

Metroville (M.R.)	Year	Area (sqkm)	Population ('000)	Density (per sqkm)
New York SC2A	1980	12,810	18,788	1,472
Chicago SC2A	1980	12,062	7,870	652
Reg. Parisienne 1978	1978	12,007	9,422	785
Hamburg			383	

F O R S C H U N G S B E R I C H T

Language Atlas of China - A Project

S. A. Wurm

A large number of various types of atlases of China have been produced, but no up-to-date detailed major atlas showing the distribution of the languages and dialects of China is in existence. Extensive research has been carried out on the language and dialect distribution in China in recent years, both by Chinese scholars and institutions, and also by scholars outside China. In addition to the many dialects of Chinese, a large number of languages and dialects are spoken in China which belong to a number of different language groups. As a result of the research carried out to date, the complex language and dialect situation of China has become clearer, and work to solve the problems of the distribution and classifications of languages and dialects in not yet fully studied areas, has continued vigorously. At the same time a very major language atlas dealing with the approximately 2,000 languages of the Pacific area and entitled "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area" has been produced over the last six years in collaboration between the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Japan Academy, as well as the Department of Linguistics and of Human Geography in the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University in Canberra, leading to the publication of the first part of this atlas, in 1981, and of the second, in 1983. It was under the joint editorship of Professor S.A. Wurm and Professor Shiro Hattori, has won wide international acclaim, and has led to an extensive amount of very useful cartographic, editorial and other technical and scholarly experience of great value for the production of similar types of language atlases.

In the light of all this, the time seemed to have come three years ago, after the publication of Part I of the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area", to make plans for the production of a "Language Atlas of China" which would constitute a direct continuation of the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area" project and benefit from the experience gained through that large-scale project. This idea was taken up by

the Chinese National Academy of Social Sciences and the Australian Academy of the Humanities in co-operation, with the Department of Linguistics and of Human Geography in the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University to play a major role as well in the planning and later production of this envisaged "Language Atlas of China". In lengthy discussions between these institutions and the various scholars and technical experts attached to them, the plans concerning the production of this atlas and its exact nature and extent were worked out step by step and eventually an agreement signed between the two academies concerned, and agreement reached about the nature and degree of the involvement of the departments, scholars and technical experts in the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University. Amongst the latter, the role played by the cartographer, Mr T. Baumann, who had by himself produced all the maps of the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area" and had played a major part in the designing and setting up of the text materials of that atlas as well, was of particular importance.

Practical work on the first map of the "Language Atlas of China" had already begun on an experimental basis before the signing of the agreement mentioned above, and it was determined that the general editors of the atlas on the Australian side be Professors S.A.Wurm, B.T'sou, and D.Bradley, and on the Chinese side Professors Li Rong, Xiong Zhenghui (responsible for Chinese dialects), Fu Maoji and Wang Jun (responsible for non-Chinese languages). Mr T.Baumann was designated to carry out the cartographic work for the entire atlas and also be firmly involved in matters of the setting out of text materials in the atlas and act as technical adviser and technical editor.

The "Language Atlas of China" project was submitted by the academies concerned to the Union Académique Internationale for acceptance as a project under its auspices, as a major international academic project. The Union Académique Internationale, which had also sponsored the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area", accepted the "Language Atlas of China" project as a project under its auspices and recommended it for sponsorship and financial support to the Comité International de la Philosophie et des Sciences Humaines (UNESCO) which accepted the recommendation and placed the "Language Atlas of China" under its sponsorship and awarded financial support to it on an annual basis as had been the case with the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area" project before it. At the same time, generous financial assistance was awarded to the "Language Atlas of China" project by the Australia



China Council of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Australian Government and also by private enterprise in Australia, in particular the Myer Foundation and by Esso Australia Pty. Ltd. The latter had also given generous support to the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area" project previously. A large amount of the production cost of the atlas are to be met by the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University which is covering the salary costs of the cartographer who is expected to devote over 80% of his working time to the "Language Atlas of China" for four years, and which also meets the costs of the setting up and typesetting of the atlas text materials as far as they do not involve Chinese characters. Also, the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University has contributed materially to the expenses of a six-month visit to the Department of Linguistics of the Chinese general editors of the atlas, who during his visit during the last quarter of 1983 and the first quarter of 1984, had laid the foundations for the scholarly and cartographic production of the first maps of non-Chinese languages in the atlas and contributed materially to establishing scholarly format principles for individual maps in the atlas. At the same time, the Chinese National Academy of Social Sciences has made substantial funds available towards fieldwork in China under its auspices which is necessary to obtain additional information needed for the atlas concerning the language and dialect distribution in some areas.

