

Cultural Heritage Preservation in Regional China: Tourism, Culture and the Shaxi Model

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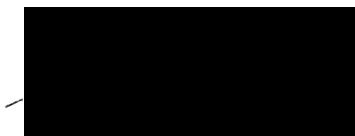
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Abstract

China's post-Mao era of 'opening up and reform' (1978-1992) began a relentless drive for modernization on a national scale. What had survived the wars and revolutions of the last one hundred years, in particular the Great Cultural Revolution (1967-1976), was now under threat again. Industrialization, urbanization, and frantic economic and infrastructure development resulted in a cycle of indiscriminate material destruction (of the old) and construction (of the new) which had a deep impact on people and their lived-in environment. Increasingly, the negative effects of this seemingly unstoppable 'destructionism' were acutely felt and a new awareness of the need to preserve what was left of China's past set in. This led to a new 'era' of preservation, protection, and revitalization of China's rich material and immaterial cultural heritage which occurred within the larger context of China's new commitment to the global (heritage) community, as demonstrated in its joining of the UNESCO World Heritage regime and the enacting of corresponding legislation on a domestic level. It incited a veritable world heritage application 'fever' and an enthusiastic and comprehensive 'heritageisation' of China's past on a national scale. Instrumental here was the continued growth of (domestic) tourism which at once engendered the new cultural revival and endangered it by posing an increasing threat to the material heritage and the integrity and survival of local cultures and traditions. Tourism and cultural heritage are thus intimately linked, while both have become viable tools of government developmental politics.

This study demonstrates that the place where this tourism-cultural heritage nexus is most dramatically played out is China's countryside, in particular the often remote western borderlands where its many diverse minority peoples reside. Driven by 'modernised' urbanites' nostalgic feelings of a near-lost (romanticised) past, small town rural China with its rich vernacular architecture, perceived authentic ethnic cultures, and pristine ecological natural environment is now being fetishized as a 'place of desire' and is consumed in many and varied ways. Here, the '(post) modern' and 'traditional' continually collide and notions of authenticity and integrity become irrelevant as original 'traditional' culture is pitted against re-created/fake 'traditional-style' culture.

In this thesis it is argued that the government as the principal custodian of the nation's heritage, as well as largely the main stakeholder and business enterprise in heritage-tourism development, highly influences these processes. In particular, this occurs through the (re-) construction of space and place (heritage sites and zoning, the national project of 'building a new socialist countryside',

including rural urbanisation and the building of ‘new ancient towns’), as well as the (re-) construction of historical narratives and the shaping of new ethnic identities (through, for example, the standardization and commercialization of cultural and artistic expression, or newly assigned (touristic) cultural characteristics). The study further argues that China’s overarching goal of modernisation is still the basis of all political and rational policy making in contemporary China and where the rationale of a developmental state under-writes this goal. This thesis takes the small town of Shaxi in China’s Yunnan Province, inhabited by mainly the Bai minority, as an ethnographic case study to show how these transformations occur and how local people cope and/or become active agents in the process.

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Abbreviations

UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WTO	World Tourism Organization
GHF	Global Heritage Fund
WHC	World Heritage Committee
SACH	State Authority of Cultural Heritage
CNTO	China National Tourism Organization
ATHR	Ancient Tea Horse Road
BSCS	Build a Socialist Countryside
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value

Chinese Glossary

<i>Jianshe shehuizhuyi xinnongcun</i>	building a socialist new countryside
<i>nongjiale</i>	happy farmer's home/ delights in farm guesthouses
<i>xiangcunyou</i>	rural or countryside tourism
<i>nongjiafan</i>	farmer's home-made meals
<i>nongjiayuan</i>	farm guesthouses
<i>yuanzi</i>	home/house with inner courtyard
<i>siheyuan</i>	house encircled by four walls
<i>sanfang yizhibi</i>	three houses one wall courtyard house
<i>wenming</i>	civilized
<i>you suzhi</i>	human quality, a person's quality measured in terms of behaviour, education, ethics/ ambition
<i>ruan shili</i>	soft power
<i>wenhua chanye</i>	cultural industries
<i>chuangyi chanye</i>	creative industries
<i>li tu bu li xiang</i>	leave the fields without leaving the countryside
<i>tongyi de duominzu guojia</i>	unified multi-ethnic state
<i>difang tese</i>	local characteristics
<i>xiujiu rujiu</i>	built/renovated to look old
<i>baohuxing de fazhan</i>	preservation-style development
<i>hongyang minzu wenhua</i>	promote ethnic cultures

Cultural Heritage Preservation in Regional China: Tourism, Culture and the Shaxi Model



Map 1: China with Overlay of Yunnan Province and its Border Countries of South-East Asia (Google)

INTRODUCTION

On 11 January 2014 a fire broke out and raged for nearly ten hours and almost entirely razed the ancient town of Dukezong - now better known as Shangri-La, or Xianggelila - in the north of China's Yunnan province.¹ The ancient town, once a vibrant staging post located along the Ancient Tea Horse Road, has a history of over one thousand years tied to this once extensive regional trading network and is rich in Tibetan cultural and architectural heritage. The loss of the historic cultural heritage of Dukezong is deeply felt and is a 'fatal blow' to the region and the heritage community.² However, unbeknown to many, the ancient town was not really ancient and its recreation as an 'ancient' town goes back less than twenty years when tourism first made inroads into China's remote western borderlands.



FIGURE 1: DUKEZONG AFTER THE FIRE IN 2014

This remote region has been extremely poor and underdeveloped in the past, so in 2001, in the hope to attract more tourists to the region, Zhongdian County - as it was previously known - was renamed Shangri-la County, in reference to a mystical, mythical place in the Himalayan Mountains described by James Hilton in his 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*.³ The publicity stunt worked and in the next decade tourist numbers climbed substantially.⁴ The government invested heavily in transport and tourism infrastructure and in the process, Shangri-la's transformation occurred in a fashion best described as

¹ Dukezong is the name of the ancient part of Shangri-la County town, formerly known as Zhongdian County in Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, North-West Yunnan.

² Wang Fan, 'Effective Measures Needed For Ancient Towns: Deputies', *China Daily*, 10 March 2014, <http://www.ecns.cn/2014/03-10/104091.shtml>

³ J. Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, Harper Collins, 2004. The 'branding' of Shangri-la was a fierce competition between different communities, each claiming to be the 'real' Shangri-La. See, A. Kolas, 'Tourism and the Making of Place in Shangri-La', *Tourism Geographies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2004, pp. 262-278.

⁴ J. Feiner and N. Hellmann, 'Dukezong Historic Town Preservation', CITECE STAR mission report. Beijing: United Nations Development Program, June 6, 2004; see also, Kolas, 'Tourism and the Making of Place ...'.

the ‘turn-village-into-tourist-destination-no-matter-what’ paradigm⁵, where cultural and historical authenticity and integrity of the rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage was of little concern.⁶

The transformation of Dukezong into Shangrila had its precedent in an earlier development model that was also born out of a natural disaster. In 1996, the nearby ancient town of Lijiang, or Dayan, as it was known then, was struck by an earthquake which largely destroyed the town. Recognizing the value of the once great local architecture and unique Naxi culture, Lijiang was listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site in 1997. What followed was a path of development that had no prior example: Lijiang was rebuilt at the same time as it was prepared for large-scale tourism, resulting in what has become known as ‘heritage-tourism development’, or ‘heritage construction’, where tourism became the *raison d’être* both for economic development and developing Lijiang into a premier world heritage town. The ancient town was almost entirely re-built in a modernized pseudo-local/post-traditional style while the once vibrant local Naxi culture was highly commercialized. The ‘new ancient town’ of Lijiang has since become a successful tourist destination beyond anyone’s expectations and in spite of the frequent conflicts surrounding its reconstruction since its World Heritage inception in 1997, ‘it has played a crucial role in Yunnan and beyond as a model for how heritage, ethnicity and culture can become resources to generate wealth and acquiring a “modern” identity’.⁷

Background

In 1979 the post-Mao leadership initiated radical new policies of ‘opening up and reform’ and embarked on a wholesale drive of industrial, economic and social modernization of the country. This resulted in a cycle of comprehensive material destruction of the old and a construction of the new. Over the next few decades, whole cities and traditional neighbourhoods were flattened and replaced by super-modern skyscrapers, residential conglomerates, and tech industrial parks.⁸ Urban residents were resettled in the millions, while millions of rural migrant workers left the fields and flooded the cities to help rebuild the new China and take part in the economic boom. A similar scenario was repeated in the Chinese countryside, where thousands of China’s rural ancient towns and villages were destroyed, mostly following a development pattern of building new towns (in the

⁵ This author’s quote

⁶ Feiner and Hellmann, ‘Dukezong Historic Town Preservation’.

⁷ H. Evans and M. Rowlands, ‘Reconceptualizing Heritage in China: Museums, Development and the Shifting Dynamics of Power’, in P. Basu and W. Modest (eds.), *Museums, Heritage and International Development*, New York, Routledge, 2015, pp. 272-294.

