

and used all the evidence they could muster, however obscure and esoteric, to support their case. In the end, the Tajiks gained some additional land, but this fell short of their hopes and (perhaps unrealistic) expectations.

This book makes an important new contribution to the scholarly literature on the Central Asian region. It does not present Tajik–Uzbek relations in a simplistic black-and-white fashion; neither does it demonize Moscow and the Communist Party. Rather, it illustrates the contradictions and complexities of the period, bringing a rare sense of balance to the narrative. Finely researched and fluently written, it will satisfy the specialist but will not present a daunting challenge for the general reader.

Shirin Akiner

OLIVIER ROY:

The New Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Birth of Nations.

xxiii, 222 pp. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007. £16.99.

ISBN 978 1 84511 552 4.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000676

This work was originally published in French in 1997. An English translation appeared in 2000. It has now been reproduced yet again, this time in a “newly updated version”. The promotional statement on the back cover (presumably written by the publisher) states that in this new edition the author “examines the political development of Central Asia, from the Russian conquest to the ‘War on Terror’ and beyond”. I am at a loss to understand the justification for this claim. Apart from a rather inconsequential “Prologue” of just over four pages (which wrongly dates the violence in Andijan and subsequent closure of the US base in Uzbekistan to 2006, instead of 2005), I have been unable to find any indication that this book has been updated. The last events mentioned in the final chapter of the new edition refer to 1996–97. The bibliography does not extend beyond works published in the mid-1990s, with the exception of one published in 1998, for which the bibliographic details are incorrect.

In my review of the 2000 edition of this book, I pointed out that the Soviet-era modernization of Central Asia “radically reshaped the public domain and influenced many areas of private life”. I highlighted the significance of free and universal education, the emancipation of women and “the role of the Communist Party, not only as an ideological force, but as a channel for social mobility”. Developments such as these shaped the “new” Central Asia, yet Roy either ignored them or else deemed them worthy of no more than a cursory mention. Instead, I suggested in my review, he had adopted an “orientalizing” approach that picked out the exotic elements in Central Asian societies without attempting to set them in context. I stand by this today, but I would now go further and say that this attitude, which at the time was shared by many in the West (United States and European Union member states), obscured the realities of the situation. To take but one example, Roy’s confident assumption that there would be a de-linking from Russia, and a concomitant rise in the influence of the United States, is symptomatic of a wider failure to grasp the complexity of regional dynamics. The result of these miscalculations has been that Western policies in Central Asia have been largely ineffective.

The Central Asian states gained independence unexpectedly, without prior preparation. The early 1990s were marked by trauma and upheaval. They could have

descended into chaos and conflict. In fact, with the exception of the civil war in Tajikistan (the peace treaty signed in 1997 is still holding) the transition from Soviet republic to independent statehood has been remarkably orderly. The changes that have taken place over the past seventeen-odd years are enormous. Certainly these states have many problems, some inherited, some of their own making. Yet they have also initiated serious and innovative measures to address these problems. Inevitably, they have not always been successful. They are, after all, following new and untried paths. However, in all these states there is a sense of direction and purpose. They are not looking for “mentors” or “patrons”, but partners with whom they can co-operate on a basis of equality and mutual benefit. If the West (governments, business corporations, non-governmental organizations and so on) wishes to engage with these states, a sober, nuanced understanding of regional developments is essential. Surely it is time to relegate “orientalist” interpretations to the realm of historiography.

Shirin Akiner

EAST ASIA

CHEN JINHUA:

Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician: The Many Lives of Fazang (643–712).

(Sinica Leidensia.) xviii, 542 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2007. €139.

ISBN 978 90 0415613 5.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000688

Fazang is one of the leading intellectual and religious figures of medieval China; the Buddhist monk is credited with the *de facto* founding of the Huayan school, reputedly the most philosophical tradition of Chinese Buddhism. Its abstruse insight into the interpenetration of the existing world, phenomenal or noumenal, and its elaborate explanation have been its main hallmark for centuries in East Asia, and have attracted a great deal of attention from the West. It is little wonder that scholarly publications on this tradition have focused on discovering various aspects of this unfathomable world view, overshadowing the exploration of the historical background which is in fact wedded to the development of Huayan ideas. Chen Jinhua’s new book attempts to remedy this situation, and not only does it explore several aspects of Fazang’s life which were previously unexplored, but it also challenges many old concepts suggested by historical sources.

The conventional view of Fazang is well stated by Ming-wood Liu in his PhD thesis (“The teaching of Fa-tsang: an examination of Buddhist metaphysics”, University of California, 1974), which includes the most detailed treatment of Fazang’s biography prior to the book under review. “The image we have of him is that of a highly intelligent and erudite monk, who spent most of his life diligently translating and commenting on religious texts, as well as composing original treatises of his own. Like most famous Buddhist masters of his time, he apparently saw little contradiction between the other-worldly ideal of Buddhism and the wealth and prestige associated with mundane existence; and even though there was no indication that he had ever actively gone out to court favour, he obviously