

In combination, the substantive chapters provide one of the fullest and most theoretically informed overviews of the recent history of the Sino-Tibetan dispute. Despite this theoretical sophistication, which Topgyal hopes will prove “generally applicable to other ethnic conflicts around the world” (p. 175), at times he includes claims of questionable precision, such as repeating the oft-made assertion that prior to 1949 the Dalai Lama “was the temporal and spiritual head of Tibet” (p. 87) – thereby obfuscating the existence of meaningful regional and sectarian divisions – or suggesting that the Communist Party’s distrust of Tibetan Buddhism is directly linked to memory of the conversion of “the Mongol Khans and their subjects to Tibetan Buddhism” in the 13th century (p. 83). More consequentially, even while expertly documenting fundamental strategic and policy disagreements within the Tibetan exile community, and to a lesser degree within the Chinese leadership, too often “Tibet” and “China” are allowed to stand as self-evident and nearly immutable interest groups. In particular, Tibetans within China are treated as univocal (through omission “Tibetan collaborators” (p. 6) are dismissed as inconsequential) and speeches of political leaders on both sides are taken to represent broader opinions and policies. For instance, the Dalai Lama’s words are used as a proxy for the thoughts of “most Tibetans inside and outside Tibet” (p. 90) while a statement by a Chinese scholar-cum-official in 2008 is presented as proof of broader Chinese designs six decades earlier (p. 55).

As *China and Tibet* contains little of an empirical nature that is entirely new, ultimately the book’s reception may depend on how much weight readers attach to Topgyal’s theoretical framework. Does the “insecurity dilemma” provide a mechanism to understand the Sino-Tibetan dispute in ways that traditional focuses on “ethno-nationalism,” for example, do not? Or is it new language describing principles intuitively contained within other analyses? The answer may depend on the disciplinary inclinations of the reader. In any case, *China and Tibet: The Perils of Insecurity* is an important and thought-provoking addition to the fields of Tibetan, Chinese and security studies. Not only does Topgyal provide an excellent overview of the Sino-Tibetan dispute, but also provocative theoretical insights that should be welcomed in both area studies and international relations classrooms, as well as beyond.

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*Contesting the Yellow Dragon: Ethnicity, Religion, and the State in the Sino-Tibetan Borderland*

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In the early decades of the Ming Dynasty, on what is now a vegetable patch on the western hill of the Songpan county seat, the Monastery of Great Compassion became the home of a Han Chinese Chan Buddhist monk appointed by the state to oversee local Bon and Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. This religious intermediary was expected to convert northern Sichuan’s Tibetans into obedient subjects of the Ming state. Even with his temporary success, aided by the established military garrison and the enrollment of local leaders in the state’s *tusi* system, the ability of the Ming to bring the region under its control was fleeting at best. By the mid-Qing

Dynasty this indirect state rule would collapse, and the region known in Tibetan as the Shar khog would return to autonomous rule by local *tsowa* (Ch. *buluo*).

Nearly 600 years later, in a meadow behind the Daoist-managed Rear Temple in the Huanglong scenic area, a stone marks the grave of the temple's last priest, who committed suicide during the political campaigns of the Mao era, his body found seated in a self-dug grave facing the temple door. This period would also rend the fabric of local Tibetan social, political and religious life, especially through the "Democratic Reform" campaign of 1958. Today, it is clear that the People's Republic has succeeded in Songpan where all state projects before it had failed, establishing an unprecedented governing infrastructure and an economy of capital accumulation.

These sites and stories (respectively, pp. 43–44 and pp. 364–373) bookend Kang and Sutton's ambitious, *longue durée* history of how the central Chinese state sought to impose "its political will and ideology on the frontier," and how "frontier cultures and identities" adapted to the state project (p. 311). This is a substantial, sprawling book, covering multiple sites, multiple ethnic populations and multiple themes spread across a 600-year time span: Historically, the book begins with the establishment of the remote military garrison at Songpan in the Ming Dynasty (chapter one). It follows the ebb and flow of state assertiveness in the region from the expansion and overextension of the Qing dynasty (chapter two), through the period of political fragmentation and social change in the Republican period (chapter three), to the consequential changes brought by the Party state in the Mao era, which would put an end to Tibetan autonomy (chapter five).

