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***On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society:
Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China.* Edited by
TRINE BROX and ILDIKÓ BELLÉR-HANN.
Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2014 xvi + 352 pp.
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Colin Mackerras

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structure” (p. 188) of local peoples. The book could also have benefited from a stronger editorial hand in eliminating repetition. Nevertheless it is a valuable contribution and will be of particular interest for use in the classroom.

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On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China

Edited by TRINE BROX and ILDIKÓ BELLÉR-HANN

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xvi + 352 pp. £18.99

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This book collects various articles about China’s two most sensitive ethnic minority areas, namely the Tibetan and Uyghur, in essence the country’s south-western and north-western regions. The Tibetan areas are spread over several province-level units, while the Uyghur are concentrated mostly in Xinjiang. There is a consistent theme that revolves around the relative failure to achieve the state goal of the “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui*) in the first decade of the 21st century. The contributors to the book are all specialists and the great majority have carried out intensive field research in their areas of expertise. In that there is a coherent theme and each chapter contains genuine contributions to our understanding of important topical problems relating to ethnic affairs, this book is definitely a substantial contribution to the literature in its field. It covers a range of fields, from human rights, labour, aspects of the economy, to language, the environment, television, religion and gender relations.

One of the areas where the book aspires to make a contribution is in considering the Tibetan areas and Xinjiang together, rather than separately, which is far more normal. I think the editors are right that in some ways the two areas and populations are directly subject to comparison and contrast. For instance, they are the two that have caused the greatest headaches for the central government. In both, religions exert profound influence and historically both ethnic groups have been bridges to peoples outside China. But of course there are big differences too, as the cultures of the two regions, the religions and the ethnicities of the regions’ people are very different, raising their own issues and with their own achievements.

My own view is that to consider the two together is perfectly legitimate and does give rise to interesting joint analyses and insights. What is in some ways disappointing is that in fact most of the chapters deal with only one of the two. Only the introductory chapter and the second one by Andrew Fischer, about labour transitions, social inequalities and the structural bases of ethnic discrimination, make any attempt to consider both Tibetans and Uyghurs or seriously to draw general conclusions that cover both.

There is a reason why it is difficult to deal with the two regions and peoples comparatively. To understand a people at the depth that applies in virtually all the chapters here, it is very useful, even necessary, to know their language. Very few specialists know both Tibetan and Uyghur. Of the two editors, one is specialist on the Tibetans, the other the Uyghurs.

The whole idea of the “harmonious society” derives from former president Hu Jintao, who put it forward as an ideal for China in 2005. The success of such a concept is very difficult to measure, as the editors recognize, but this collection of articles has made a real attempt to apply economic, political, cultural and educational

criteria. Though most are micro-studies in the sense that they examine not only one theme but even one place, all do add valuable insights. The conclusion is that patterns of harmony and resistance are somewhat different in these two far western regions than in other parts of China, even including ethnic areas such as those in Inner Mongolia or Yunnan.

One chapter I found of particular interest was the one by Chris Hann on language instruction among the Uyghurs of Xinjiang. I use it as an example to show the kinds of theory and content of the individual chapters. Hann draws on the theory of Ernest Gellner, who believed in the need for all people in multiethnic states to use a common language and focused attention on Eastern Europe, and makes comparisons with a similar concept by Ma Rong, who believes that all peoples in China should know standard Chinese. In the Tibetan and Uyghur areas, Ma thinks that it is only in this way that ethnic minorities can effectively compete with the Han majority in the employment market. However, Hann's finding is that excessive demand for Uyghurs in Xinjiang to know Chinese is one of the contributors to a rise in tension. Interestingly, and I think validly, he considers that pressure, and even compulsion, to learn Chinese has actually increased ethnic cultural identity and pride.

The scholarly appurtenances, bibliographies, documentation and so on, are all excellent. Generally speaking the book is very well written and edited and reflects very well on the publisher, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies. All the chapters are excellent, and are certainly important and interesting contributions in their own field. However, I finished reading the book with the feeling that the merits of this book lie more in the individual studies than in the fact that they have been collected into a single book.

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Taming China's Wilderness: Immigration, Settlement and the Shaping of the Heilongjiang Frontier, 1900–1931

PATRICK FULIANG SHAN

Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014

xii + 227 pp. £63.00

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The title of this monograph by Patrick Fuliang Shan encapsulates its argument: Han Chinese immigration and settlement in Heilongjiang from 1900–1931 brought about the “taming” of China's last great “wilderness.” Within that wilderness, as he describes it, “nature was dominant and the inhabitants depended upon it for survival, but newcomers moved in, changed the land, overwhelmed the native population, exploited the natural resources and created their own society” (p. 1).

The turning point came in 1904, when the Qing Empire lifted the last remaining restrictions on Han Chinese migration and settlement in Heilongjiang to build what Shan terms a “human shield” capable of blocking ongoing incursions by the Russian Empire. Although banditry was a persistent problem in the region, by 1931 the availability of land, the lure of economic opportunities, and the official policy of fortifying the frontier (*shibian*) had drawn some four million migrants to Heilongjiang from Shandong and other parts of north China. Shan casts the resulting “integration of the Heilongjiang frontier region into the dominant Chinese political,