⁸ The late 1990s and early 2000s in particular saw a wave of large-scale destruction which was largely due to more favourable economic policies (privatization, loosening of state control) that also unleashed a period of heightened commercialization, including that of natural and cultural resources.

typical Stalinist/socialist style) alongside the old (and completely neglecting the old) , but mostly demolishing the old completely.

This destruction and re-construction of the countryside was happening at the same time as a rural cultural revival took hold. The new reform policies had triggered a new flourishing of the diverse ethnic cultures and traditions, including religious sites and practices, vernacular architecture, festivals and song and dance, which were increasingly integrated into or became the basis of a growing tourism and heritage industry. However, as those new tourism resources were getting scarcer by the day, it also triggered a new awareness and need to protect China's rapidly vanishing rural built and cultural heritage. Paradoxically, what followed was a continuation of the ongoing demolition of the countryside, experienced by a frenetic pace of (re-)building traditional villages and 'making the ancient new', and extensive road and tourism infrastructure construction and development, supported by regional strategic economic policies of the early 2000s such as the *Great Western Development* and *Build a Socialist Countryside*. The growing number of potential 'ancient' tourist towns and villages were now competing for locational advantage by developing their more or less unique cultural resources to a mostly generic blue-print of pseudo Ming/Qing dynasty style or following other successful development models, thus adding to an increasingly homogenous rural village landscape.

Aim of this research

This thesis seeks to explore the politics of cultural heritage in China at this junction of rampant modernization and re-orientation to the past. Nowhere in China is this antithesis played out more profoundly and powerful than in rural China, where the 'traditional' and 'modern' continually clash, are continually questioned, and where heritage and the past are continually re-invented, re-built, and re-constructed to inform the final goal of the 'modern'. The politics of cultural heritage (protection and conservation) and the past provides us a key to better understand these processes and changes, and the negotiations local people, government and other stakeholders have to undergo to secure their relative positions and advantages. This thesis thus also explores the intricate relationship between heritage and power (or control), on the one hand, and heritage as a social action, that is, the relationship of heritage and nationalism, cultural, ethnic and national identity, as well as globalisation, and grass-roots heritage movements. By taking the recently restored ancient market town of Shaxi on the Ancient Tea Horse Road in China's south-west province of Yunnan as a case study, this thesis will illuminate the 'tensions' of the processes of modernization in an

ethnically diverse and traditional environment, and show how a dominant politically-charged heritage discourse (with Chinese characteristics) uses culture and tradition as tools for the overarching goals of economic development, urbanization, and modernization, as well as to use it as ‘soft power’ to present a cosmopolitan image to the world. The increasing number and diversity of stakeholders in heritage and tourism development (NGO’s, local people, foreign and outsider entrepreneurs, tourism agencies and tourists) challenges this hegemonic discourse and traditional power holders. Cultural heritage tourism, as the major category of the rapidly increasing (domestic) tourism market, plays a pivotal role in this project and is played out in the many world heritage sites, nationally designated scenic spots, and in the ‘new ancient towns’.

In particular, this study explores the often contradicting and competing, creative and destructive, processes of economic development and modernization against the background of heritage preservation in rural south-west China. This region is a border-zone inhabited by a large number of culturally diverse peoples who have migrated there over many millennia and have been – to various degrees – assimilated and integrated into the greater Chinese civilizational and cultural realm. Heritage and the past in these regions are thus deeply entangled with a sense of belonging, place-making and notions of identity – be it cultural, ethnic, (trans-) national, regional or local. In the past, these identities have been framed in terms of the nation and nation-building, but increasingly, as a result of a growing ‘heritageization’ and ‘tourism-fication’ of the countryside, local identities, cultures and traditions, have also been re-framed by the market. This has been most evident in the small towns and villages in the ethnically diverse provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou which have experienced high tourism growth due to their unique cultural and natural resources.

Argument

In this thesis I argue that China’s overarching goal of modernization is still the basis of all political and rational policy-making and where the rationale of a developmental state under-writes this goal.⁹ Tourism (based on cultural and natural resources), poverty alleviation (through pro-poor tourism and agricultural diversification and innovation), and (rural) urbanization are the primary conditions for the modernization of the countryside in this region and are the main considerations in decision-making of village development. Heritage is thus considered a means to an end and is largely

⁹ In recent decades, China has seen significant reforms and changes, including in the ideological, political, legal, and socio-economic spheres, based on which it can be classified as an (authoritarian) developmental state. See, Z. Cheng, ‘Dilemmas of Change in Chinese Local Governance: Through the Lens of Heritage Conservation’, PhD, University of Sheffield, 2015.

economically motivated, resulting in the commercialization and gentrification of the local built and cultural heritage. Cultural and natural resources are exploitable assets as increasingly new (capitalist) market forces drive development. Local (ethnic) people are increasingly – and by necessity – participating in this race and thus have also become accessories in perverting their own heritage. However, more often they are excluded from meaningful engagement in the tourism industry and are generally struggling to cope with the new, mostly externally – even globally – imposed changes of modernization and fast development.

Research method

This thesis is an ethnographic study utilizing qualitative and quantitative research methods, including the consultation of both Chinese and English sources. I employ critical heritage and discourse theory in my inquiries to address the multi-faceted nature and academic inter-disciplinarity of heritage, and explore Chinese theories in heritage studies which are not borrowed from the West. In order to understand the current state of heritage protection and preservation in China, I use discourse analysis to introduce the reader to the Western World Heritage regime led by UNESCO and its affiliated agencies and which is based on a dominant Western Eurocentric authorized heritage discourse (AHD) as proposed by LJ Smith.¹⁰ The Chinese national heritage discourse and legislation are strongly tied to this Western universal and authorised heritage discourse, but local heritage practice continuously challenges the global/national norm.¹¹

In this study I explore these challenges by also asking: what are the main factors influencing heritage policy and practice in (rural) China? How and why do certain small town development projects change track from being a (designated) unique model of heritage preservation to a more generic model of heritage-tourism development? How does (rural) tourism influence social and economic development in ethnic villages, in particular, what impact do these developments (modernization) have on rural culture and tradition? How do villagers perceive their heritage in the onslaught of tourism and how do they react to it? How are local identities (re-) formed as a result of these developments? And lastly, what is the role of minority people in preserving their heritage?

To answer these and other questions, I have conducted formal and open-ended interviews with local stakeholders, including government officials, local and outsider/foreign business people and

¹⁰ L.J. Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*, New York, Routledge, 2006.

¹¹ Evans and Rowlands, 'Reconceptualizing Heritage in China ...'.

guesthouse owners. Further, I have distributed a survey/questionnaire which provided a small sample for analysis which I have used to support my interviews. This study is to a large extent based on qualitative methods of cultural immersion and participant observation, casual, impromptu, but topic-relevant conversations, familiarity (over time), my diary and other field notes. I have used textual analysis as another method of research, where I have studied tourism promotions in both English and Chinese of Yunnan, the Ancient Tea Horse Road and the greater Dali, Lijiang and Shangri-La tourist zone, including Shaxi. These included tourist brochures, booklets, a range of media platforms, including Wechat, travel accounts on internet forums, and historical accounts of the region in recently published academic books, which are only available in Chinese. Scholarly publications by Chinese local historians and intellectuals on ancient towns, such as Shaxi and Jianchuan, major tourist attractions, such as Shibaoshan, and local folk culture and history, are abundant but are often very similar in content, such as the dominant (recreated) local historical and cultural narrative. There is only one official publication available in English on the *Shaxi Rehabilitation Project* called *Reading Time in Shaxi*, co-written by local architect Huang Yinwu, the Swiss representative of the project.¹² Other publications include a Master Thesis and a few short articles published internally at ETH Zurich University.¹³ The study gains further validity and understanding through visits to other ‘new ancient towns’ in the area and studying other relevant ethnographic case studies of the region. Here, classic and more recent anthropological/ethnographical work by foreign scholars working in the region on topics such as ethnicity and identity, nationalism, tourism, gender, and heritage were helpful and inspiring.¹⁴

I have chosen one case study for my empirical work which is supported by a separate comprehensive theoretical chapter on the phenomenon of ‘new ancient towns’ in rural China.

¹² Y. Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi* (original title: *zai Shaxi yuedu shijian*), Kunming: Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House, 2007.

¹³ See J. Feiner, S. Mi and W. Schmid, ‘Sustainable Rural Development Based on Cultural Heritage’, ETH Zurich, Switzerland, DISP 151, 2002; P. Bertschi, ‘Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for Shaxi Valley’, Diploma Thesis, Volume 1/2. Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, 2005; P. Bertschi, ‘Regional Economic Development Strategy for Shaxi Valley (Jianchuan County, Yunnan Province, People’s Republic of China)’, Shaxi Rehabilitation Project, SRP (Rural Pilot Shaxi), Training and Research Program ‘Environment’, China (TRP-E), September 2009.

