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Review of Piper Rae Gaubatz, *Beyond the Great Wall: Urban Form and Transformation in the Chinese Frontiers*

Christopher P. Atwood  
*University of Pennsylvania*, [catwood@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:catwood@sas.upenn.edu)

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At the time of publication, author Christopher P. Atwood was affiliated with Indiana University. Currently, he is a faculty member in the East Asian Languages and Civilizations Department at the University of Pennsylvania.

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**Disciplines**

Arts and Humanities | East Asian Languages and Societies

**Comments**

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stay out of trouble, following the lead of the Party's cadres because during the Anti-Rightist and Socialist Education campaigns they had learned all too well the price of resistance.

The Great Leap Forward was certainly a seminal event in the history of Communist China. It was the first serious setback to communism and the starting point for a series of political upheavals culminating in the Cultural Revolution and the ten years of troubles that followed in its wake. It has been left to others to address the policy objectives of the planners in Beijing and cover the evolution of the radical line among the top leaders there. Domenach's contribution is to illuminate the ways by which central policy directives intruded upon the political landscape at the provincial level. It is essential reading for those seeking to understand what went wrong and how policy implementation could wind up as divorced from reality as it eventually was.

Sacred Heart University

Thomas D. Curran

Gaubatz, Piper Rae: *Beyond the Great Wall: Urban Form and Transformation in the Chinese Frontiers*. (Stanford University Press, 1996), xx + 378 pp., \$ 49.50. ISBN 0-8047-2399-0.

Previous studies of the Chinese frontiers have focused on the conflict between settled farmers and nomadic herders and largely ignored the urban dimension. Piper Rae Gaubatz's focus on cities in *Beyond the Great Wall* therefore brings a valuable new perspective to the history of China's Inner Asian and Southeast Asian frontiers. Through a detailed examination of Höhhot, Lanzhou, Xining, Ürümqi, and Kunming, with occasional glances at Lhasa, Dali, and other sites, the author examines China's frontier cities as arenas of cultural interchange and instruments of Chinese frontier control.

As one might expect in such a ground-breaking study, Gaubatz emphasizes description and mid-level theory more than the formulation of any single overarching conclusion. After a comparative look at the Chinese frontier (chapter 1) and brief histories of the main sites (chapter 2) the author describes the economic functions of Chinese cities (chapter 3), their design in relation to traditional Chinese, Islamic, and Tibeto-Mongolian ideals of proper urban form (chapters 4, 5, and 6), and the mutual interrelations of Chinese, Islamic, and Tibeto-Mongolian forms and motifs in monumental and vernacular architecture (chapters 7 and 8). She concludes by examining how these cities have weathered the introduction of motorized traffic in the Republic, the socialist communalism of 1949 to 1979, and finally the government-sponsored ethnic and market revivals of the 1980s (chapters 9 and 10).

The most striking feature of this study is its sheer usefulness. Gaubatz has based her research on an exhaustive reading of the published Chinese sources, personal acquaintance with all the cities described, and a reasonable grasp of the history of both China's frontiers and the relevant urban forms. The maps in particular, both general and thematic, will be of invaluable assistance to any future study of the areas concerned. I found that her description of Höhhot,

where I lived for two years, greatly enriched my understanding of the city's history.

A surprising result of Gaubatz's study is the degree to which Chinese frontier cities, particularly those on the Gansu-Xinjiang corridor, exemplify classic Chinese geomantic and urban planning principles. She thus demolishes Owen Lattimore's dictum that frontier areas contain the "least typical" aspects of the core culture – actually the frontier cities are among the "most typical" of China, at least in terms of their core settlement area (p. 313). At the same time, for those Inner Asianists inclined to dismiss these frontier cities as utterly alien impositions on otherwise pristine non-Chinese societies, Gaubatz's highlighting of widespread interaction outside the central administrative-Confucian complex will come as an eye-opener. Finally, her discussion of the PRC period will deepen our appreciation of the complex range of attitudes that have determined contemporary urban style. The thorough documentation of the transformation of post-1979 mosque architecture from indigenous Chinese styles to synthetic Middle Eastern forms is especially striking.

In such a wide-ranging study, straddling three distinct culture-areas, there is some inevitable superficiality. The discussion of Tibeto-Mongolian urban traditions, for example, does not touch on the mandala as the archetype of both temple and city form (see Rebecca French's recent *The Golden Yoke*). Gaubatz also operates throughout with the erroneous assumption that Muslim religious activities have always revolved around the mosque – she thus misses an opportunity to explore the urban social dynamics of the redirection of religious activities from the traditional saints' tombs to the more modern-seeming mosque. These are, however, minor flaws in what will for a long time be a standard study on a hitherto unjustly neglected topic.

Indiana University

Christopher P. Atwood

Harell, Stevan (ed.): *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), viii + 379 pp., \$ 35.00. ISBN 0-295-97380-3.

This is a remarkable book offering highly informative *Studies on Ethnic Groups in China* by eleven authors dealing with eight non-Han nationalities out of more than fifty-six officially recognized "minorities." Here is a sketch of the rich contents.

*Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them* (including Western missionaries active in China between 1842, the Treaty of Nanjing, and 1949, the proclamation of the PRC) by Stevan Harrell, University of Washington (pp. 3–36) summing up the studies and outlining the theoretical framework of the *Encounters*. In this he outlines: The Ideology of the Civilizers, the relation of Periphery and Center (Periphery), the Center's Metaphors applied to the peoples of Periphery: sexual – (exotic) women/female, educational (and paternalistic) – "children," historical – ancient, primitive or backward. He compares three Civilizing Projects, the Confucian, the Christian, and the Communist approaches. The last of these roots in Joseph Stalin's highly influential principle of four cri-