorative ceremonies for the dead. But the "reciting women" are also invited to other life-cycle rituals (cradle rituals, weddings) and religious ceremonies connected or unconnected to the Islamic calendar. Some also acquire additional functions as healers or fortunetellers. Although both *halpa* and *ātin āyi* recite a wide range of religious texts, the recitation of the Qur'an occupies such a central place in the activities of the *ātin āyi*, that they often organize reading circles for local women with the aim to teach them to read the Holy Book. Chapter 3 looks at the relationship of the *halpa/ātin āyi* to the texts which they recite, exploring details such as (un)awareness of authorship and the copying, preserving, and disguising of books during times of

repression. Chapter 4 considers the nature of the performance, how exactly "reading" is understood, defined, and realized in different regions by individual women, and the sacred as well as literary value that they themselves attribute to the texts. In Chapter 5 the focus is on the social context of *halpachilik* in contemporary Uzbekistan; the chapter attempts to reconstruct its history, and considers when women are most likely to turn to the professional recital of sacred texts, the reactions of husbands, and the relationship of the "reading women" to the local representatives of the state. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the life histories of four *halpa* and three *ātin āyi*. Chapter 6 finally introduces the texts one by one. A brief description of the contents of each text, the various titles under which it is known, local knowledge of the author, and a listing of the occasions when it is typically recited, is augmented by references to the work in the scholarly literature, the existence of manuscript versions in various library holdings, and lithograph editions.

Although the book deals primarily with contemporary Uzbekistan, there are numerous references to Soviet and occasionally pre-Soviet practice. The temporal embeddedness of the various practices, developed through numerous small vignettes, makes the book particularly interesting. The author concludes that, in spite of the official ban and repeated campaigns against religious literature, the tradition of women reciting texts recorded and transmitted in the Arabic script has never been completely broken. Local interpretations and realization of the ban varied in time and space. In contemporary Uzbekistan, old Chaghatay texts, which in the Soviet period were preserved and transmitted privately, are being reprinted and *halpachilik* in general enjoys considerable public recognition. But the author is careful not to present this tradition as monolithic or unchanging. She emphasizes the emergence of new elements such as the introduction of new poetry to the old text corpus as well as changes in the regional distribution of sacred texts caused by the out-marriage of some bearers of the tradition.

The book also deals with many aspects of Uzbek social life and their transformation over time, including notions of sacred and profane, pollution and ritual purity, the meanings of religious and life cycle rituals, magic, healing, and the informal transmission of knowledge. Although much of the book reveals the world of women, since the texts are recited by women for women, Kleinmichel pays due

attention to the influence of the male world and patriarchal values. She is thus able to reveal important details about women's social rights and obligations. By placing reading within a wider social context she also affords us insight into local social worlds and their political and economic determinants. In presenting a wealth of material the

author carefully identifies trends while also noting departures from the rule. She distinguishes normative expectations from lived practice and, by skillfully integrating the temporal and spatial dimensions, brings a comprehensive and deeply humanistic perspective to the study of modern Uzbek women.

Levon Abrahamian and Nancy Sweezy, eds., *Armenia: Folk Arts, Culture, and Identity*. Photography edited by Sam Sweezy. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001. xi + 312 pp., illustrations, map. ISBN 0253337046 (cloth), \$49.95.

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This book is an interesting and enlightening self-reflection on Armenian identity by a large number of Armenian scholars. The general theme is clear from the title: Armenian identity is a complex and unique reality built on the interaction of many deeply rooted ancient elements that are still present in the life of modern Armenian society. The image that is presented is one of a culture building cumulatively over time, from prehistory to the present, creating a sense of continuity in heritage for the Armenian nation. The basic structure of the book re-enforces this theme, with each of its six sections building a picture of the interaction of people, place, and culture.

The first section is "Origins," which tells the story of the inhabitants starting from the point of early human habitation and continuing through to the early 20th century. From there, the book progresses to "Symbols of Armenian Identity," which lays out those basic elements of thought that form the basis of a historical Armenian culture and their physical representations in the world. From this point, the book moves to physical representations of Armenian culture, but still keeping the people close to the subjects covered. "Settlements," "Dwellings," and "Inhabitants" discuss how the physical architecture of Armenians reflects their worldview, and how they interact with that architecture. The next two chapters cover "Crafts" and how they interact with the population. "Artifacts and Artisans" is further broken down by medium, with each chapter discussing in turn, first the physical, "Wood," "Clay," "Copper," then displaying forms, "Carpets" and "Needle Arts." Each of these chapters discusses the meaning of the medium and how it is produced, as well as the customs of the artisans that produce it. The next chapter deals with "Personal

Adornment," and focuses on two main elements, "Costume" and "Jewelry." The final chapter, "Fight, Feast, and Festival," as its title indicates, deals with culture, both old and new, and connects modern cultural expressions to ancient traditions.

The book is physically larger than a standard textbook, but this allows a lot of space for pictures, and the work is lavishly illustrated with pictures on almost every page. These pictures provide clear and very striking examples of all the various issues addressed in the text. They are not only used to provide examples of the artistic or cultural elements described, but are also often presented to show the connections between ancient forms and modern Armenian culture. Unfortunately, some of the most impressive items are pictured in black and white, and some of the highly intricate pieces are presented in frames too small for the fine detail to be appreciated, but this is a minor issue given the effectiveness of the pictures to support the text.

Overall, the book is a well written and presented work that seeks to explain the Armenian view of the interrelationship between the topics presented. Each of the subjects discussed is clearly presented by Armenian experts in the field of concern, and when coupled with the photographs the book makes a strong impression. In addition to the main text, the book also provides a glossary of Armenian terms and an extensive bibliography of over 200 sources (mostly in Armenian, but many in English) on the subjects discussed in the work. This work should be of interest to anyone who wants to look at how Armenians in general, and the Armenian academic community in particular, view the issues of history, culture, and identity in the present, and how deeply historical consciousness permeates all aspects of the issue of culture for modern Armenia.