¹⁴ These include, D. Gladney, ‘Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1994, pp.93-123; R. A. Litzinger, *Other Chinas: The Yao and the Politics of National Belonging*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2000; T. Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, New York, Routledge, 1998; L. Schein, *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China’s Cultural Politics*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2000; C. Mackerras, ‘Aspects of Bai Culture: Change and Continuity in a Yunnan Nationality’, *Modern China*, Vol. 14, No. 1, January 1988, pp. 51-84; P. Niyiri, *Scenic Spots. Chinese Tourism, the State, and Cultural Authority*. Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2006.

Significance of the research

This research adds to a growing pool of scholarly ethnographic studies on cultural heritage conservation in minority areas in south-west China. It takes a new approach as it analyses cultural heritage protection and preservation in China through the lens of the phenomenon of the ‘new ancient towns’ by using the framework of ‘modernization’ in China as an analytical tool. Instrumental to this method is an inquiry into the interlocking projects, mechanisms and policies attached to modernization (economic development, poverty alleviation, tourism and livelihood diversification, urbanization, agricultural diversification and innovation, as well as the recognition of the importance of the nation’s heritage and the past) in order to establish what modernization - and by proxy modernity - means in contemporary rural China. It is then possible to infer why and how - and in spite of following rigid legislation and global heritage norms - the phenomenon of the ‘new ancient town’ has become the ‘new normal’.

Further, the Ancient Tea Horse Road is a relative new concept but has in recent years gained considerable interest in China and abroad as it has been put on the Chinese tentative list for World Heritage nomination in the category of ‘cultural routes’. While the nomination is a lengthy process, the current developments (heritage selection, protection and preservation of culture, nature, architecture and artefacts) around its possible inclusion on the World Heritage list are important. However, at this point, with the exception of the research and publications on the Ancient Tea Horse Road of my supervisor, Gary Sigley, academic scholarly publications are almost exclusively in Chinese language. Therefore, this study is important as it is the first such study in the English language where heritage conservation in China is analysed by using tourism and (rural) modernization as frameworks for ‘Chinese-style’ heritage-making in ancient towns and villages on the Ancient Tea Horse Road.

Field Site

Shaxi village is situated in a beautiful remote and fertile valley in the north-west of Yunnan province in the foothills of the Himalayas at an elevation of 2100m. It is nestled between the Cangshan Mountain range (east) which towers over the fertile Dali-Erhai plain and the Hengduan Mountains (west) which house the world heritage site of the ‘Three Parallel Rivers’. It lies roughly in between the two major tourist destinations of Lijiang and Dali, and also directly connects to Shangrila. Shaxi valley and the immediate region is inhabited by mainly the Bai minority group (others include the Yi, Lisu, and Han) which is the second largest minority group in Yunnan after

the Yi minority group. Politically, Shaxi is a small town, or 'zhen' surrounded by a cluster of administrative and natural villages and is still mainly reliant on agriculture.

In November 2002, Shaxi old town (*Shaxi Sidengjie* 沙溪寺登街) was listed on the World Monument Fund's '100 Most Endangered World Heritage Sites'. It is stated, '[T]he Shaxi Market Area in China's Yunnan Province is the most complete surviving example of a trading center along the historic Tea and Horse Caravan Trail, which linked Tibet with Southeast Asia between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries'.¹⁵ This marked the beginning of the *Shaxi Rehabilitation Project* (SRP), a joint Swiss-Chinese restoration project, supported by national and international funding and expertise, to restore the old market town back to its former glory. It also put this once important and famous but long forgotten stop-over on the Ancient Tea Horse Road back on the map, more precisely, on the tourist map.

From the mid-2000s when restorations of the Market place had finished, to around 2012 (the time of my field work), Shaxi had experienced only a gradual increase in tourism. Due to its remote location it had so far escaped mass tourism which has had major impacts on the nearby cities of Dali, Lijiang, and Shangri-la. Since then, however, in preparation of the impending opening in 2014 of the major high-way linking Dali with Lijiang and Jianchuan county town (Shaxi's nearest town and transport hub), small and larger-scale business and investment activities have greatly increased. This has created a favourable environment for tourism and economic development which have taken off at great speed and have greatly changed the outward face, or façade, of Shaxi, as well as its internal social dynamics. The new highway has cut travelling time to Shaxi considerably and potentially now opens up the valley for mass tourism. However, Shaxi valley has a fragile ecology and its main advantage has been its remote location that has helped preserve much of its natural and cultural heritage, which in turn is the draw-card for tourism. Therefore, Shaxi is at a cross-roads and the local authorities have to decide which way to go: will they go (further) down the path of 'mainstream' (heritage) tourism development in China, or will they maintain a path of development for Shaxi as a model for green, ecological, and sustainable tourism development, with its unique architectural heritage at the core, as intended and initiated by the SRP?

Fieldwork and Methodology

¹⁵ World Monument Fund, <https://www.wmf.org/project/shaxi-market-area>

This research project comprises one extended fieldwork trip from August 2011 - May 2012, and a follow-up visit from end of July to middle of October in 2014. My first fieldwork trip in 2011/12 was approved by Yunnan University in Kunming where I was enrolled as a paying foreign research student and affiliated with the Ancient Tea Horse Road Research Centre under the auspices of Prof Mu Jihong and his team. Several places were suggested to me by my supervisor and the Kunming research centre staff, including Dali, Lijiang, Shangrila, and the recently restored small town of Shaxi in Yunnan's north-west Jianchuan County. After travelling around and investigating these towns, it was soon clear to me that Shaxi was the place where I would stay and do my research. It satisfied most of the criteria of my intended research as Shaxi is rich in history and natural, architectural, and cultural heritage.

One of the major difficulties I soon encountered was the language barrier, as most middle-aged and older people, my main research subjects, speak the Bai dialect, and their spoken Mandarin has a heavy accent. The importance of language in communicating with our informants is well recognized, however, the influence of language (fluency, or 'communicative competency') of native/ non-native speakers in the research process has rarely been interrogated. Dales and Tanu, for example, in their research on how language shapes ethnographic fieldwork found that 'implications of language can lead to valuable contrasts within the informant group, and subsequently a valuable reframing of the research aims and process, as well as outcomes', and ultimately, to take ethnography seriously, 'we must also address our relationship with language, complex, shifting and imperfect as we inevitably find it'¹⁶. Younger people in general are Bai-Mandarin bilingual but don't speak English or are very shy about it. As Shaxi does not have a high school most of the younger generation leave Shaxi to study or work outside the valley or are migrant workers in the bigger cities, which also heavily weighs on Shaxi's population distribution, in particular in the outlying and poor villages. My Chinese is on an intermediate level both written and oral, so communication was often a struggle until I became more accustomed to the local accent. I had only few opportunities to enlist the help of someone who spoke English for some of my interviews, but I did not want to use outside business owners (only one or two of whom spoke English) as I saw it as a conflict of interest, and I already sensed early on a tension between locals and outside business owners. For other informal interviews I had to be more inventive by finding ways to approach potential subjects directly, including government workers, without invitation, which, while unorthodox in a Chinese context, has mostly been a surprisingly successful and welcoming experience with lots of cups of tea. As has also been noted by many foreigners who do research in

¹⁶ D. Tanu and L. Dales, 'Language in Fieldwork: Making Visible the Ethnographic Impact of the Researcher's Linguistic Fluency', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 31 July 2015.

China, it can be very difficult to gain access to the field site, to official data, and to government officials for interviews without proper invitation, or *guanxi*, in particular when working with ethnic minorities as these are considered sensitive topics.¹⁷ As well, it can be just as difficult to find ordinary people who are able and willing to help beyond simple social interaction.

I had prepared a long survey/ questionnaire (English and Chinese) while still in Australia which I had ethics approval for, but in the field it proved very difficult to find a willing, educated, literate and representative sample group to fill out the survey, and the result was only 10 returned questionnaires out of about 20. I encountered the same apprehension at formal and informal interviews. Later on, I shared some thoughts about my work with the then manager of the *Shaxi Cultural Centre* (who also became a research assistant with the newly established *Shaxi Low Carbon Community Centre*) and who was, at that time, designing a survey for the Centre on certain aspects of village life, economy, and culture. In this preliminary survey (community needs assessment report) she included some relevant questions for my study in regards to culture and cultural heritage, as in this way I could tap into the larger sample of survey subjects which would otherwise have not been possible for me.

From the very beginning when I arrived in Shaxi, I did my rounds every day, and the local Shaxi people slowly got to know and trust me knowing I was there at the time, a Ph.D. student from Australia, investigating the history and cultural heritage of the ATHR and Shaxi. I also got to know *them* and integrated easily into the community, but as with most field researchers, my ‘outsider-insider’ position fluctuated in intensity. My ‘insider’ position was constructed through being slowly integrated into my host family at my first visit, but even more fully integrated at my second (shorter) visit when I became a ‘laowai nainai’ (grandmother) as the young Ouyang’s had a baby which I often looked after. Much in the way of classical Malinowskian style of doing ethnographic research I was immersing myself totally into local life, including living arrangements, participation in daily life activities and major celebrations.¹⁸ This was my best choice. I had to let the field shape my research, which required time, but it could also create those unforeseen opportunities of ‘serendipitous’ encounters and ‘Geertzian moments’ (which basically deconstruct the traditional

¹⁷ See, for an extensive example, C. Cornet, ‘Fieldwork among the Dong National Minority in Guizhou, China: Practicalities, Obstacles and Challenges’, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 51, No. 2, 2010, pp. 135-147.

