

Book review: Karl E. Ryavec: A Historical Atlas of Tibet; London: The University of Chicago Press 2015, ISBN 978-0-226-73244-2

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time, to reach out to the social, religious and ritual practices of public spheres and of ‘marginal’ communities which constituted the reality of the monarch’s domain” (p. 140). The strength of these ritual events was their wide social participation. Chattopadhyaya aptly calls them “ritual subversion”. And one can plainly agree with him to define these social ritual events as the result of the convergence of Brahmanical orthodoxy and popular tradition (*laukika*, derived from *loka*, “people”). This ritual convergence of orthodoxy and *laukika* indicates a successful facet of “Unity in Diversity”, although mostly only at the subregional level of early kingdoms. As a rare example at the regional level Chattopadhyaya refers to Puri’s famous Jagannath cult.

His seventh essay, “Accommodation and Negotiation in a Culture of Exclusionism. Some Early Indian Perspectives”, begins with a critical observation on the notion of “composite culture”, an expression conceived “in the context of a fast-paced growth of nationalist ideology”. According to Chattopadhyaya’s interpretation, this stands in direct contradiction to the early Indian, particularly Brahmanical, thinkers and their exclusivism. He reiterates the fact that notions such as the “fundamental unity of India” and “composite culture” are recent accomplishments. But he also emphasises the need to “understand how India as we observe it today, evolved with variations, contradictions and confrontations as a continuum” (p. 164). He concludes his essay with a statement that directly leads up to his address to the Indian History Congress. India’s cultural development was based not on “homogenization from a hegemonic source but [on] interpenetration in diversity and of emergence of symbols of universal recognition” (p. 182). This statement is of fundamental significance and paradigmatically represents the essence of this volume and its eight articles.

Hermann Kulke

KARL E. RYAVEC, *A Historical Atlas of Tibet*. Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015. 202 pages, 49 maps, \$45.00. ISBN 978-0-226-73244-2

A Historical Atlas of Tibet by Karl Ryavec far exceeds expectations, in that it is not merely a set of maps depicting the geographical changes experienced by the Tibetan territories throughout different historical periods. On the contrary, the book presents a comprehensive analysis of the different eras that shaped the development of the region we now call Tibet, illustrating developments on the Tibetan Plateau since the first evidence of human activity, which can be traced back as far as 30,000 BC (Map 9) until the end of the 20th century, by

which time the majority of land inhabited by Tibetans had been incorporated into the People's Republic of China (Maps 47–49).

In his atlas, Karl Ryavec skilfully turns the available primary and secondary texts covering the historical development of Tibet into maps, tracing the significant events that influenced the creation of pastoral and farming societies, the establishment of local power entities, such as the individual Tibetan kingdoms, the spread of Buddhism and the changing power of the various Bonpo and Buddhist sects, as well as the cultural and political leverage of neighbouring ethnic groups, tribes and empires. The atlas clearly depicts the relations of the rise and fall of the Tibetan Kingdoms of Zhangzhung (Maps 10–11), Guge (Maps 17 and 30–31), Derge (Map 41) and Nangchen (Map 42), as well as the growth and decrease in influence of the Lhasa Ganden Podrang administration (Maps 33–37) to the spread of Bon and Buddhism (Maps 12, 15–16, 18–19 and 25–27) and the spread of influence of the Mongols (Map 25) and the Chinese (Map 28). The cultural and political shifts are demonstrated through the construction of temples and monasteries, trade centres, centres of administration, and forts and military garrisons.

The historical atlas is divided into four major parts, each focusing on a specific period of Tibetan history. In each part, a comprehensive summary of the main events from each period is accompanied by and visualised in a series of detailed maps, which also carefully depict the changes in urbanisation and demography and shifts in secular as well as religious power. The first part concerns the prehistoric and ancient periods up to 600 AD and maps not only important archaeological sites of evidence for human occupation of the Tibetan Plateau (Map 9), but also the establishment of the ancient cultural and political centre of Zhangzhung in Western Tibet, showing the locations of castles, fortresses and royal residences (Map 10). Part two depicts the imperial period of the Yarlung Kingdom and the shift of the political centre towards Central Tibet (Maps 11 and 12). The third part focuses on the period of disunion between 900 and 1642, specifically through the diffusion of Buddhism into different schools (Map 15) and the establishment of parallel centres of authority. It includes a closer look at the Tibetan Kingdom of Guge (Maps 17 and 18) in Western Tibet and the Tsongkha Kingdom in the East (Map 21). Maps 22–26 show important administrative changes in the Tibetan areas that followed the establishment of Mongol rule over certain parts of the Tibetan Plateau and Maps 28 and 29 depict the return to Tibetan administration under the Pakmodrupa rule. The final part, part four, then concentrates on the period of the rule of the Dalai Lamas and the Ganden Podrang in Lhasa.

The individual maps treat the historical developments on the Tibetan Plateau not only from a Lhasa-centred perspective. The atlas describes all four macroregions of Tibet, i.e., Ngari, U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham, “where population and agricultural resources historically concentrated in the river valleys”

(p. 14), and offers separate maps showing political and religious developments in these regions, which were themselves centres of Tibetan culture with their own administrative systems.

The well-elaborated maps clearly show the interrelationship between religious influence and economic and political power (Maps 13, 22–23, 25–28, 32 and 43–45) and are able to support or contradict claims of the territorial control of, for example, Mongol tribes or the Chinese imperial court (Maps 22 and 25). Moreover, the maps also help to illuminate the less clear links such as between the existence of functioning administrative networks and local political and religious authority and climate change (Map 18).

Presenting historical narratives in the form of maps allows us to view the historical events and their complex backgrounds from new perspectives. Providing unique perspectives from the viewpoint of the various Tibetan centres of political, religious and economic influence, the Historical Atlas of Tibet is a valuable tool for all those who seek to understand historical developments on the Tibetan Plateau and the complex interrelationship between Tibetans and their neighbouring regions.

Jarmila Ptackova

RAINER WERNING / HELGA PICHT (eds), *Brennpunkt Nordkorea: Wie gefährlich ist die Region? Berichte, Daten und Fakten*. Berlin: edition berolina, 2018. 192 pages, €9.99. ISBN 978-3-95841-088-6

In response to the latest nuclear and missile crises as well as the increase of media (and policy) attention to North Korea, Rainer Werning and Helga Picht have released a timely publication. The book at hand is an edited volume, consisting of essays by the editors and other authors. The range of authors runs parallel to the range of topics being discussed: from the latest crises to the Korean War, from cultural insights to travel reports and regional comparisons. Moreover, the annex (pp. 178–187) provides facts on the isolated state, such as geographic data, national holidays – which all have political meaning of some sort – and the structure of the political system. Such a list of objective facts is not trivial; the scarcity, dispersion and ambiguity concerning data on North Korea demand the continuous compilation of available and verified statistics.

The academic (and social) objective is explicit throughout the book. The editors aim to provide background information and shed light on often neglected aspects of the ongoing conflict. This objective of clarification has resulted in a book that focuses mainly on discussing actions taken by the US and