

Rough draft for *Ethnos*, forthcoming

Rough Draft for *Ethnos* 77 (1)

Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War. By Carole McGranahan. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010. xx, 307 pp., £16.99 (paperback), £66 (cloth).

Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War is a fascinating work from historical anthropologist Carole McGranahan focused on the Tibetan guerilla army (the Chushi Gangdruk/Four Rivers Six Ranges) who fought against the People's Republic of China between 1956 and 1974. Over a course of more than ten years of field research, McGranahan interviewed veterans of the Chushi Gangdruk who live in Tibetan refugee settlements scattered across the Southern Himalayas. Though McGranahan describes the activities of the Chushi Gangdrug in Tibet and in exile, the real focus and value of the book lies in her development of "arrested histories" as a perspective to understand Tibetan historiography, as well as her focus on subalterneity within the diverse groups of people's who fall under the banner of a pan-Tibetan identity.

In the Introduction, McGranahan introduces a dense network of key concepts for her perspective on Tibetan historiography including Veena Das' observation that societies hide the pain of belonging (p. 3), the fraught nature of Tibetan identity (p. 4), the place of the Dalai Lama in the lives of veterans, lived impermanence (p. 5), layered political allegiances (p. 7), resistance history as national history (p. 9), an anthropology of recognition and deferral (p. 19), and memory and its relationship to history (p. 19). At the beginning of the Introduction, McGranahan states, "This book is about the grassroots Tibetan militia, the war they fought, and how and why it was forgotten," and then gives a series of reasons for why the war was forgotten. If we put aside the question of it being a "forgotten war," which is less useful and maybe even less accurate than considering it an "arrested history," we find one of the great contributions of the book, an idea McGranahan should have made a more prominent feature, "histories of the Tibetan resistance army challenge the expected order of things, that is, they challenge the Tibetan social and political status quo. The resistance army contested not just China, but also long-standing power structures and cultural hierarchies within the Tibetan community itself" (p. 2). The idea of a subalterneity to facets of Tibetan identity and internal politics connects well with arrested histories, which in this case McGranahan defines as, "histories... [which] are not suppressed indefinitely, but are instead arrested or delayed until a time in the future when it will be deemed appropriate to tell them" (p. 5). In many ways, a history of the guerilla war is a Khampa or Eastern Tibetan history of Tibet, which is itself a form of subalterneity, since by definition it challenges efforts to create a homogenized Tibetan identity and a unitary past through erasing difference and diversity (p. 10, 22).

Chapter One is a relatively short, but essential, introduction to the history of the Tibetan plateau, the political relationship between the Tibetan state, other Tibetan areas of China and the Chinese state. Chapter Two is a very brief expansion on the notion of the pain of belonging for Khampa Tibetans in particular based primarily on the experience of one veteran of the Chushi Gangdrug, Lobsang Tinley. A monk before he volunteered for the army in exile, McGranahan uses Tinley as a portrait for how Tibetans in exile came to be guerillas, what they engaged in, and what those experiences mean in every day life today. Since most veterans are poor and of low social status,

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Lobsang Tinley also serves as a welcome corrective to our image of the wealthy and empowered Tibetan exiles like carpet factory owners, former aristocrats, and world famous lamas.

With Chapter Three, McGranahan begins a mostly chronological account of the resistance beginning with its formation in Tibet and continuing up through relatively recent gatherings of veterans to mark significant anniversaries. The line drawings of the PLA bombing Khampa monasteries in the 1950s from the *Mirror* are powerful to see, however like the violent image which adorns the cover of *Arrested Histories*, McGranahan does not bring the same kind of nuanced, comparative anthropological analysis to these images she does to her interview notes.

In Chapter Four: The Golden Throne, McGranahan recounts the official formation of the army in Lhasa after the failed Khampa uprising. The primary sources quoted in chapters three and four are fascinating documents, which this reader wishes would have been quoted in their entirety at least in appendices. Also, these primary sources deserve a consistent philological approach. McGranahan alternates between transliterating some Tibetan words using the Wylie method, transcribing phonetically some words using what is probably Lhasa pronunciation, and translating other words and phrases. It would have been much more useful if she would have translated everything into English and provided the transliterated Tibetan italicized in parentheses, since Khampa dialects differ greatly from the Lhasa dialect of Tibetan and from each other.