¹⁸ J. Blommaert, and J. Dong, *Ethnographic Fieldwork. A Beginner’s Guide*, Multilingual Matters, Bristol, UK, 2010; see also the ethnographic masterwork by B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1922.

approach – geographical, temporal, and social unity of study and a narrative of cultural encounters) in my ethnographic fieldwork and writing.¹⁹

Relationships in the field are mostly established according to one's positionality, including age, ethnicity, gender, social status and social networks and more, and which then also determines accessibility to different informants and data sources.²⁰ In many ways, my gender and age (female, middle-aged) were an advantage, as I was old enough *and* an academic to elicit respect and credibility, and as an older female I also fitted well into one of the communities I was interested in, the middle-aged and older women who do the work in the fields, run food stalls, help out at banquets at weddings and funerals, and who frequent the temple to pray and prepare feasts. As was pointed out in speeches given by members of the local county cultural bureau at the end of a workshop on cultural preservation that I attended, it is the women, the mothers, who keep the heritage alive, they teach and educate the next generation, talk to them in their native language and teach them traditional ways of life.²¹ Indeed, I often noticed the influence and power of women in Bai communities, especially within the family. Once we got to know each other better, the older women took me around to outlying temple gatherings and celebrations, or just to the local *benzhu* temple, and more generally acknowledged me as they also realised I was genuinely interested in their culture. I lived with a local Bai family (in a guest house), and while we became quite close, I did not want to push building 'rapport' purely for the sake of extracting desired information, something which could easily impact on a relationship.²² When I returned to Shaxi for a brief period in 2014, local life had changed so much that I found it difficult to combine these two visits in my thesis. As is often the case with multiple, or multi-temporal, field visits, my gaze had shifted towards more specific topics and events²³, in particular as new aspects for further inquiry opened up. Interestingly, also, local people, in particular my Bai friend, tried to steer me to their own points of interest and enjoyment (food, home, festival and song and dance performances), and what they thought would be interesting for me to research, rather than what I (thought I) wanted.

Organization of Chapters

¹⁹ I. Rivoal and N.B. Salazaar, 'Introduction: Contemporary ethnographic practice and the value of serendipity', *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*, 2013.

²⁰ Cornet, 'Fieldwork among the Dong ...';

²¹ Recorded lecture by author (Jianchuan workshop, September 2014);

²² J.J. Schensul and M.D. LeCompte, *Essential Ethnographic Methods. A Mixed Methods Approach*, AltaMira Press, 2013.

²³ Blommaert and Dong, *Ethnographic Fieldwork ...* ;

Chapter One provides an overview and historical context of cultural heritage in the West. A definition and scope of heritage as understood in the West (D. Lowenthal, R. Harrison, R. Hewison, R. Samuels, P. Wright, L.J. Smith) are given before addressing the politics and uses of heritage and the emergence of a 'heritage industry'. Here, relationships of local-national-global power, of ownership and representation, of collective memory and more, are put into relevant context of contested heritage, heritage at risk, heritage in conflict, as well as in the context of commodification, ethnicity, and identity. The heritage regime and its dominant (global) institutions for the protection of the 'heritage for humanity', such as UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS, and other affiliated NGO's are discussed in terms of laws, charters, rules and regulation relevant to their environment of creation in Europe, as well as the controversies surrounding these institutions. A UNESCO-sanctioned Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) and the uses of heritage as put forward by L.J. Smith are discussed, in particular relating to cultural heritage as cultural and social processes of meaning and memory making, identity construction, or re-theorisation of heritage.²⁴

Chapter Two acknowledges these discourses of a Western/Euro-centric heritage regime and specifically addresses cultural heritage preservation in China, including its history, philosophy and narratives of the past, as well as the practice of heritage conservation and possible alternative discourses of cultural heritage in China. This is followed by an enquiry into the politics of cultural heritage in China today, including the hierarchy of heritage governance, the entanglement with global forces and institutions, the politics of 'soft power', a well-institutionalised 'cultural and heritage industry', a new cosmopolitanism, and the intertwining of cultural heritage protection, preservation, and production with social, political and economic forces of change in present-day China. As cultural heritage protection in China is very much tied to an economic agenda, this discussion also includes theories of the developmental state and a political economy, the discourse of (spiritual and material) modernization in China, dominant ideologies (Marx/Lenin/Mao) and identity politics. It further draws attention to power politics between the Chinese State as the self-appointed guardian of China's cultural heritage, the people, and an increasing heterogeneity of other stakeholders in cultural heritage production. Finally, the disjuncture between a government discourse of heritage preservation and protection and its practice on the ground is discussed. It is here that grass-roots participation, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and philanthropy find their way into the discussion of power and agency.

²⁴ L. Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*, New York, Routledge, 2006.

Chapter Three examines the history and development of tourism in contemporary China and the forces that enabled its unique and whirlwind growth. China's path of tourism development was entirely different to that of the West, in its historical, social, economic and political aspects, and in its administrative structure.²⁵ This chapter exposes the phenomenon of the 'Chinese tourist' that behaves much unlike the Western tourist, and has its grounding in a long tradition of literati travel and the canon of 'scenic views and spots'.²⁶ This tradition of leisure and travel impacted greatly on the physical (infrastructure) development of the tourism industry and the tourism product. Tourism as an 'industry' only developed in the late 1980, and because of its rapid growth and the associated benefits it soon became a 'pillar' industry of national and provincial development. The encounter between 'hosts' and 'guests' was seen by the state as an opportunity to further the projects of civilizational and spiritual as well as material modernization. In this new travel era, the state played an important role in creating and promoting a common Chinese heritage and culture within its project of modernization and nation-building.²⁷ As the tourism industry keeps expanding, the last few years have been dominated by new forms of travel and new tourism products, such as rural tourism, eco-tourism, ethnic tourism, backpacker and individual tourism, nature and adventure tourism, and in particular heritage and cultural tourism, and is therefore aligning itself with more global trends, but all the while tied to the tradition of 'scenic spot' travel.

Chapter Four discusses the Chinese government's relationship with its ethnic minority peoples. China is a multi-ethnic country and the discursive framework of cultural heritage is intimately linked with the recognition of minority, ethnic, and national culture and identity. In the early 1950s, the Chinese government embarked on a Stalinist/Marxist influenced project of recording and classifying its many ethnic peoples resulting in the official recognition of fifty-five minority nationalities (*shaoshu minzu*), plus the Han as the majority group.

In the context of the case study, the Bai minority (*bai minzu*) of Yunnan's Dali Autonomous Region is discussed. Historically, the Bai have been considered an 'ethnically advanced' society that was highly acculturated with the Han. However, in the course of the 1980s cultural 'revivalism' of the countryside (China's own 'cultural turn') and increasing tourism, both the state and the people were

²⁵ P. Nyiri, *Scenic Spots. Chinese Tourism. The State, and Cultural Authority*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2006.

²⁶ R. E. Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes. Travel Writing from Imperial China*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.

²⁷ T. Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, New York, Routledge, 1998.

consciously crafting a new ‘touristic’ ethnic identity around (re-) invented folk customs and traditions of the Bai.²⁸

While historically ethnic peoples in this region were considered ‘backward’ (*luohou*) and of ‘low quality’ (*di suzhi*), in a twist, in the new environment of tourism and marketization, they have become the ‘desired’ object for China’s newly affluent urbanites to find recourse to a lost and romanticized past. However, while *minzu* is a state construct and largely accepted today, the politics of identity construction around this label is not always clear-cut and reveals ongoing negotiations between the state and society. The chapter finishes with a personal experience of a government-organized training workshop of Bai minority performance which brings to light how official theory and rhetoric of intangible cultural heritage protection is put into practice on the ground.

Chapter Five focuses on the transformation of ‘authentic’ ancient towns into ‘new ancient towns’ spurred on by growing (rural and heritage) tourism demand amidst continuing economic growth and modernization, an increasing awareness of heritage preservation, and the national project of urbanization. The use of cultural heritage assets in urban planning has been most visible in the (re-) building of China’s traditional villages and towns and the revival of their intangible past.²⁹ Many of these have succeeded in ‘authentically’ restoring, rebuilding, and promoting their cultural heritage and have become models for others, while more are waiting to be developed, but most of them will only copy a prevailing generic ‘cut-and-paste’ style blueprint of fake/replica Ming and Qing dynasty style architecture and commodification of ethnic culture, adding to the already homogenous spread of ‘new ancient’ tourist towns and villages. Adding to this, an increasing diversity of stakeholders with often competing interests, such as governments, developers, tourism companies, tourists, migrant businesses and local people, vie for space and resources, but mostly benefits. This reconstruction of the countryside has fundamentally changed local space and place and thus has been impacting heavily on local cultures and identities.

