

violent dissolution evidenced in Tone Bringa's *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, she shows that cultures of peace can be cultivated and maintained despite, and against, external and internal forces working towards violence and fragmentation.

Sharing the Sacred demonstrates that communities in mixed religious settings are able to coexist without perduring conflicts not because fear of the other makes them do so but rather because they want to do so. Its nuanced presentation of "the daily activities and micro-strategies of engagement that contribute to Malerkotla's peace" (ibid.) is a non-polemical retort to those who contend that inter-communal relations are inherently conflictual.

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Erik Mueggler, *The Paper Road: Archive and Experience in the Botanical Exploration of West China and Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011, xiv + 361 pp.

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There are some books that stick in the mind from the moment you encounter them. Perhaps it is the way they are written, perhaps the intrinsic interest of the story they tell, perhaps their ramifications way beyond the subject at hand: very rarely it is all three. *The Paper Road* is one of those books. At one level, it is a scholarly history of the work of two early-twentieth-century botanists—the Scot George Forrest and the American Joseph Rock—whose travels took them over large distances in China, Tibet, and Burma gathering botanical specimens. There is more than enough in their biographies to attract the historian and the reader. Yet more, much more is accomplished here. The focus is less on these individuals than on their relationships—with local (and not so local) collectors and authorities, with the disciplinary and political fields in and through which they worked, and above all with the landscape itself. In its allusive and reflective style, as in its substantive concerns with landscape, archive, and knowledge, this book deserves a wide readership across the humanities.

The Paper Road is not an easy work to encapsulate in a few sentences, though the cover blurbs certainly make for enticing reading: exhilarating, breathtaking, eloquent, haunting.... A good place to begin is with the author's own description of the two-volume *Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom of Southwest China*, by Joseph Rock, published by the Harvard Yenching Institute in 1947: "It was a strange text, in no established genre: awkward, haphazard, badly edited, brilliantly illustrated, and brutally unreadable.... Rock's editors

despaired of his prose” (pp. 278–79). Thankfully the same cannot be said of Erik Mueggler. *The Paper Road* may be in some respects strange—its voice a distinctive and sometimes unsettling amalgam of historical narration and philosophical reflection—but its prose is nicely pitched, and the contents are artfully constructed, well-illustrated, and consistently absorbing. This is saying a lot for a large book on a potentially daunting topic, which involves digressions into some pretty scholastic issues around, *inter alia*, the *dongba* script of the Naxi people, or the writings of Merleau-Ponty.

The Paper Road weaves historical narrative, landscape description, and philosophical reflection into a compelling whole. It combines ideas from a number of disciplines with an impressive knowledge of a huge region boldly described in the title as “West China and Tibet.” Stylistically and conceptually, the book is in fact much more than a regional study and is evidently written with a wider audience in mind: in this respect it stands comparison with Paul Carter’s *The Road to Botany Bay*, Greg Denning’s *Mr Bligh’s Bad Language*, or Graeme Burnett’s *Masters of all They Surveyed*, all works which share Mueggler’s interest in texts and in the encounters through which exploration and empire were produced. While Carter is mentioned briefly as one of the sources for the kind of “spatial history” in evidence here, *The Paper Road* is arguably closer to the ground and closer to the experience of encounter than this would imply. Mueggler’s concern is essentially with the texture of encounters and interactions between very different ways of inhabiting and traversing landscape. This may reflect the author’s disciplinary background in anthropology, but it also greatly enhances the reach of a book that in general wears its theoretical colors more lightly than many comparable works. Overall, *The Paper Road* is more concerned with affect than discourse.

Mueggler’s phenomenological concerns with landscape and embodiment are reflected in his treatment of practices of walking, talking, reciting, narrating, collecting, and traveling. And his historical imagination draws him increasingly towards reflections on the nature of archives—less as *the* imperial archive, more as different (yet intersecting) forms of archive and memory, from the letters in British and American collections to the *dongba* script which is presented here as a distinctive form of social memory. The relations between western and “local” forms of memory, as between the botanists and the local collectors who enabled their collections to be produced in the first place, lie at the core of a fascinating book. This is a history in motion and of motion; a profound and far-reaching meditation on the relationships between individuals who found their place and made their mark by turning landscape into paper.

———Felix Driver, Royal Holloway, University of London