
Amid the Clouds and Mist
China's Colonization of Guizhou,
1200–1700

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Amid the Clouds and Mist
China's Colonization of Guizhou,
1200–1700

John E. Herman

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Dates of Selected Eras

Chinese Dynasties

Shang	ca. 17th c.–ca. 11th c. BCE
Zhou	ca. 11th c.–221 BCE
Qin	221–206 BCE
Han	206 BCE–220 CE
Three Kingdoms	220–80
Southern and Northern Dynasties	317–589
Sui	581–618
Tang	618–907
Five Dynasties	907–60
Song	960–1279
Jin	1115–1234
Yuan	1271–1368
Ming	1368–1644
Qing	1636–1912

Kingdoms in the Southwest

Mu'ege	ca. 300–1283
Cuan	338–737
Nanzhao	740–902
Dali	934–1253

Weights and Measures

1 *jin* (catty) = 1.3 pounds or 0.6 kilograms

1 *li* = 0.36 miles or 0.576 kilometers

1 *mu* = 0.1647 acre or 0.0666 hectare

1 *shi* = 103.5 liters or 2.9 bushels (23.5 gallons). One *shi* of milled rice weighed approximately 175–95 pounds (80–89 kg).



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My eyes have gazed upon the empire's vast expanse,
And my heart has absorbed the landscape's peculiarities.
But Guizhou, far from well-traveled roads, is a true wilderness.
It is the strangest of all the places I have visited;
Its heights are magnificent and its depths treacherous.

Forgetting the burden of sense and cognition,
I have chanced on a hidden place where my footprints will remain unseen.
To this eerie place my heart and spirit are committed:
I remove vegetation on my way up the winding mountain path
And burn the thorny brush to clear an open hilltop.

Countless peaks are revealed before me here,
And assembled together in front and behind they are awesome.
I ascend to the highest point to gaze out into the distance,
Sensing how quickly the jagged summits disappear,
Amid the clouds and mist, assuming ten thousand shapes,
And with each image one sees an illusion never grasped in its entirety.

—Qian Bangqi, *Other Mountains*, ca. 1650