Chapter Six introduces the Ancient Tea Horse Road (ATHR) in China's south-west province of Yunnan, providing both a regional, national, and world-view of this ancient trade route. In the last few decades, Yunnan has sought to regain its historic strategic position by locating itself as a ‘bridgehead’ to Asia and reposition itself vis-à-vis the centre.³⁰ Instrumental in this repositioning

²⁸ B. Notar, *Displacing Desire: Travel and Popular Culture in China*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2006.

²⁹ In June 2013, the Ministry of Construction and Housing issued a list of 646 renowned villages and towns in China worthy of protection, among them 62 historic and ancient villages in Yunnan province alone, many of them along the Ancient Tea Horse Road, ‘which together represent a great wealth of culturally significant architecture’.

³⁰ T. Summers, *Yunnan – A Chinese Bridgehead to Asia. A Case Study of China’s Political and Economic Relations with its Neighbours*, Oxford, Chandos Publishing, 2013; see also, G. Sigley, ‘From “Backwater” to “Bridgehead”’:

was the ‘rediscovery’ of the ATHR. All through China’s ancient history, but notably since the Tang dynasty (618-907), this region, with its strategic access to China’s plains, South-East Asia, Tibet and beyond, had developed a significant trading network, including the trade of tea, horses, salt, jade and a multitude of other commodities, as well as a rich and varied social network and cultural exchange, which resulted in bustling centres of commercial activity, vibrant entertainment nodes, and busy market towns.³¹ It passed through the most ethnically and topographically diverse regions, immensely rich in flora, fauna and natural resources, and still harbours significant cultural heritage. Today, the ATHR is associated with a past - imagined or real - irrevocably lost and is now used as a marketing and branding tool, a marker for regional identity and a platform for promoting national unity. In this sense, the ATHR has become an important cultural icon, and its tourism potential focuses squarely on the resurrection of ancient towns.

Chapters VII and VIII discuss the author’s research site of Shaxi, in China’s south-west Yunnan province. In Chapter VII, I will first introduce the reader to Shaxi in terms of its geography, history, and diverse culture and locate it within an emerging regional awakening tied to the heritage construction and production of the Ancient Tea Horse Road. A joint Sino-Swiss heritage rehabilitation project to save the ancient Market place commenced in 2001 and has set the foundation for its future as a pilot model for poverty alleviation and comprehensive sustainable rural development. In Chapter VIII, I will analyse my findings from my field work. Here we witness, on a micro scale, the immense changes that take place in China at a time of intense economic development and modernization, and where tourism has become the driver of both in these remote hinterlands. As Shaxi has been developing from a traditional ethnic community with a unique cultural heritage into a tourist ‘hot spot’ for cashed up middle-class urbanites, its people have been increasingly subjected to the vagaries of modern life they are mostly ill prepared for, including participating in a capitalist economy, urbanization, loss of ethnic ways of life and identity, deteriorating village harmony and cohesion, exposure to foreign and modern cultures and new ways of thinking and doing. Shaxi’s urban transformation into a ‘new ancient town’ is astounding, but it could not avoid some of the pitfalls of a ‘Lijiangization’, which increasingly threaten its popularity. In many ways, Shaxi as an aspiring new model of rural small town sustainable development with a rich cultural heritage has succumbed to the ‘tourism-heritage development’ logic of its anti-model, Lijiang. For this reason, it is also argued, Shaxi’s future lies not in Shaxi, but in the comprehensive

Culture, Modernity and the Reimagining of Yunnan’, in M.E. Clarke and D. Smith (eds.), *China’s Frontier Regions. Ethnicity, Economic Integration and Foreign Relations*, London, IB Tauris, 2016, pp. 171-203.

³¹ See for two excellent examples: W. Zhang, ‘The Trading Culture of Jade Stones Among the Yunnanese in Burma and Thailand, 1962-81’, *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, Vol. 2, No. 2, November 2006, pp. 269-293; B. Yang, ‘Horses, Silver, and Cowries: Yunnan in Global Perspective’, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2004, pp 281-322.

development of the valley and other ancient folk cultural villages with a strong original (*yuanshengtai*) heritage and character.

'A nation who respects itself and its independence cannot possibly rest satisfied with the consideration of its present situation alone. It must of necessity direct its attention to bygone times so as to ascertain by what means it has arrived at its present character and condition.'
(Jacob Worsaae, Danish archaeologist)³²

'World Heritage has become a global language, a world of its own, recreating and representing particular cultures, ethnic groups, and/or national icons to be shared universally'
(Keiko Miura)³³

Introduction

Cultural heritage conservation is not an invention of our time and has a long history in many countries of the world, but differed in its interpretation and practice through culture, place and time. *Heritage* as we know it today 'is a thoroughly modern concept' and 'a condition of the later twentieth century'³⁴, infused with political and social legacies of Europe's recent past. In recent decades, heritage has taken on new meanings as it has evolved from a Western-centric 'scientific' form of inquiry of the nineteenth century European Enlightenment period - dominated by the new science of archaeology with its emphasis on the built environment and a claim for sole bearer of truth - to being used as a tool for nation-building, both in the West and in a post-colonial context, to more inclusive forms of heritage theory and practice in the late twentieth century, when 'culture' became intricately linked with heritage. Crucial in the later developments were the establishment of institutions for the preservation of national and world heritage and the creation of a global 'heritage industry'³⁵. Due to the popularity, growth and diversification of this 'heritage industry', over time, it has become increasingly difficult to define 'heritage' and maintain prevailing Eurocentric notions and values of heritage preservation as enshrined in global heritage charters. Through its many (mis-) uses, it had long become clear that heritage (and the discourse of heritage), whether on a

³² Cited in J. McBride (ed.), 'Who Owns the Past? Papers from the Annual Symposium of the Australian Academy of the Humanities', Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 3.

³³ K. Miura, 'Contested Heritage: People of Angkor', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2004.

³⁴ Cited in D. Harvey, 'Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: Temporality, Meaning and the Scope of Heritage Studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2001, pp. 319-338.

³⁵ R. Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, London, Methuen, 1987.

global or local scale, is never neutral, but is subject to selection, construction, negotiation and contestation in the context of more general processes in the arena of national and cultural politics. In particular, relationships of (local-national-global) power, of ownership and representation, of interpretation, identity construction, and collective memory, both burden and challenge universal norms of heritage protection and preservation set by global institutions.

This chapter provides an overview and historical context of cultural heritage as understood in the West as well as more recent developments in cultural heritage conservation, legislation and theory, including key literature in the field of heritage studies. Below, I will discuss some of the major themes supported by the dominant institutions for the protection of the 'heritage for humanity', such as the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) and its affiliated advisory bodies³⁶, in terms of their laws, charters, rules and regulations, as well as controversies surrounding them. Taken as a universal 'templet' for world heritage protection and preservation, this will then allow us to analyse and better understand heritage discourse and practice in contemporary China.

Heritage and the Past: Defining the 'Undefinable'

'Heritage', it is said, can be anything you want, anything passed down from generation to generation, anything old, aesthetically pleasing, including monuments, buildings, and artefacts. While commonly accepted in the past, this more simplistic and one-dimensional definition reflects an inherently 'material' undertone prevalent in what has become a Eurocentric science-based inquiry into the past, dominated by (Western) expert knowledge and monumental heritage. The inclusion above of (historical) *artefacts* points to the integral part *art* has always played in the evolution of heritage and conservation, such as museums and (private) galleries, while it also confirms the 'elitist' status that art and heritage in general have held. For example, in the (European) past, artefacts were mainly purchased as 'positional goods' by members of the aristocracy to gain cultural/social capital within their own class and which promoted the development of an art market and art dealers.³⁷ Very similar, in today's modernizing China, the acquisition of antiques and cultural relics (including, as we will see later, tea as a cultural artefact) by a new 'super-rich' class is perceived to strengthen ones position as a 'Chinese traditionalist'.³⁸

³⁶ These include the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM),

³⁷ A.T. Peacock and I. Rizzo, *The Heritage Game: Economics, Policy, and Practice*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.

³⁸ 'China's Material Heritage and Nationalism: Old Story, New Directions', *Wordpress* (blog), 28 March 2013,

This 'cultural capital' factor, as first articulated by Pierre Bourdieu, also points to the long-standing importance in China of the interrelation of (possessing) cultural property and knowledge, such as the (scholarly) knowledge of art, philosophy, and literature, but also, and *ipso ergo*, the power that could be derived from this importance of culture (tradition) and knowledge.³⁹

Few have elaborated more on the issue of heritage and the past than the British academic David Lowenthal in his seminal works *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), and *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1997) which have paved the way for a better understanding of our past, our history, our memory, that is, what our heritage means in relation to the present and future.⁴⁰ Lowenthal was closely followed by other theorists in the field, including Denis Byrne, Rodney Harrison, Robert Hewison, Stuart Hall, David Harvey, Tim Winter, and Laura Jane Smith, who have been developing more critical and cross-disciplinary approaches to heritage studies and theory over the years, thereby also advancing the cause of necessary change.⁴¹ As a complex concept, Lowenthal also pointed to the ambiguity of *heritage* and *history*, but he emphasised 'heritage is not history', and other heritage critics were even more forceful in condemning heritage as 'bogus history', that 'history is the past that really happened, whereas heritage is a partisan perversion, the past manipulated for some present aim'.⁴² While this seems a trivial squabble amongst heritage scholars and historians, it has implications for both camps if we think, for example, of narratives of nation-making, museum displays and historical plays, but in particular if we think of notions of authenticity and identity.

