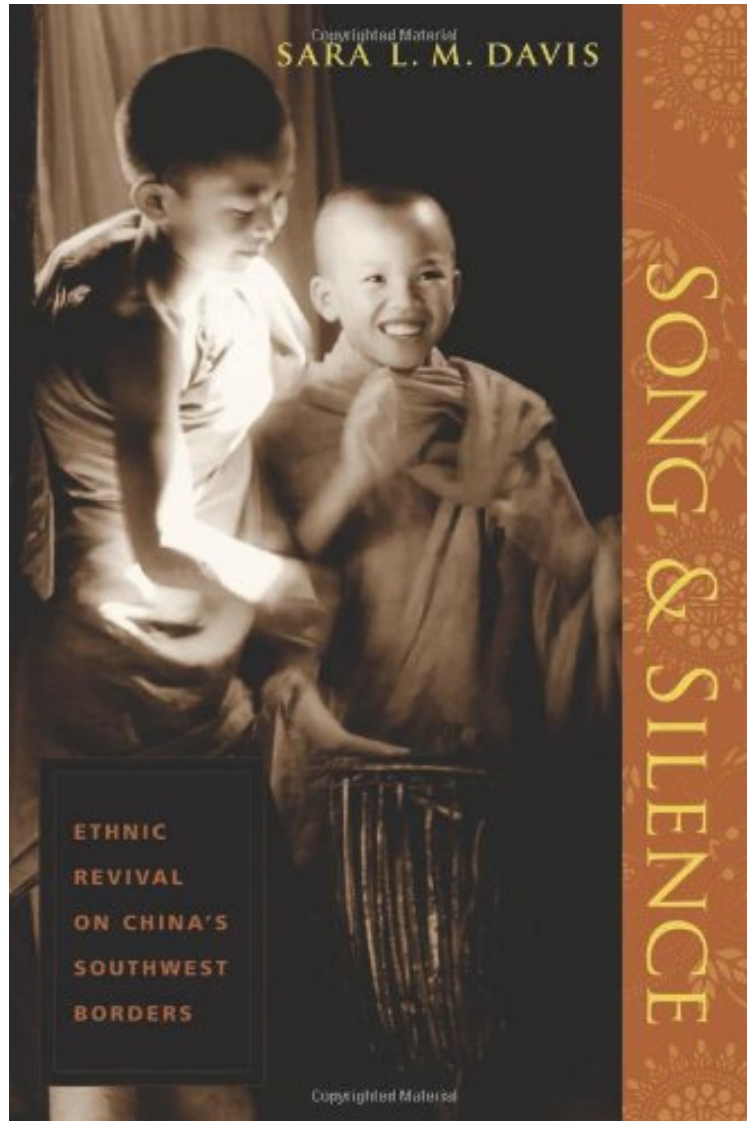


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Song and Silence: Ethnic Revival on China's Southwest Borders

Sara Davis

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Sara Davis : Song and Silence: Ethnic Revival on China's Southwest Borders before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Song and Silence: Ethnic Revival on China's Southwest Borders:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy ZhorA great item at a great price.2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. interesting, but too much prejudiceBy D. KauckThis book is interesting inquiry into the cultural revival of an ethnic minority in China - one that is not in conflict with state authorities.Much of the book is

written in the form of a research diary and travel report, including descriptions of places visited and interactions with local people. This probably makes the book more interesting and entertaining for many readers. Through these interactions, travel, and learning of the minority language the author explores the ethnic revival of the Tai Lue People of Yunnan Province. Partly inspired by related ethnic groups in neighbouring countries, there is a revival and emergence of modern forms of music. The author also analyses state policies towards the culture of the ethnic minority and the development of the prefecture they inhabit as a tropical tourist destination for Chinese tourists. Both function to integrate the prefecture and the minority into China. Unfortunately, even in this central topic of the book, some of the hypotheses seem to be based on stereotypes rather than proper research. The statement that the message from the state to ethnic minorities is to either enrich themselves "through self-commodification, or express other kinds of ethnic identity and create trouble for yourself with the police" (p. 37) seems to conform to common Western perceptions of China, but is not supported in the book. Later in the book the author describes expressions of "other kinds of ethnic identity", but police responses are lacking. It is thus not clear where the earlier statement comes from and it actually seems to be refuted by her own research. Proper background research also seems to be lacking in other parts of the book, including the section on Burma. The author suggests that the end of insurgencies has paved the way for exploitation of resources. In fact many rebel armies were largely financed by natural resource exploitation, which makes her suggestion appear questionable.

In the sunny, subtropical Sipsongpanna region, Tai Lues perform flirtatious, exoticized dances for an increasingly growing tourist trade. Endorsed by Chinese officials, who view the Tai Lues as a "model minority," these staged performances are part of a carefully sanctioned ethnic policy. However, behind the scenes and away from the eyes and ears of tourists and the Chinese government, a different kind of cultural resurgence is taking place. In this vivid and beautifully told ethnography, Sara L. M. Davis reveals how Tai Lues are reviving and reinventing their culture in ways that contest the official state version. Carefully avoiding government repression, Tai Lues have rebuilt Buddhist temples and made them into vital centers for the Tai community to gather, discuss their future, and express discontent. Davis also describes the resurgence of the Tai language evident in a renewed interest in epic storytelling and traditional songs as well as the popularity of Tai pop music and computer publishing projects. Throughout her work, Davis weaves together the voices of monks, singers, and activists to examine issues of cultural authenticity, the status of ethnic minorities in China, and the growing cross-border contacts among Tai Lues in China, Thailand, Burma, and Laos.

I recommend to everyone to read the book... It is indeed a vivid and beautifully told ethnography. (Emily Sarasvati Dharmapanna *Tai Culture*) Touching and beautifully written... Sarah L. M. Davis has provided a path-breaking study of the logic of borders. (Alexander Horstmann *Kyoto of Southeast Asia*) About the Author Sara L. M. Davis is a former researcher in the Asia Division of Human Rights Watch.