

compared to members of food-producing communities. Even more striking were differences between life in the tribal communities of hunters and early agriculturalists on the one hand and life in the advanced state-level societies on the other. In the study of European population history and evolution, both approaches—historical and evolutionary—are necessary to make sense of the data available—data that come primarily from paleodemographic sources.

Europe between the Oceans is a reader-friendly book, but it has some noteworthy shortcomings in the editing. There are pleasingly many colored maps and other informative illustrations spread throughout; unfortunately, the text often fails to refer explicitly to them. More disturbing are the many mislabelings on the maps and cases where the color legends are not reproduced on the maps themselves. A second edition would greatly benefit from more care with the illustrations.

Clearly, the book is aimed at an educated readership but not at professional historians. For population scientists, however, it covers material that serious professionals in the subject, demographic historians especially, should be aware of and may well not be. My strong recommendation for European population scientists is to familiarize themselves with the long lines of European history. *Europe between the Oceans* would be a good starting point for such a study, though by no means the only one.

Institute of Forensic Medicine
University of Southern Denmark, Odense

JESPER BOLDSSEN

GEOFF CHILDS

Tibetan Transitions: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Fertility, Family Planning, and Demographic Change

Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008. xvii + 321 p. \$148.00.

At several recent conferences of the International Association of Tibet Studies, Janet Gyatso, a renowned scholar of Tibetan Buddhism, repeatedly challenged Tibetologists to relinquish their isolationism and find ways to inform wider fields of academic inquiry. The dilemma is typical of area studies, yet exacerbated by the perceived exceptionalism of Tibet. What is needed, she suggested, is for a Michel Foucault to emerge from the field, using Tibetan Buddhist peoples as a focus but drawing theoretical ramifications that travel far beyond this high-altitude plateau the size of Western Europe.

Even while she was making these challenges, Geoff Childs had already been meeting them head on, although not from the traditional realms of religious or linguistic studies that usually dominate the field. Rather, he drew from the social scientific realms of anthropology and demography. His book, *Tibetan Transitions*, represents a culmination of such work. It offers a wealth of empirical and theoretical contributions that probably hold more interest for the general anthropologist or demographer than for the traditional Tibetologist. Indeed, in the first chapter he reminds us of the historical precursor of his endeavor: late-eighteenth-century travel observations of Tibet by an English diplomat became a key inspiration for Malthus in the modifications for the second edition of his *Essay*. Referring to Tibetan practices

of monastic celibacy and polyandry, Malthus acknowledged that populations could use preventive checks to limit population growth, rather than simply succumbing to the positive check of mortality as he argued in his first edition.

Childs similarly brings Tibet back to the center of demographic debates, this time informed by years of extensive and intimate field work and a sophisticated understanding of modern social theory. The result is of high relevance for those wishing to understand the dramatic, sometimes traumatic, and almost always highly politicized social transformations in this remote region since the 1950s. He also offers fascinating and pertinent insights for anthropological demography and for demography more generally, particularly with respect to fertility transitions in developing countries. Finally, the book is exemplary in its interdisciplinary combination of qualitative ethnographic methods and quantitative survey methods, as well as in its use of innovative techniques to reconstitute demographic data from historical sources and in politicized and difficult-to-access regions. If only for these last reasons, several chapters would make excellent material for courses on demography or research methods.

The theme of Childs's book revolves around shifts from "natural" to "controlled" fertility regimes and the interplay between culture and agency within these transitions. For lack of longitudinal data or extended access to any one particular case, he analyzes this theme through an innovative comparison of four cases differentiated in space and time. These are a historical study of a pretransitional Tibetan population in Tibet in the late 1950s based on historical registers and interviews with surviving elders living in exile; a study of a contemporary pretransitional ethnic Tibetan population in the Himalayan outskirts of Tibet in northern Nepal, based on field work in the 1990s; and two longitudinal studies of macro-level transitions from the 1950s to the 2000s, one among Tibetan refugees living in exile in India and Nepal, and another among Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, both based on statistical data from several large surveys as well as primary and secondary field work.

Childs broadly focuses on the role of ideational change and the use of contraception in bringing about fertility transitions. However, in exploring such factors he avoids single-explanation theories. He also avoids casting Tibetans in the role of victims, refusing to attribute fertility changes in Tibet to state coercion alone. Rather, he offers a subtle and nuanced consideration of a wide variety of proximate determinants and well-reasoned arguments in support of active agency. His analyses of active agency and of the demographic implications of various institutional settings within both pretransitional and transitional Tibetan populations are major contributions of the study.

In this sense, the book represents a remarkable application of the "anthropology of reproduction" (Greenhalgh 1995), which Childs acknowledges as his dominant theoretical framework. Particularly notable is Chapter 7, in which he compares the very rapid fertility transitions that occurred in an almost identical manner—in timing and magnitude—among both Tibetan exiles and Tibetans in Tibet, despite very different social, economic, and political circumstances. Childs considers several theoretical approaches to explain this counterintuitive observation. He concludes that each sheds light on the case of the Tibetan exiles, in particular the gender equity approach of McDonald (2000), but also the wealth-flow hypothesis of Caldwell (1976), the ideational change approach of Cleland and Wilson (1987), and the institutional focus of McNicoll (1980). On the other hand, he notes that none of these approaches fits the case of Tibetans in Tibet, who remained overwhelmingly rural, patriarchal, and

poorly educated throughout their rapid fertility transition. In seeking to explain this contrast, he narrows his explanation in the latter case to a discussion of the political economy of land ownership in synergy with increased access to, knowledge of, and desire to use contraception.

One element lacking from this theoretical consideration is the issue of mortality as a key causal factor underlying fertility decline (for instance, see Dyson 2001). As I argued in this journal (Fischer 2008: 638), "one can plausibly suggest that both the timing of the fertility transition in Tibet and its subsequent lagging behind the rest of China until the late 1990s were the result of mortality declines in the 1960s and 1970s that, although sustained, were much weaker than those in the rest of China." I was hoping for more elucidation on this point from Childs, but I did not find it in this book. He does consider mortality in certain sections (e.g., pp. 196–201), but does not integrate this discussion into his theoretical consideration of fertility decline. Hence, his focus on proximate determinants of fertility tends to leave the discussion unanchored. Although he distances himself from culturally deterministic explanations, he allows for an interpretation that fertility transitions are predominantly determined by institutional or ideational factors, without explicitly connecting these to the most fundamental structural determinant of all. However, as Childs notes on several occasions, this missing link is partly the result of a lack of credible mortality data before the 1980s.

Nonetheless, the book holds many valuable insights for readers of many different propensities: historical, anthropological, demographic, political economic, and methodological. In his impressive integration of these and other elements, Childs manages to challenge Tibetologists, anthropologists, and demographers alike. While perhaps not yet a Foucault, he clearly draws Tibet studies out of their isolation and shows how the study of Tibetan transitions might inform demographic transition theory more broadly.

*Institute of Social Studies
The Hague*

ANDREW M. FISCHER

References

- Caldwell, J. C. 1976. "Toward a restatement of demographic transition theory," *Population and Development Review* 2(3/4): 321–366.
- Cleland, J. and C. Wilson. 1987. "Demand theories of the fertility transition: An iconoclastic view," *Population Studies* 41: 5–30.
- Dyson, T. 2001. "A partial theory of world development: The neglected role of the demographic transition in the shaping of modern society," *International Journal of Population Geography* 7(2): 67–90.
- Fischer, A. M. 2008. "'Population invasion' versus urban exclusion in the Tibetan areas of western China," *Population and Development Review* 34(4): 631–662.
- Greenhalgh, S. 1995. "Anthropology theorizes reproduction: Integrating practice, political economic, and feminist perspectives," in S. Greenhalgh (ed.), *Situating Fertility: Anthropology and Demographic Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–28.
- McDonald, P. 2000. "Gender equity in theories of fertility transition," *Population and Development Review* 26(3): 427–439.
- McNicoll, G. 1980. "Institutional determinants of fertility change," *Population and Development Review* 6(3): 441–462.