In fact, while different cultures and regions in the world have appreciated the past in their present in different ways, throughout the centuries (or even millennia), heritage has been intimately tied up with identity and politics.⁴³ As we will see throughout this thesis, heritage, as something 'handed down' to an individual, group, or a nation, is deeply entangled in ownership of the past, identity-

<https://wkirkby.wordpress.com/2013/03/28/chinas-material-heritage-and-nationalism-old-story-new-directions/>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1985; and D. Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, London, Viking, 1997.

⁴¹ D. Byrne, 'Heritage as Social Action', in G. Fairclough et al. (eds.) *The Heritage Reader*, London, Routledge, 2008, Chapter 11, pp. 149-173; R. Harrison, *Understanding the Politics of Heritage*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010; R. Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, London, Methuen, 1987; S. Hall, 'Who's Heritage?' Un-Settling 'the Heritage,' Re-Imagining the Post-Nation," in J. Littler and R. Naidoo, *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of 'Race'*, London, Routledge, 2005, pp. 21-31; D.C. Harvey, 'Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: Temporality, Meaning and the Scope of Heritage Studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2001, pp. 319-338; T. Winter, 'Beyond Eurocentrism? Heritage Conservation and the Politics of Difference', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Volume 20, Issue 2, 2014, pp. 123-137.

⁴² Hewison, *The Heritage Industry*, p. 144; Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade*, p. 103.

⁴³ For example, the Italian Renaissance historian, philosopher, politician and humanist Niccolo Macchiavelli, considered the father of modern political science, already realised the strong link of (national) identity and national survival, see e.g. R. During (ed.), *Cultural Heritage and Identity Politics*, Wageningen Academic Publishers, Silk Road Research Foundation, 2011.

making, and by extension, nation-making, and conflict and contestation are therefore intrinsic to heritage.

The Politization of Heritage

Hall states, ‘[I]t was in the last century and a half, that from a state perspective heritage had become an important tool in the creation of a unitary, homogeneous ‘national’ identity, or ‘national family’, constructing some kind of a collective social memory, and developing a new national narrative out of a carefully selected past, often to the detriment of regional or minority groups’.⁴⁴ These narrative constructions of history and continuity, of (ethnic) solidarity and national unity also became important mechanisms in the selection and nomination for national or world heritage listing. In particular museums as representational spaces of the nation have played an important role in using the past for political purposes to construct national identity, promote patriotism and the legitimacy of the current regime.⁴⁵ Heritage, then - tangible or intangible - as a national symbol and a symbol of collective cultural memory, opened up discussions of ownership and property rights in heritage legislation such as ‘who owns the past?’ and ‘who has the right to the past?’, including ownership not only of things from the past but ownership of the past itself. Ownership is conducive to control, and the uses of heritage are not only deeply entangled with control but are also concerned with its knowledge production. In many countries the assumption is that the people own their past, or a ‘common heritage of all’ approach, but in reality, and by implication, the past, or the use of the past, is in possession of those in power, of the victors, and is often jealously guarded, or as Lowenthal puts it, the past is ‘nationalized’.⁴⁶ All this indicates the appropriation of politics into cultural heritage and vice versa and has not only engulfed the West, but the same ‘politization’ of the past has occurred in many non-western and post-colonial new nation-states. By no means is the ‘politization’ of the past a thing of the past, but it is very much alive, in particular in national museum displays and within the World Heritage regime in the selection and inclusion/exclusion of heritage sites on the World Heritage List.

The question of ‘who’s past is it anyways?’ becomes more complex in the context of world heritage when we think of a pan-national entity, such as the European Union, or a multi-nationalities country such as China, where the geography of heritage and its cultural and political embedding become all

⁴⁴ Hall, ‘Whose Heritage?’ ...’, p. 25.

⁴⁵ J. M. Fladmark, *Heritage and Museums Shaping National Identity*, Florence, Taylor and Francis, online resource, 2015.

⁴⁶ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*.

too evident. Here, distinctions of national, pan-national, and world cultural heritage are blurred and During - exploring a European heritage discourse - rightfully asks: '[Can] then a windmill be both Dutch and European heritage? Is a world heritage site within Europe automatically European heritage?'⁴⁷ He notes, while in general some categories, such as World Heritage sites, are meant to unite people by toting 'universal values', other categories indicate difference, are specific to a country, community, or ethnic group (Dutch heritage) and can therefore elicit opposition.⁴⁸ It is this politics of identity construction that uses cultural heritage to mark differences or affiliations with other communities, and interestingly, both Europe and China promote a 'unity in diversity' motto. So the Dutch-Windmill-in-Europe case finds its parallel in any world heritage site in any of Europe's countries, or in China in any of China's minority regions, as for example the Potala Palace in Tibet, which is located in a peripheral autonomous ethnic minority region in China's south-west (Tibet Autonomous Region, TAR), but belongs politically and geographically to China.⁴⁹ Another layer of this complexity is added in multi-ethnic states with a dominant majority group, or in conquered territory where a former majority is displaced by an ethnically and culturally different group.

This then shows that as heritage is interpreted and re-interpreted, presented and represented, it is a construct of the past that is being given new meanings in the present, or, to reiterate a meanwhile widely accepted truism, 'heritage is no longer about the past but draws on the power of the past to produce the present and shape the future'.⁵⁰ As a construction of the past (at a particular period in time), heritage then is immensely pliable and subject to all kinds of (mis-) uses, including also, for example, a complete reproduction of the past – fake or real, tangible or intangible. Waterton et al. quite clearly point out the vagueness of the term 'heritage' and how it has in popular, policy and academic discourse taken on currency bordering on the promiscuous.⁵¹ What we discover here is the 'desperate' need of (alternative) heritage discourses to keep up with the 'social reality' of heritage (preservation) in the late 20th century. Trying to define the 'undefinable' and gaining new understandings and perspectives of what heritage is has occurred in parallel with the rise of the 'heritage industry', or heritage 'market'⁵², and an increasing popularization, internationalization,

⁴⁷ R. During, 'European Heritage Discourses, a Matter of Identity Construction?', in R. During (ed.), *Cultural Heritage and Identity Politics*, Wageningen Academic Publishers, Silk Road Research Foundation, 2011.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Similarly, this is the case with the Chengde Palace in China, see J.L. Hevia, 'World Heritage, National Culture, and the Restoration of Chengde' *positions: east asia cultures critique*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring, 2001, pp. 219-243.

⁵⁰ J. Fairclough et al., *The Heritage Reader*, London, Routledge, 2008, Introduction.

⁵¹ E. Waterton, L. Smith and G. Campbell, 'The Utility of Discourse Analysis in Heritage Studies: the Burra Charter and Social Inclusion', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2006, pp. 339-355.

⁵² Peacock and Rizzo, *The Heritage Game*, p. 7.

and institutionalization of heritage protection and conservation.

The rise of heritage and the heritage industry

In the West, the heritage and conservation movement, in many ways, have a parallel history and have reinforced each other. Heritage has become synonymous with those features of our environment that we want to rescue from the 'wrecking ball of modernity' and conserve for present and future generations. As Samuel reflects, conservation has long been a 'magnet for dissidents', and the cry of 'heritage in danger' has proved by far the most potent of mobilizing forces in environmental campaigns.⁵³ Importantly these movements were also tied to minority and indigenous issues, folk (music) revival, or town planning.⁵⁴

The 'heritage fever' from the 1970's onwards was marked by a 'creeping takeover by the past', 'a movement dedicated to turning the British Isles into one vast open-air museum', and it cumulated in what has become known as a (global) 'heritage industry'.⁵⁵ It found its fiercest critics in the British academics Robert Hewison and Patrick Wright who condemned the heritage fever as distracting from engaging with (problems of) the present and the future (contemporary art and literature and critical culture), as a sanitized and unrealistic reconstruction of the past.⁵⁶ Hewison, in his influential book *The Heritage Industry* (1987) argues that heritage nostalgia is a response to a sense of 'uprootedness' of a post-colonial, post-industrial world, and the ensuing cultural and economic decline of Britain at a time of a waning empire.⁵⁷ Interestingly, and the point will be made later, quite the opposite can be argued for China whose heritage nostalgia occurs at a time of economic prosperity and the (re)emergence of a 'golden era' for the Chinese nation. Wright in *On Living in an Old Country* (1985) questions the 'museumification' of the UK and also explores the relationship between the idea of an imperilled national identity under (Thatcherian) Conservative politics and societal change.⁵⁸ Both Hewison and Fowler discuss heritage in the context of post-modernism, with Hewison quoting Jameson's definition of the 'post-modernist hyperspace' which he associates with 'flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality ...', and Fowler, borrowing Charles Jencks' take on post-modernism, sees 'eclecticism' and 'discontinuity' in heritage presentation and

⁵³ R. Samuel, 'Politics', in G. Fairclough et al. (eds.) *The Heritage Reader*, London, Routledge, 2008, Chapter 20.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Harrison, *Understanding the Politics of Cultural Heritage*.

