

or not they are readily applicable to analyzing each of the events in the 1950s is questionable. For instance, did Mao's launch of the suppressing counterrevolutionaries campaign in early 1951 already signify Mao's abandonment of his original conception of a pluralist "new democracy" in post-1949 China and his embrace of China's transition to socialism and proletarian dictatorship, as Sheng claims (76)? Did Mao really decide to switch to the method of class struggle for ruling China as early as the early 1950s (99)? How should we distinguish between Mao's sporadic use of the language of class struggle in the early 1950s and his later formulation of a rather systematic theory of "continuous revolution" and advocacy for "proletarian dictatorship" in the 1960s and 1970s? While there were no doubt continuities in his political thinking throughout those decades, Mao's conception of the "contradictions" (*maodun*) in Chinese society changed over time, as did his approaches to dealing with them. Mao indeed erred in "enlarging" (*kuodahua*) class struggle before and during the Cultural Revolution as the Party's historiography depicts it, but this characterization of Mao should not lead to retroactively expanding his theory if any, on class struggle under the condition of socialism in the early 1950s.

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The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier, by Benno Weiner. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020. 312 pp. US\$49.95 (cloth), US\$29.99 (e-book).

The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier is an in-depth history of Amdo, one of the two large ethnic Tibetan areas (Amdo in Qinghai and Kham in Sichuan) outside of Tibet, the polity that was ruled by the Dalai Lamas. The book covers the period from when the PLA first took control of Amdo in 1949 to the major revolt of 1958 and its aftermath. In the words of the author, Benno Weiner: "This book is about the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the ideologies, policies, practices, and limitations that drove its state- and nation-building efforts in an ethnic frontier region during the first decade of the People's Republic of China" (xv).

The volume is primarily based on new materials from the archives of the Communist Party and government in Zeku (in Tibetan, Tsekhok), a Tibetan Autonomous County in Qinghai, in the southeastern portion of Amdo. Weiner says that "taken as a whole, the two archives provide a remarkable portrait of the CCP's intentions and actions, its headway and hindrances, and its achievements, fiascos, and frustrations as it attempted to turn a culturally foreign and physically demanding corner of a former imperial borderland into an integrated component

of the new, socialist nation-state” (xv). The archival materials were supplemented with “published and unpublished document collections, reportage meant for internal circulation (*neibu cankao*), gazetteers, party histories, and state-sponsored oral history collections (*wenshi ziliao*)” (xv).

The book situates the history of Amdo in the larger study of transitions from empires to nations, in this case from the Qing dynasty to the People’s Republic of China, and begins with a discussion of the Qing dynasty’s policies for ruling its huge empire. It then discusses how the PRC “representatives tried to integrate the Tibetan regions into the modern Chinese nation” (3). Weiner argues that the CCP’s initial goal in Amdo “was not just state building, which presumably could have been accomplished primarily through force, but also nation building, which required the construction of narratives and policies capable of convincing Amdo Tibetans of their membership in a wider political community” (4). To achieve this, “the CCP . . . adopted and adapted imperial strategies of rule, often collectively referred to as the United Front, as a means to ‘gradually,’ ‘voluntarily,’ and ‘organically’ bridge the gap between empire and nation” (4): in other words, “to integrate Amdo Tibetans and others not just physically into the new socialist state, but psychologically into the Han-dominated, multi-national nation” (208). However, in the end this approach failed because the CCP’s United Front approach “lost out to a revolutionary impatience that demanded more immediate paths to national integration and socialist transformation,” and this led in 1958 to communization, which in turn triggered the large-scale rebellion (4).

Weiner also addresses an important controversy regarding the CCP’s policy in Tibetan areas. As he explains, there has been a tendency in scholarship to “assume that the United Front as deployed in ethnic minority areas was little more than a short-term expediency or cynical ruse meant to placate certain segments of society until the CCP was in position to forcibly implement its radical agenda” (17). However, as I have shown in *A History of Modern Tibet* (vol. 4, 2019), this explanation is incorrect for the polity of Tibet, and this new study demonstrates that it is also incorrect for Amdo. The book explains that “a closer examination of internal communications and actions within Amdo prior to 1958 tells a different story. In fact, among the more remarkable characteristics of the materials from Zeku County and beyond is the earnestness, dedication, and often frustration evident in the Party’s own internal reports regarding its role as an institution of both state and nation building” (17–18). And “While genuine self-rule was clearly not possible within the Party’s United Front framework, neither was nationality autonomy simply a ruse meant to mollify minority peoples until the CCP was in position to implement the new order by force. To put it another way, what the leadership in Beijing and Xining stated publicly about minority policy and the United Front is mirrored almost without exception in internal Party directives sent to county-level cadres and below” (81). Weiner therefore argues convincingly that this policy was not a ruse. Rather, “reliance on traditional elites was

a compromise born out of necessity of the CCP's nation-building project. . . . Ultimately, the objective was to gain the trust and support of common herders" (95).

However, there were major differences in the CCP's policy in the Tibet political entity and in Amdo/Kham. For example, in Tibet the implementation of reforms occurred only after the 1959 revolt, whereas in Amdo and Kham the revolts occurred as a result of the forced start of reforms.

While the monograph presents a convincing analysis of Amdo history in the 1950s, there are aspects that I do not agree with. One of these is the author's use of "Central Tibet" instead of "Tibet" or "Political Tibet": for example, "unlike Central Tibet, in Amdo the disintegration of the Qing imperial state" (15) and "uprisings centered first in Kham (1955–1957) and then Central Tibet (1959)" (203). Of course, what this study refers to as "Central Tibet" was the de facto independent polity (Tibet) headed by the Dalai Lama. Referring to this polity, which ruled a huge area through a bureaucracy and had its own laws and an international identity, as "Central Tibet" obfuscates the critical structural and historical differences between it and Amdo/Kham, neither of which was part of political Tibet in modern times.

Finally, I should comment on the book's mention of my analysis of the 1956 revolt in Kham: "Melvyn Goldstein has recently argued that the introduction of reforms into Kham in 1955 cannot simply be chalked up to a lack of written assurances. Instead, rogue Party and military officials in Sichuan imposed the reforms against the express orders of Beijing" (205). Actually, I showed that it was the leaders of the CCP in Sichuan led by Party Secretary Li Jingquan, not rogue elements, who assured Mao and the Central Committee that the Tibetan leaders in Sichuan had agreed to start reforms so it was okay to proceed with implementing them in 1956. However, in reality the agreement the CCP had received was not genuine consent, so the start of reforms in 1956 immediately triggered the revolt. That Beijing was not pleased with this can be seen by its subsequent communications with Party leaders in Tibet in which it was explicitly stated that true agreement, not token or forced agreement, was needed. For example, the famous September 4, 1956, instructions to Party officials in Lhasa said, "carefully and repeatedly discuss these issues with them and get their true/genuine agreement (*zhengzheng de tongyi*), not token/faux/forced agreement (*mianqiang de tongyi*). If they do not really indicate that they want the reforms, then do not force any reforms to be carried out" (*A History of Modern Tibet*, vol. 3, 327).

This book fills a major gap in the academic literature on the history of Amdo in the critical decade of the 1950s. It is an important addition to the growing corpus of serious academic studies on modern Sino-Tibetan history.

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