These documents also include certain ethnological details McGranahan identified, but deserve even greater scrutiny, such as surprising appeals to a shared pan-Tibetan identity. The conscious degree and social practice of a shared pan-Tibetan identity prior to exile is a matter of continual speculation among Tibetans and scholars of Tibet; *Arrested Histories* is therefore essential reading for anyone researching Tibetan identity.

In the second half of *Arrested Histories*, McGranahan attempts to walk a fine line between what it means to call something secret versus an "arrested history." For example, Tibetan veterans are aware that the Cold War politics of their resistance is a secret, whereas the community politics among Tibetan exiles is an arrested history (165). However, despite being a major theme of the book, the degree to which the resistance was ever or is now a secret or an arrested history remains unclear. For every explanation McGranahan gives for why the resistance might have been an arrested history among Tibetan exiles, she provides just as many examples of instances when part of this story was made public a long time ago. For example, McGranahan provides oblique references to the ways and places the Chushi Gangdrug have tried to promote themselves publicly and states that Tibetan-government-in-exile have censored this material, but does not tell the reader how, when or exactly why that censorship happened. This is made all the more confusing when we find out that the Tibetan-government-in-exile published the resistance leader Andrug Gompo Tashi's brief history of the war in Tibet in 1973 (177). In the pages following, McGranahan provides a list of the many publications on the resistance that have come out over the years.

The same can be said of *Arrested Histories* itself, for this is not the first major English language book about the Tibetan resistance, just the first by a trained anthropologist who situates her own narrative primarily within the Tibetan exile community. Previous publications go back to at least

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1997 and the filming for the documentary *Shadow Circus: The CIA and Tibet*, which McGranahan mentions, began as far back as 1989.

To return to the beginning of *Arrested Histories*, McGranahan argues that this war was forgotten in the Tibetan exile community. But McGranahan's own introduction belies this fact in mentioning that the veterans of the war have organized themselves into a refugee social and political welfare association. It might be fair to say, but difficult to judge precisely why knowledge of the importance or extent of the guerilla war is inconsistent among Tibetan exiles or why some would maintain that telling war stories is discouraged. Even if the Tibetan resistance is an "arrested history" the most intriguing justification McGranahan provides is that the history of the war challenges the Tibetan social and political status quo, which is the great contribution of this book.

Finally, even while McGranahan artfully paints the Tibetan exile community as diverse in its appreciation for the war and its veterans, she inaccurately depicts the exiles as monolithically supportive of the Dalai Lama, "Within the exile community, the Dalai Lama's authority is unchallenged" (p. 15). This simply is not true. There is a minority of the exile community who openly reject the Dalai Lama's leadership and claim he does not support religious freedom because of his disapproval of the cult of the protective deity Dorjé Shugden. McGranahan acknowledges a connection between Dorjé Shugden and the Chushi Gangdrug in Chapter Four (98-99), but it is mostly regulated to a couple of footnotes. This reader would have liked to have seen evidence that McGranahan had explored the possibility that whatever gulf might exist between mainstream exile society and Chushi Gangdrug veterans might be more attributable to the Dorjé Shugden controversy than regional background. The fact that she represents the exile community as monolithically in support of the Dalai Lama and the central contradiction in veterans' lives as how to be both a proud veteran and an enthusiastic supporter of the Dalai Lama, indicates her failure to account for the degree to which allegiance to one's protector deity and allegiance to the Dalai Lama could be an equal or even larger contradiction for a Tibetan to overcome. In the epilogue, McGranahan quotes the Chushi Gangdrug's five-point public offering to the Dalai Lama on their fiftieth anniversary, which includes a "renewed promise" to not worship Dorjé Shugden. This reader would have liked to have seen McGranahan hypothesize the need and purpose of an anti-Shugden pledge in that context. Is it now a standard formulation directed at the Dalai Lama or a statement the Chushi Gangdrug felt their group in particular had to make in public?

Arrested Histories is an excellent, moving and very readable work, which demonstrates the continuing value of fieldwork among the Tibetan exile community at a time when fieldwork among Tibetans in China is much more popular among anthropologists. It is also a very welcome contribution to the promising subfield of historical anthropology.

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