⁵⁷ Hewison, *The Heritage Industry*; see also F. Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: The Sociology of Nostalgia*, in J.K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, and D. Levy (eds.), *The Collective Memory Reader*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.446-451.

⁵⁸ P. Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: the National Past in Contemporary Britain*, London, Verso, 1985.

interpretation, and referring to the creation of phoney heritage as 'antiquing'.⁵⁹ However, Samuels criticised Hewison's Conservative argument in pointing out that '... heritage had served to make the past more democratic through emphasis on lives of ordinary people', and refers to the social practices and processes of heritage that have the capacity to promote social change.⁶⁰

In spite of all its criticism, the 'heritageization' of 1970s Europe (UK) continued to grow rapidly from a 'national pastime' to a global industry. Heritage is now ever-present: historic sites, cultural landscapes, national parks, museums, antique shops, heritage villages, as well as in all the (digital) media and the market place. Rodney Harrison in a recent article draws attention to the overwhelming material of the past, the heterogeneous piling up of disparate and conflicting pasts, which is leading to a 'crisis of accumulation'.⁶¹ He reminds us that deaccessioning and disposal - or the process of forgetting as part of remembering - must become a key area of critical heritage studies to make heritage more 'sustainable'.⁶² However, the survival and growth of the 'heritage industry' testify to a continuing need for the emotional nature of heritage (nostalgia, individual or collective memory), its uses as a political and economic tool (tourism, identity-building, show-case national culture, strengthen patriotism), as well as the continuing need for a global 'caretaker', such as the UNESCO regime. Ken Taylor observes that an increase in popular heritage consciousness is related to the values people put on knowing about the history of events, places, and people through time, and adds that this movement is not centred solely on physical places or objects but is inclusive of their meanings.⁶³ As many case studies show, and we will see this further below in the Chinese scenario, education in, and raising awareness of communities' heritage and history, are considered the most important form of 'social work/action' to ensure inclusive and successful cultural preservation and transmission. And while in the past ownership and use over national (and colonial) heritage was rather an exclusive and elitist 'right', and one which 'ignored diversity in favour of a one-dimensional narrative',⁶⁴ there is now growing interest in the 'ordinary' places, 'ordinary' people's way of life, the 'bottom-up' approach of heritage that helps build its popularity.⁶⁵ This has been particularly true for nation-building countries in a post-colonial context, and for other non-

⁵⁹ P. Fowler, 'Heritage: A Post-Modernist Perspective', in D. Uzzell (ed.), *Heritage Interpretation*, Vol. 1, The Natural & Built Environment, London, Belhaven Press, 1989, pp. 57-63.

⁶⁰ R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory. Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, London, Verso, 1994 (2012).

⁶¹ R. Harrison, 'Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget: Late Modern Heritage Practices, Sustainability and the 'Crisis' of Accumulation of the Past', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Routledge, iFirst article, 2012, pp. 1-17.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ K. Taylor, 'Cultural Heritage Management: A Possible Role for Charters and Principles in Asia', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 5, December 2004, pp. 417-433.

⁶⁴ W. Logan, M. Langfield and MN Craith, 'Intersecting Concepts and Practices', in M. Langfield, W. Logan, and MN Craith, *Cultural Diversity, Heritage and Human Rights. Intersections in Theory and Practice*, New York, Routledge, 2010, pp. 3-20.

⁶⁵ Taylor, 'Cultural Heritage Management...'

Western countries whose conservation practices and heritage values such as materiality, authenticity or aesthetics, quite clearly differed to that promoted by a Eurocentric global heritage regime.

The Heritage Regime: Revered and Contested

The World Heritage List

By the end of 2015 the *World Heritage List* comprised 1031 properties, including 802 cultural, 197 natural, and 32 mixed properties, as well as 2 delisted and 31 transboundary properties, from 151 States Parties out of 187 member State Parties, making the World Heritage Convention one of the most significant international tools of conservation in terms of sheer scope and with close to universal ratification (191 states).⁶⁶ The *Tentative List* - an inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination during the following five to ten years - now includes 1641 properties from 175 State Parties. The List of *World Heritage in Danger*, administered by the *World Heritage Committee* (WHC), now has 48 properties, while the *World Monuments Watch* program runs a list of *100 Most Endangered Sites*⁶⁷, run by the *World Monuments Fund* (WMF), a private, non-profit organization.⁶⁸

When a site is inscribed on the World Heritage list it is demonstrated that it is unique and outstanding, and its value is acknowledged at a global level as a shared heritage of humanity. As such the (local) site is subjected to the global regime with shared rights and responsibilities.⁶⁹ Inscription on the World Heritage list is highly desired for its presumed economic and political benefits, for its prestige and prominence, and has become a 'top brand' in marketing terms for tourism. Importantly, it confers on the site a state of 'authenticity'. However, UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and its many charters, documents, regulations and recommendations have also been the target of frequent criticism, including the questioning of an infinitely growing, as well as imbalanced World Heritage list, its Eurocentric focus, its vague language, its politicisation and political 'meddling', and its economic imperative.

Frey and Steiner, for example, weigh up the pro and cons of World Heritage listing, and suggest that

⁶⁶ UNESCO World Heritage List, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

⁶⁷ The 2016 *World Monuments Watch* features 50 sites in 36 countries that are at risk from the forces of nature and the impact of social, political, and economic change. See, <https://www.wmf.org/>.

⁶⁸ According to the Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage sites, "if the site and its integrity are threatened by serious and specific dangers (ascertained or potential), caused by either man or nature", it deserves listing.

⁶⁹ UNESCO World Heritage Convention, Article 1 and 4.

maybe alternatives to the List could be envisaged, such as (private) market forces, or tradeable World Heritage Certificates, much like the Carbon Trade Certificates.⁷⁰ They also draw attention to existing competing lists or other evaluations, such as national-level lists of cultural and natural heritage sites, or renowned tourist and guide-books that allot stars or other attributes to their own list of the world's wonders, as well as scholarly and popular material, extolling the world's most important heritage sites, much like a *bucket list* of the world's heritage.⁷¹ In China, for example, as we shall see later, the national-level list of tangible and intangible cultural heritage works outstandingly well, is very comprehensive, competitive, and immensely popular, but none-the-less the World Heritage label is desirable for many reasons, including global prestige for a rising China, a recognition of China's past and legitimization on national level.⁷²

It also remains a fact, that in spite of recent efforts of a more representative, balanced and inclusive approach, European sites continue to dominate the World Heritage List.⁷³ To address these problems the Committee launched the *Strategy for a Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List* in 1994, followed by amendments of the *Operational Guidelines* to limit the overall number of nominations considered annually, as well as the number of nominations that can be considered each year for one State Party.⁷⁴ However, these efforts had only moderate impacts as they did not find sufficient support by State Parties.⁷⁵ The discrepancy in listing by countries and categories (cultural, natural or mixed) has long been acknowledged, in particular, the overwhelming imbalance in favour of cultural sites as well as in their typological distribution.⁷⁶ The evaluation for cultural sites seems to be less restrictive and more inclusive than for natural sites, and as the tourist impact at cultural

⁷⁰ B.S. Frey and L. Steiner, 'World Heritage List: Does it Make Sense?', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 17 No. 5, 2011, pp. 555-573.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² In its internal structure, the national-level list shows similarities in benefits and shortcomings to that of the World Heritage list, including politization, conservation and management, selection, and geographical and cultural differences.

⁷³ D. Barthel-Bouchier, *Cultural Heritage and the Challenge of Sustainability*, Walnut Creek, Left Coast Press, 2013, p. 40. Imbalances, for example are addressed by nominating priority to state parties with no sites on the list, or limit the number of sites and countries per year (in Frey and Steiner, 'World Heritage List...';)

⁷⁴ These are known as the Cairns and Suzhou Decisions.

⁷⁵ W. Logan, 'States, Governance and the Politics of Culture', in P. Daly and T. Winter (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Heritage in Asia*, London, Routledge, 2012, pp. 113-128. One reason for this may be, that a site's rejection leads to disappointment for the nominating State Party, so decision-makers at the national level try to only nominate sites that have a high chance of inscription.