In addition to its primary focus on the Chinese state, the book explains how the sacred geography of nearby Huanglong was shared by Bon, Tibetan Buddhist, Chinese Buddhist, Daoist and folk practitioners long before the Mao era (chapter four). It explains how, in the reform era, the state's efforts to regulate religion has spurred both local resistance and opportunism (chapter eight), and how local ethnoreligious identity thwarts state classification, sustains a shared regional identity, and reinforces contests over sacred space (chapter nine). Finally, the book covers the rise of tourism in Huanglong, both the contradictions that emerged with its designation as a natural heritage site (chapter six) and the utility of ethnicity and religion to a local "tourism culture," which can selectively aggrandize or silence Tibetan religious and cultural practices (chapter seven).

Ordered roughly chronologically, these chapters require a close reading to follow the threads of ethnicity, religion and tourism. Keeping the ultimate concern with the state in mind is helpful, especially as the final chapter serves more as a summary of the preceding discussion than a synthesizing conclusion. Of the many historical findings presented here, one of the most broadly notable is that while there were periods of violence (from both sides) and brutality (particularly from the Chinese state in the 1950s), Greater Songpan was marked by long periods of interethnic accommodation and peace, long enough for a regional identity to form, manifested in a shared local dialect, native place identification, and borrowed cultural and religious practices (pp. 400–402).

This thread of local agency also runs through Jack Patrick Hayes's *A Change in Worlds on the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands* (2014, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD), which covers the same area, over much of the same period, but is focused more on the sources of local conflict than the complexities of how that conflict was managed. In focusing on religion, Kang and Sutton present a more historically nuanced account of interethnic relations and Chinese state governing strategy than Hayes, while Hayes provides a useful account of the politics of land use and resource management.

In addition to valuable historical detail from their archival work and observations from site visits, Kang and Sutton include maps of the area's sacred geography, major

Chinese garrisons and Tibetan *tsowa*. An extensive appendix catalogues the area's religious sites and annual events. *Contesting the Yellow Dragon* is a richly detailed work of borderland history that should find a core readership among historians of China, Tibet, interethnic relations and borderland studies. With its attention to more contemporary events (to about 2007), it should also find many readers among anthropologists, geographers, sociologists and others interested in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands of today, from the machinations of the Chinese state, to the livelihoods of Shar khog Tibetans and the pervasiveness of tourists and tourism in Songpan.

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*Chinese Thought as Global Theory: Diversifying Knowledge Production in the Social Sciences and Humanities*

Edited by LEIGH JENCO

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*Chinese Thought as Global Theory* is an ambitious edited volume based on the central premise that thinking born in local conditions can “produce new and broader insight into social and political conditions elsewhere.” As Leigh Jenco persuasively argues in the introduction, global theory is based on a commitment to the mobility and generality of thought, which can travel across borders in conversation with other communities of argument.

This edited volume focuses on China's role in the production of global thought. The timeliness and necessity of this project is not only because the inclusion of Chinese thought in the canon of theory is long overdue. The stakes of global theory transcend the domain of academic recognition. The exciting potentiality introduced by global theory is that thinking generated in local Chinese contexts may (or may not) be more relevant to illuminating contemporary political dynamics than reading Locke, for example. To put it differently, global theory promises a de-territorialization of the conceptual resources which shape our ability to understand the world, orient ourselves within it, and imagine new political possibilities.

As the volume subtitle suggests, theoretical inquiry is produced in the *humanities* and *social sciences*. While the appeal and place of global theory in the humanities is rather obvious, I highly recommend this book to scholars in the social sciences, especially those engaged in empirical data analysis and fieldwork. The questions one formulates in the office may not translate into how people understand and talk about their lives in the area being researched. A literal response to an interview question may harbour associative, nuanced and equivocal meanings that can only be gleaned from the local context. Familiarity with diverse patterns of thinking does not only enrich empirical analyses; it is their indispensable basis.

Theoretical production is also part of China's political system. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) refers to itself as a “learning party” that produces, analyzes and modifies its own theories. The CCP has developed an extensive vocabulary of political concepts and practices, which inherit, modify, and challenge different stands of Chinese thought. Although not its main goal, global theory can also provide insight into how China's political system operates.