

Lybien. Geschichte-Landschaft-Gesellschaft-Politik (Hg. Fritz Edlinger, Erwin M. Ruprechtsberger), Vienna, Promedia Druck- und verlagsges, 2009, 241 p.

For some very obvious political reasons, the attention of International Community, on both media and academic level, has grown in the last years toward the situation in Libya, Arabic country from Northern Africa. This volume is the result of the efforts of several Austrian and other German-speaking scholars, whose main purpose has been to set up a complete synthesis, for all those who are interested in this specific issue, from the very basic knowledge related to the country's general past and geography to several contemporary and very specific issues, like the famous Lockerbie incident, the travel description of the Austrian traveler Ludwig Salvator in 1873 to Libya or the issue of the Tuareg community in Libya. The two coordinators of the volume are both well known specialists in the issue, although their different type of intellectual formation could suggest different ways of approach: Fritz Eblinger, beside his studies in history, German studies and political sciences and his academic work in these fields, is currently the general secretary of "Gessellschaft für Österreichisch-Arabische Beziehungen" from Vienna, while Erwin Ruprechtberger is a well-qualified scholar in archeology and classics. As for the authors of the 13 studies that are enclosed in the volume, the eldest one is Gottfried Tichy, born in 1942, Professor in geology and paleontology, while the youngest one, Eva Bund, born in 1984, was still in the moment of the publishing of this volume an MA student in cultural geography and pedagogy, having her major interests in Arab communities and migration issues. The wide variety of topics and intellectual formation of the authors are giving to this book a real multidisciplinary background.

Signed by one of the editors, Erwin M. Ruprechtsberger himself, the first study deals with the pre-history and history of Libya before its Arab conquest. Having as title "*Libyen- urgeschichte bis frühislamische zeit*", it synthesizes the history of the area from the Paleolithic to the end of the Byzantine domination. The following study, signed by the same author, is dealing with the issue of the Garamant state, a nation mentioned for the first time by Herodotus, probably from Sahara, whose rule ended before the Roman conquest. In his study, "*Geschichte Libyens in islamischer Zeit*", Herbert Eisenstein makes a synthesis of Muslim Libya, focusing upon Cyrenaica and Tripoli, from its Arab conquest to the end of Italian colonial rule in World War II. Rudolf Agtner's work is a classical study in diplomatic history and deals with the activity of Austrian diplomats on Libyan soil between 1726 and 1974. The study gives less importance to presenting the evolution of global politics in the period treated, probably considering that it has to be part of basic culture of every Specialist: it rather focuses on positivist manner on presenting data, using concrete data, lists of names and a lot of information from original documents of Austrian diplomacy. Brigitta Mader's study is an interesting – in a more belletristic definition, "lovely" – piece of work regarding Ludwig Salvator's journey from 1873. The whole study is abundantly illustrated by drawings representing Ludwig Salvator, which makes the whole study to be more pleasant to be read.

The study signed by Maria Steiner, an Austrian expert of theater and film history, is entitled "*Die Beziehung zwischen Bundeskanzler Bruno Kreisky und*

Lybiens Revolutionsführer Muammar al-Gaddafi” and makes an introduction on issues of contemporary Libya, through an Austrian point of view. By using a prosopographic approach, it refers to the friendship between Bruno Kreisky and the Libyan dictator, until the death of Kreisky in 1990 and offers illustrations from Bruno Kreisky Archive. Almut Besold’s “*Lybien gezielte Annäherung an den Westen*” is a synthetic analysis of evolution of post-World War II Libyan foreign policy, focusing upon the country’s relations with Western powers – the USA and major European –. It also makes a comparison between the approach of the USA’s and the European Community’s foreign policies towards Libya, with special accent on years of the 21st century. Ines Kohl’s study about Tuaregs proposes the marks of inter- and multidisciplinary approach, having strong marks of ethnographic research and methodology, and relying upon the author’s socio-anthropological intellectual formation. The last subchapter is dealing also with the possible future of Libyan Tuareg community, having the options to stay in a united Libya or to follow a separatist way: this later one is probably not supported by Arab countries in general but could open new perspectives in the region especially for the emerging power of China, which already has a strong presence and influence all over sub-Saharan Africa. Gottfried Tichy’s study is even more interdisciplinary, and analyzes the impact of geographical and geological realities over the life of people from Libya. Konrad Schliephake focuses on Libyan issues related to natural resources, especially to energy- and water supply management, their strong points and weaknesses, and also the possible future challenges that are expecting in these fields’ management in Libya on state-level economy. The following two studies are descriptive-analytic ones and deals with larger issues like the analysis of Libyan population and economics, based on data of recent and current statistics. The enclosing chapter is written by a jurist, Yvonne Schmidt, and deals with the impact of the famous Lockerbie incident over international public opinion, which transformed Gadhafi’s state into a rogue, terrorist state, image that could not be demolished not even by Gadhafi’s efforts following to 2001, September 11 to join the anti-terrorist global coalition.

Generally speaking, one could state that this present volume is a good contribution for understanding the past and contemporary Libyan realities. Result of a comprehensive collective work, set up by efforts combined of specialists from various fields of science, it is a reliable synthesis. It could represent a bibliography for future research activities in this field. The project still can be expanded by its initiators or by others, especially in our days, when the Gadhafi regime collapsed in a bloody civil war, and Libya’s future, even if it is not bleak, is still very uncertain.

Artur Lakatos