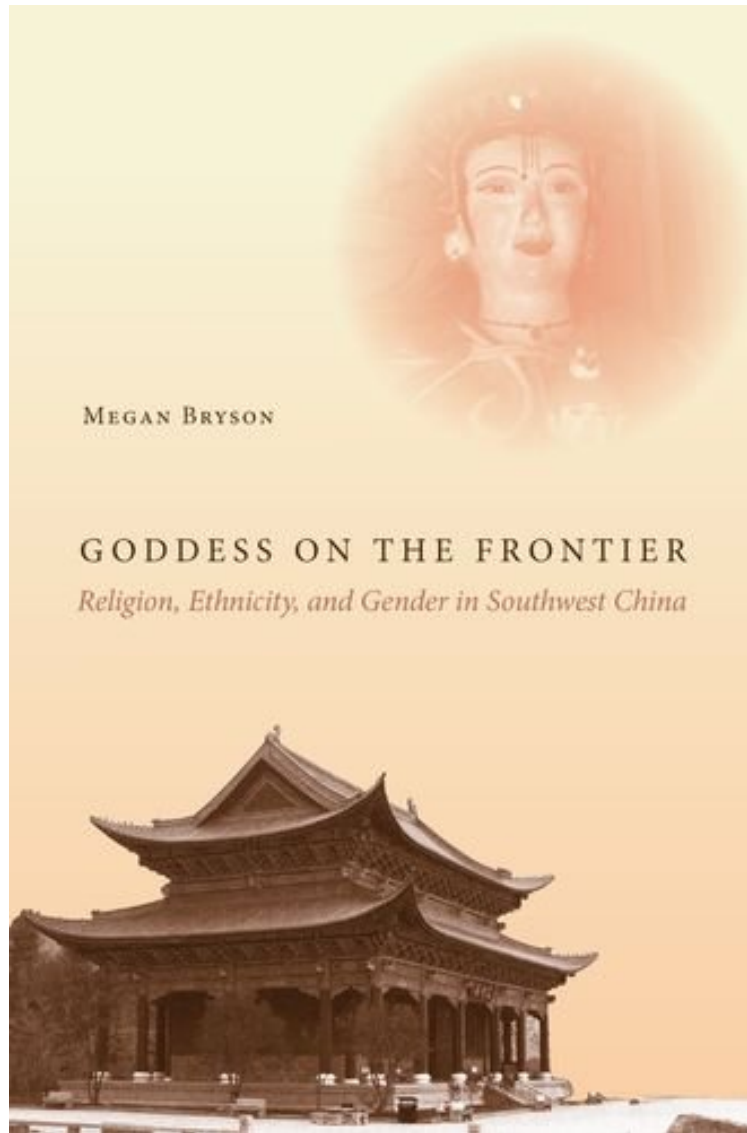


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Goddess on the Frontier: Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender in Southwest China

Megan Bryson

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Megan Bryson : Goddess on the Frontier: Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender in Southwest China before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Goddess on the Frontier:

Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender in Southwest China:

Dali is a small region on a high plateau in Southeast Asia. Its main deity, Baijie, has assumed several gendered forms throughout the area's history: Buddhist goddess, the mother of Dali's founder, a widowed martyr, and a village divinity. What accounts for so many different incarnations of a local deity? *Goddess on the Frontier* argues that Dali's encounters with forces beyond region and nation have influenced the goddess's transformations. Dali sits at the cultural crossroads of Southeast Asia, India, and Tibet; it has been claimed by different countries but is currently part of Yunnan Province in Southwest China. Megan Bryson incorporates historical-textual studies, art history, and ethnography in her book to argue that Baijie provided a regional identity that enabled Dali to position itself geopolitically and historically. In doing so, Bryson provides a case study of how people craft local identities out of disparate cultural elements and how these local identities transform over time in relation to larger historical changes including the increasing presence of the Chinese state.

"Bryson hits her target well...The scholarship is excellent, the sources well researched, and the ancillary references useful." (John W. Dardess *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*) "*Goddess on the Frontier* vividly portrays religious life in Dali (Yunnan). Megan Bryson's interdisciplinary research shows how the manifold images of the goddess Baijie resulted from local worshippers adapting to the impact of Buddhism and Han Chinese culture by subverting stereotypes of sexually uninhibited minority women, while still emphasizing indigenous ideals of feminine fertility." Paul R. Katz, *Academia Sinica* "A compelling interdisciplinary study of a fascinating religio-cultural phenomenon on the frontiers of China, India, and Southeast Asia. Bryson has skillfully combined historical research with fieldwork to produce a methodologically sophisticated portrait of a regionally important goddess through her many historical and contemporary vicissitudes." (Robert Ford Company Vanderbilt University) "No other work has linked gendered religious symbols to the complex process of identity-making in such a long historical span, and with such analytical depth. Meticulously researched and lucidly written, this book makes an important and timely contribution to dialogues about religion, gender, and ethnicity in China." (Xiaofei Kang George Washington University) "A tour de force of historical and ethnographic inquiry, *Goddess on the Frontier* sheds invaluable light on the religion and culture of southwest China. Combining meticulous scholarship with sophisticated theory, this book is a must-read for anyone interested in the interplay of gender, ethnicity, and religion." (Meir Shahar Tel Aviv University) About the Author Megan Bryson is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee.