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Koen Wellens

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Koen Wellens : Religious Revival in the Tibetan Borderlands: The Premi of Southwest China (Studies on Ethnic Groups in China) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Religious Revival in the Tibetan Borderlands: The Premi of Southwest China (Studies on Ethnic Groups in

China):

Revival of religious practices of all sorts in China, after decades of systematic government suppression, is a topic of considerable interest to scholars in disciplines ranging from religious studies to anthropology to political science. This book examines contemporary religious practices among the Premi people of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet area, a group of about 60,000 who speak a language belonging to the Qiang branch of Tibeto-Burman. Koen Wellens's ethnographic research in two Premi communities on opposite sides of the border, and his analysis of available historical documents, find multiple advocates and rationales for the revival of both formal Tibetan Buddhism and the indigenous Premi practices centered on ritual specialists called anji. Wellens argues that the variety in the shape the revitalization process takes—as it affects Premi on the Sichuan side of the border and their counterparts on the Yunnan side—can only be understood in a local cultural context. This full-length study of the Premi, the first in a language other than Chinese, makes a valuable contribution to our ethnographic knowledge of Southwest China, as well as to our understanding of contemporary Chinese religious and cultural politics.

"Koen Wellens' deeply serious book on the Premi clearly is a marvelous contribution to the study of precisely these wider issues of how people on the margins of civilizations negotiate their forced incorporation into imposing state machineries . . ."Magnus Fiskesjo, *Anthropos*, Vol. 107 2012" This is the work that anthropologists of southwest China have been looking forward to. . . . [It] fills in the ethnographic gap of English-speaking anthropology on the Tibetan-Yi corridor . . . is full of insightful observations that only intensive fieldwork can render."Liang Yongjia, *Asian Ethnology*"Wellens is to be commended for the detailed and grounded manner in which he reveals the complexities of the historical, linguistic, and ethnic makeup of the Tibetan borderlands and the care with which he documents Premi culture."Gerald Roche, *China International*, Vol. 17(3), 2010" The author . . . convincingly reminds readers that Muli's ordinary people have successfully adapted external religious doctrines to their own syncretic practices and rituals, despite the state's hegemonic classifications in an invincible worldly system."Shao-Hua Liu, *Pacific Affairs*, March 2012". . . a fine ethnographic example of 'thick description' . . . [T]his balanced and thoughtful piece of scholarship . . . gives fascinating insights into the role of certain social actors in several Premi villages and of the social complexities in play between ritual, religion, ethnicity and the power of China's nationality politics."Mona Schrempf, *Journal of Asian Studies*, November 2011 "A muchwelcomed book on the topic of religious revival in reformera China and on the Premi people, as well as on the broader themes of identity politics and the politics of incorporation."Adam Yuet Chau, University of Cambridge *From the Inside Flap* This full-length study of the Premi, the first in a language other than Chinese, makes a valuable contribution to our ethnographic knowledge of Southwest China, as well as to our understanding of contemporary Chinese religious and cultural politics.