After lengthy negotiations with various potential publishers, it was agreed that the Longman Group (Far East) Ltd. in Hong Kong would publish the atlas on behalf of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Chinese National Academy of Social Sciences, in two editions, one in English and one in Chinese, with each of these editions, consisting of two parts to be published in sequence, with the publication of Part I of the atlas expected for 1986. Each of these two parts will contain two sections, one devoted to dialects of Chinese and the other to languages of the non-Chinese people of China. The whole atlas is planned to contain over thirty multi-coloured maps, 500x360 mm, 6 to 8 colours, with texts giving demographic, bibliographical and other relevant information.

As is the case with the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area", the "Language Atlas of China" is a language atlas, i.e. shows the distribution of languages rather than being a specialised linguistic atlas of interest only to a narrow range of linguistic specialists. In the light of this, the "Language Atlas of China" will be of great value for scien-

tific and pragmatic purposes alike, to a broad range of scholars both in China and outside China, such als linguists, anthropologists, archeologists, geographers, demographers, historians, economists and many others whose fields of interest are directly, or indirectly, connected with human beings, their life and history. The atlas is intended to provide easily understandable, detailed graphic information which until now has been lacking for the complete language situation in China. As such, it is intended to be of use also to a wide variety of governmental, administrative and other agencies and persons with applied interests of relevance to China and its languages, both within China itself, and outside China.

Some of the maps in the atlas will have as their basis given geographical areas in China, others will primarily deal with given language groups only. Both the sections dealing with the Chinese dialects, and the non-Chinese languages and dialects respectively, will be preceded by a general text giving information and explanations of a general nature of interest to the user of the atlas, and each of the sections will be followed by an index of language and dialect names. Each of the individual maps will be accompanied by text materials giving the information mentioned above, i.e. demographic information referring to the numbers of speakers of individual languages and dialects, the classification of the languages and dialects shown on the map which a given text accompanies, other relevant information and explanations in the form of notes, and bibliographical information. In the English edition of the atlas, the names of languages and dialects, language groups, etc. will be given in the pinyin script which will also be used for the place names on the maps. In the Chinese edition, all these names will be given in Chinese characters. Each of the maps will be provided with detailed legends in colour.

The sections of the atlas dealing with languages and dialects spoken by non-Chinese people in China are planned to contain a total of sixteen maps of which two are general maps. Five are general regional maps, six are maps of language groups and three are dialect maps. The two general maps are to be a map of all non-Chinese languages in China, and a map of the national minorities. The five general regional maps are planned to be a map of North China languages, a map of South China languages, a split map containing both Hainan and Taiwan and showing the languages and dialects located on them, a map showing the languages and dialects of the Guangxi province area, and a map containing the languages of the Yunnan provice area. The maps of lan-



guage groups are maps of the following groups: Kam Tai, Miao-Yao, Tibeto-Burman including Yiish, Mongol languages, Turkic languages, and Man-Tungus languages. The dialect maps are maps of the Tibetan dialects, the Mongol dialects, and the Miao dialects.

The section dealing with the Chinese dialects in the atlas are planned to contain ten regional maps showing the distribution of Chinese dialects, one general map showing the overall distribution of the main Chinese dialects in all of China, one map of dialects of Chinese spoken outside of China in other parts of the world, and one general language distribution map of China. In addition, it has been considered to include two composite maps of selected areas of China showing the distribution of both Chinese dialects and non-Chinese languages and dialects in those areas.

In producing the "Language Atlas of China", a number of technical and other difficulties have to be faced and overcome. One particular technical problem is caused by the nature of the geographical distribution of some languages and dialects in China. Many of the non-Chinese languages and dialects are widely scattered, with wide gaps between them, and the individual language and dialect areas can be very small. Also there is considerable overlap in the regions occupied by individual languages and dialects. Special cartographic techniques have to be used to present such situations in a clear, readily understandable form. As has been pointed out above, the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area" which presented similar problems, with these problems successfully solved cartographically, constitutes an excellent model for the cartographic solution of such problems in the "Language Atlas of China", with this situation aided by the fact that the same cartographer has been engaged in producing both atlases. In general, the cartographic production of the "Language Atlas of China" constitutes a great challenge to old fashioned cartography carried out exclusively by painstaking handwork with the help of comparatively simple instruments and cartographic tools, with a number of unorthodox solutions, necessitating individual decisions by the cartographer, required to be arrived at in the presentation of the varied information on the individual maps. Modern streamlined techniques, resorting in part to computer methods, are not useable in this case because of the great variation in the information to be shown cartographically and the very low degree of repetiveness in the presentation of information.

