

**Cultural  
Encounters  
on  
China's  
Ethnic  
Frontiers**

Edited by

**STEVAN HARRELL**

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# Contents

## INTRODUCTION

Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them

*Stevan Harrell*

3

## PART I

### THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Scholarly and Official Discourses

37

### THE NAXI AND THE NATIONALITIES QUESTION

*Charles F. McKhann*

39

### THE HISTORY OF THE HISTORY OF THE YI

*Stevan Harrell*

63

### DEFINING THE MIAO

Ming, Qing, and Contemporary Views

*Norma Diamond*

92

### MAKING HISTORIES

Contending Conceptions of the Yao Past

*Ralph A. Litzinger*

117

CONTENTS

PÈRE VIAL AND THE GNI-P'A  
Orientalist Scholarship and the Christian Project  
*Margaret Byrne Swain*

140

VOICES OF MANCHU IDENTITY, 1635 - 1935  
*Shelley Rigger*

186

PART II  
THE HISTORY OF ETHNIC IDENTITY  
The Process of Peoples

215

MILLENARIANISM, CHRISTIAN MOVEMENTS,  
AND ETHNIC CHANGE AMONG THE MIAO  
IN SOUTHWEST CHINA

*Siu-woo Cheung*

217

CHINGGIS KHAN  
From Imperial Ancestor to Ethnic Hero

*Almaz Khan*

248

THE IMPACT OF URBAN ETHNIC EDUCATION  
ON MODERN MONGOLIAN ETHNICITY, 1949 - 1966

*Wurlig Borchigud*

278

ON THE DYNAMICS OF TAI/DAI-LUE ETHNICITY  
An Ethnohistorical Analysis

*Shih-chung Hsieh*

301

GLOSSARY

329

# Maps

1. China. Provinces and autonomous regions  
5
2. Yi areas of Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou  
64
3. Major Miao groups  
93
4. Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region  
and adjacent provinces  
118
5. Inner Mongolia and neighboring regions  
249
6. Yunnan and neighboring areas  
302
7. Historical Tai kingdoms and modern states  
305

# Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers

Edited by Stevan Harrell

A succession of Chinese governments, as well as Western missionaries, have sought to define, objectify, and "civilize" China's ethnic minorities—to make them more like the civilizers. In this volume, ten scholars examine some of these attempts involving groups as culturally different and geographically distant as the Mongols in the North and the Yi in the Southwest.

"This absolutely first-rate collection of scholarly essays by nine anthropologists and one political scientist focuses on the problem of ethnic definition and self-definition among China's peripheral peoples, including the Naxi, Yi, Miao, Mongols, and Manchus. Rejecting the usual catalog of static characteristics as the way to define a people, the authors see national definition as a contentious and negotiated process resulting in a fluid and evolving set of behaviors, customs, linguistic usage, etc. At the core of this process lie Han attempts to impose their values on others in the name of civilization and the struggle of peripheral peoples to resist, adapt, and survive. An important book for students of Chinese society."

—*Library Journal*

"This book contains many excellent essays, mainly by anthropologists, on the cultural and social impact of Han colonialism past and present. The authors focus on the heightened sense of ethnic difference that has emerged in the process, and on the invention of ethnic identities that involve the distortion of the past."

—*Far Eastern Economic Review*

Stevan Harrell is professor of anthropology at the University of Washington. Other contributors are Wurlig Borchigud, Siu-woo Cheung, Norma Diamond, Shih-chung Hsieh, Almaz Khan, Ralph A. Litzinger, Charles F. McKhann, Shelley Rigger, and Margaret Byrne Swain.

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