

BOOK REVIEWS

BLUM, S. D., JENSEN, L. M., eds.: *China Off Center. Mapping the Margins of the Middle Kingdom*. Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press 2002. 402 pp. ISBN 0-8248-2577-2.

The publication under review is devoted to a complex and rewarding issue, namely it tries to offer a picture of China which is not focused on the centre, but stresses the importance of the border and periphery for the understanding of contemporary China. The margins of the supposedly homogeneous core of the Chinese civilization are understood in a very diverse context, be it in the geographical, ethnic, social linguistic, sexual, economical or cultural sense. The publication is an outcome of a course offered by the editors, Susan D. Blum and Lionel M. Jensen, to American students at the Yunnan University (which, with its peripheral position, is certainly a good location for discussing these matters) in the early 1990s. In the preface, the editors discuss the sources of the unity of China (history, language and culture), and they deal also in greater length with the sources of diversity of China (geography, ethnicity, society and culture) which are in the focus of the publication. The papers included in the volume were for the most part published earlier in journals and books and only a relatively small part was written especially for the publication under review. This approach – which is understandable as these texts were used as course reader – is to a certain extent a weak point of the publication, as it collects papers from authors which approached the central topic using a rich number of methods. One can find contributions which are very informative, innovative, interpretative and analytical (for example the contribution by Dru C. Gladney “Ethnoreligious Resurgence in a Northwestern Sufi Community”, pp. 106-126) side by side with essay which are basically ethnographic reports, giving very detailed descriptions of sometimes too marginal issues (for example the contribution of the late A. Doak Barnett “Chinese Turkestan: Xinjiang”, pp. 71-105), as they were originally written with a different purpose. On the other hand, one can put it in a positive way – this colourful mosaic of contributions can illustrate to the students a variety of different approaches to the central issue of the volume. And this volume is intended mainly for the students and can be used as reader in courses dealing with the margins of China.

The publication is arranged into three main parts which are entitled “The Center and the Noncenter”, “Geographic Margins”, and “Social and Cultural Margins” and these parts are further divided into more focused groupings of contributions according to their content, which helps the reader to get an overview of the rich number of issues tackled by the authors. Every part and every individual contribution is introduced by a short but very informative introduction by the editors, which enables the reader to understand it in a broader context. I will limit my interest to only a few of the essays included in the volume which I found for various reasons valuable. Edward Friedman in his “Symbols of Southern Identity: Rivaling Unitary Nationalism” (pp. 31-44) discusses the rise of a southern-oriented national identity centred – in the historical perspective – around the legacy of the Warring States Period state of Chu in the post-Mao period, which is a kind of counter-narrative to the officially sanctioned version of the northern

origin of Chinese civilizations. This tendency was reflected for instance also by the “searching for roots” (*xungen*) literary movement in the 1980s. Dru C. Gladney offers to the reader a detailed analysis of the, in his words, ethnoreligious resurgence in a Muslim Chinese (*Hui*) community in the Ningxia Province which started in the early 1980s. Data collected during repeated field research illustrate the various social, economic and religious aspects of this process (from a comparative perspective it is interesting to note that a similar process, in which there is a close link between the ethnicity and the distinctive religious tradition, has started in Tibet) in regard to the neighbouring Han population, the state and the worldwide Muslim community, *umma*. The paper by Mary S. Erbaugh “The Secret History of the Hakkas: The Chinese Revolution as a Hakka Enterprise” (pp. 185-213) deals with the role of Hakkas in the Communist Revolution and in a broader sense with the issue of ethnic identity in modern China. The author mentions also the history of the migration of Hakkas in China. Andrew F. Jones in his “The Politics of Popular Music in Post-Tiananmen China” (pp. 291-307) discusses the birth of rock music in China, the attitude of the state to this subculture and the use of rock music as a medium for political protest.

Due to the fact that some of the contributions were published earlier and use data from the late 1980s and early 1990s (for instance the two chapters on sexual behaviour and on the homosexuality) their conclusions are valid only in a limited way, as Chinese society has undergone rapid changes in the 1990s. This illustrates that the central topic of the publication under review was not and could not be exhausted as it encompasses a rich number of particular issues which are central to our understanding of contemporary China and could be not squeezed into one volume. To pick up the cartographic terminology of the subtitle, there are numerous other white places which are to be mapped. The present volume has successfully started this important undertaking.

Martin Slobodník

WITTRICH, Michaela: *Der arabische Dialekt von Āzax*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2001. xxiv + 212 pp., br. ISBN: 3-447-04377-6. DM 118.

The scholarly context for the study of Mesopotamian and (South-East) Anatolian dialects has been created by Haim Blanc (1964) in terms of *qeltu* dialects. The primary investigation within the newly created frame has led to the constitution of an important and prestigious branch of Arabic dialectology. The latter development is mainly due to the amazing results of Otto Jastrow's field work in the area that constitutes the starting point of a quite specific dialectological tradition.

The present monograph is a full-scale description of the major characteristics of the Arabic spoken in the Turkish district capital Āzax or Idil numbering cca 13,000 inhabitants. Most of them are Kurdish speaking Moslems living in the neighbourhood of an Arabic speaking Christian minority. The Āzaxis, considering themselves Arabized Arameans, are mostly bilingual: besides Arabic (the subject of this monograph), they speak the language of their Kurdish neighbours. The formally educated have an additional (oral and writing) competence in Turkish.

The monograph, a further development of the author's doctoral dissertation *Grammatik des arabischen Dialekts von Āzax /Südostanatolien/* (University of Heidelberg, 1999), is mainly based on the author's field-work with the Āzaxi immigrants into Ger-