Other problems to be faced and overcome have been concerned with matters of interpretation, scholarly approaches,

and the varied extent of information available for different regions and language groups. One such problem concerned the question of the concept of the National Minorities in China versus the non-Chinese languages. While 56 National Minorities have to date been officially recognized, not all of these speak distinct languages and in fact some of them speak only Chinese. At the same time, varieties of language spoken by members of the same National Minority may differ to such an extent that they greatly or entirely impair mutual intelligibility and would in fact, on purely linguistic grounds, constitute distinct languages. However, the view has been taken by the Chinese collaborators in the project that individual National Minorities constitute entities comparable to nations, in, for instance, Europe, and from the socio-political point of view, forms of language which can be regarded as varieties of the official language of a European nation, even if there is no mutual intelligibility between them, are generally referred to as dialects and not as separate languages. Such situations prevail for instance with regard to the local forms of language in Western Germany and most of Austria and Italy. But there are situations in which such an approach becomes untenable, for instance in the case of Basque and Breton in France, Finnish in Norway, Lappish in Finland and Norway, etc., and has generally been discarded in such instances. Such extreme cases do fortunately not constitute a sizeable problem in China, and the ordinarily prevailing situation in European nations such as the cases mentioned above with regard to West Germany, Austria and Italy could be overcome in the "Language Atlas of China" through careful choice of wording and presentation which may prove satisfactory to both the socio-political approach and the linguistic approach and most importantly, the members of the individual National Minorities themselves who often have very strong feelings concerning these matters.

Another related problem has been the question concerning the inclusion, into the "Language Atlas of China", of non-Chinese languages whose speakers do not have the status of constituting one of the National Minorities. There are several such languages in China, and after careful consideration of the question, both the Chinese and the Australian sides agreed that such languages and dialects be included in the atlas, so that the full picture of the language situation in China could be shown in it. Another problem has concerned differing views on the classification of language groups in terms of their inclusion into larger groups. This problem concerns in particular, the question as to which groups



should be included in the large Sino-Tibetan group. According to one view, the Dai (Thai) group and the Miao-Yao do not constitute members of the Sino-Tibetan group, but the Dai (Thai) languages are included with the Kadai and Austro-nesian languages into a large super-group called Thai-Kadai group. According to another view which is particularly in favour amongst Chinese scholars, the Dai (Thai) and Miao-Yao languages should be included into the large Sino-Tibetan group. Ways and means had to be found to present these conflicting views in a unified manner in the atlas. This was achieved through showing the Dai (Thai) and Miao-Yao groups in colours which were different from each other and also different from the colour chosen for the Tibeto-Burman group, the undisputed member of the Sino-Tibetan group apart from Chinese itself. In the text accompanying the relevant maps, only these three groups were specifically named, and ample explanations and notes added explaining the diversity of views concerning the inclusion or otherwise of these three groups into larger groupings.

Another problem was caused by the fact that the information on language and dialect distribution within language groups included in the atlas, vary considerably from group to group. In some instances, information available is only cursory and it would require many years of work to clarify the complex language and dialect situation in such groups - a problem which was also encountered in some areas covered by the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area". In such cases, the preliminary and tentative information available was presented and explanations given in the text as to the preliminary nature of the information provided.

A different type of problem connected with the production of the "Language Atlas of China" has been caused by the physical separation of, and the large distance between, the two centres at which work connected with the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area" is very predominantly carried out, i.e. China (Beijing) and Australia (Canberra). This situation was in some ways different from that prevailing during the production of the "Language Atlas of the Pacific Area" in which there was a clear division concerning the geographical areas for which the Australian side on the one hand, and the Japanese side on the other had been responsible. In the case of the "Language Atlas of China", the division of responsibilities of the two sides follows different lines: The Chinese side is responsible for working out most of the base materials and producing the first sketch maps, whereas the Australian side is responsible for putting this preliminary information into an advanced form which after mutual consul-

tation and checking by the two sides, is eventually put into the completed and cartographically final form. The same statement applies to the setting up of the English and Chinese text.

This situation requires frequent contacts by mail and also by telephone, as well as carefully planned visits by Chinese scholars to Canberra and by Australian scholars to Beijing and elsewhere in China. Very important and valuable liaison work in this is carried out by Professor B. T'sou, one of the Australian general editors of the atlas who during this work has been largely based in Hong Kong to keep up close contacts with both sides.

To date, several maps of non-Chinese languages of China have been produced in an advanced form, and work on further maps, including maps of Chinese dialects, is in progress.