⁷⁶ This disparity manifests itself in a number of ways, and notably in an irregular geographic distribution, with some countries or regions having very large numbers of World Heritage properties while others having few or none. By the end of 2015 the *World Heritage List* comprised 1031 properties, including 802 cultural, 197 natural, and 32 mixed properties. Of the 1,031 properties currently on the World Heritage List, nearly half are in the Europe and North America region, with 453 in Europe alone. This contrasts to 77 properties in the Arab States, 89 in Africa, 131 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 231 in Asia Pacific. The five best-represented States Parties in Europe—Italy, Spain, France, Germany, UK—have 200 properties between them, representing nearly 20% of the List worldwide. See, *World Heritage in Europe Today*, Published in 2016 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

sites is assumed to be greater, the selection and listing is also subject to rent-seeking.⁷⁷

There are also concerns that World Heritage designation could become less 'special' and less based on universalistic characteristics as it responds more to political manoeuvring and economic pay-off⁷⁸, however, the World Heritage List remains to date the most sought after and authoritative list in global conservation.⁷⁹ It is no surprise then, that selection *and* the actual selection process, first by the State Parties to nominate items, then by the World Heritage Committee (WHC) to list items, is highly political and measures for protection and conservation do not always sit easily with national government interests. In many instances, representatives of State Parties tend to nominate sites of national importance, ignoring both domestic local and marginal views as well as UNESCO's global standard of 'universal outstanding values' (UOV), while they may also seek personal profits.⁸⁰ Askew also confirms this saying, '... the globalized and institutionalized heritage system has not overcome nation-state-based power structures and nationalist agendas but has rather enhanced them'.⁸¹ China in particular has hijacked, or as Yan argues, 'rescripted' a global heritage discourse of universality and replaced it with a local hegemonic discourse of particularity and particularism to suit its developmental interests for modernization and to legitimate its claims as the inheritor of a civilization that is more than four thousand years old.⁸² Cultural sites like Angkor Wat in Cambodia, for example, play a significant role in nationalist history and are therefore sites of political engagement and contestation whilst also serving as major international tourist attractions and a resource for national socio-economic development.⁸³ What adds to the complexity of a site's (world) heritage designation (cultural and natural) is that it is often populated by local communities and people who live and work in close proximity to the site so that 'in this sense they are 'living' social and cultural landscapes with all the attendant problems presented for the conservation of built forms'.⁸⁴ Such tensions that exist between UNESCO's World Heritage institutions and member nation-states in relation to national identity and heritage stem from a wide-spread view that these organisations are key agencies of cultural and economic globalisation, even cultural imperialism, who impose common sets of values, norms and principles, and are therefore able to governing

⁷⁷ Frey and Steiner, 'World Heritage List ...'.

⁷⁸ Barthel-Bouchier, *Cultural Heritage and the Challenge of Sustainability*, p.40.

⁷⁹ Frey and Steiner, 'World Heritage List ...'.

⁸⁰ Frey and Steiner, 'World Heritage List ...'.

⁸¹ M. Askew, 'The Magic List of Global Status: UNESCO, World Heritage and the Agendas of States', in S. Labaldi and C. Long (eds.), *Heritage and Globalization*. New York, Routledge. 2010, pp. 19-44.

⁸² H. Yan, 'World Heritage in China: Universal Discourse and National Culture', PhD Thesis, University of Virginia, 2007.

⁸³ V.T. King, 'UNESCO in Southeast Asia: World Heritage Sites in Comparative Perspective', Draft 17 September 2013: published as 'UNESCO in Southeast Asia: World Heritage Sites in Comparative Perspective', Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Working Paper Series No 4, 2013.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* The creation of 'protective buffer zones' around heritage sites has resulted in the exclusion and resettlement of many local communities and which marginalized them and deprived them of their traditional ways of making a living.

economic, political, social and cultural attitudes and behaviour.⁸⁵ As many see it, the World Heritage regime acts as 'a global clearinghouse for heritage valuation and conservation standards' administered by what has become a 'breathless bureaucratic machinery'.⁸⁶ Unbeknown to many, however, the WHC has little power to reign in recalcitrant nations - a perplexing fact that is often disappointing. Because of this lack of formal enforcement powers, the WHC has to rely on objective and neutral scientific evidence to avoid the politicisation of decision-making processes and to enhance compliance.⁸⁷ This, of course, is also at the core of discontent for critics of the UNESCO heritage regime and its dominant heritage discourse.

Heritage Discourses

Mukherjee, for example, very pointedly recounts that in colonised regions in South Asia, '[a]rchaeology became an integral component of the British 'civilizing mission' of enlightening the 'natives' by endowing them with an authentic history', mainly reliant on material remains as sole bearer and higher order evidence over indigenous ways of 'knowing' history.⁸⁸ Further, a Western knowledge system privileged European scholarly work, such as ethnographic and historical records, over indigenous oral histories, it displaced alternative ways of understanding and marginalized non-European knowledge systems.⁸⁹ This also informed issues of (Indian) authorship of the (Indian) past, as well as questioned the positioning of the researcher/archaeologist as the sole 'decoder' of the past.⁹⁰

Laura Jane Smith in her seminal work *The Uses of Heritage* de-constructs this hegemonic discourse of heritage, a discourse which 'promotes a certain set of Western elite cultural values as being universally applicable', which is then validated in popular and expert discourse as 'heritage', but undermines alternative or subaltern views of heritage.⁹¹ She continues, that this 'self-referential', hegemonic 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD) is reliant on the power/knowledge claims of technical and aesthetic experts institutionalised in state cultural agencies, privileges 'monumentality

⁸⁵ For more information on theories of 'world polity' or 'world society theory', see for example readings on 'regime theory', e.g. S. Haggard, and B. A. Simmons, 'Theories of International Regimes', *International Organization* 41, No. 3, 1987, pp. 491-517.

⁸⁶ C. Brumann and D. Berliner, 'UNESCO World Heritage – Grounded?', Introduction', in C. Brumann and D. Berliner (eds.), *World Heritage on the Ground. Ethnographic Perspectives*, Berghahn Books, 2016.

⁸⁷ The World Heritage site of Kakadu National Park in Australia has become a landmark case where the WHC – contrary to its policy of scientific evidence - has complied with the Australian government's request that, in spite of planned mining activities (Jabeluka), not to list the site as *Heritage in Danger*. See, S.J. Maswood, 'Kakadu and the Politics of World Heritage Listing', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2000.

⁸⁸ S. Mukherjee, 'Of Methods and Aims. The Field of Archaeology in Colonial India', *IIAS Newsletter*, No. 61, 2012.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*.

and grand scale, innate artefact/site significance tied to time depth, scientific aesthetic expert judgement, social consent and nation building'.⁹² One of Smith's main points of argument, however, is that heritage is not a 'thing' (thereby countering trends of increasing reification or objectification of culture⁹³), but is more about the construction and regulation of values and meanings and is therefore above all a cultural and social practice or action. Sidestepping Foucault's post-modern approach of the centrality of discourse in discourse analysis, Smith draws on critical realism and critical discourse analysis to establish the link between discourse and practice by arguing that not only is it the 'act' or 'work' practices and performances of heritage 'do' culturally and socially, but the discourse itself constitutes a social practice.⁹⁴ Here, critical realism recognises the power of discourse but stresses the concrete social relations that underlie and generate the discourse.⁹⁵ The concrete social relations are found within places, landscapes, memory, or objects and their social or socially constructed significance, rather than their inherent or intrinsic value or significance (and as such divorced from their social context) as propagated and long held in Western empiricism. This has also been an important aspect of the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* or *Burra Charter*, which uses the term 'place' to define cultural heritage resources, where place can mean site, landscape, area, land, and others. Implicit in the term 'place' is an associated cultural context and meaning, above all it involves human activity and associated cultural traditions.⁹⁶ In the same vein, the anthropologist Appadurai, for example, defines place or locality not so much as 'spatial' or 'inherent' (where people live), but something that is socially constructed, where people have to do 'cultural work' to create it.⁹⁷ This implies a series of processes which help to produce culture, produce a 'locality', and thus establish and legitimize a community's link with the past.⁹⁸ These aspects have become especially important in diaspora communities around the world.⁹⁹ Seeing heritage in this way as social practice that can effect change, unofficial heritage in particular can be used at the local level to build a sense of community and identity, and used to the community's own political ends.¹⁰⁰ In recent times we have increasingly seen 'social practice' in the domain of tourism and heritage through ethnic performances (singing and dancing), festivals, and cultural and religious rituals, where either the state or the ethnic people, or both, have been actively (re)-creating identities (and culture).

⁹² Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*.

⁹³ Byrne, 'Heritage as Social Action'.

⁹⁴ Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*.

⁹⁵ Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*.

⁹⁶ For more information on Burra Charter, see <http://australia.icomos.org/publications/charters/>

⁹⁷ A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, Minneapolis and New York, University of Minneapolis Press, 1996 (2008).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Harrison, 'Heritage as Social Action', Chapter 7.

¹⁰⁰ Harrison, 'Heritage as Social Action', Chapter 7.

The construction of meanings of the past and how these meanings are used in the present are also at the heart of a recent book, *Ethnographies & Archaeologies*, where the authors apply the concepts of ethnography *in* and ethnography *of* archaeology to de-centre the practice of archaeology whose continuing monopoly of heritage management is becoming increasingly untenable in a world where conservation is an 'arena of community action'.¹⁰¹ Ethnography is used to explore the impacts and ramifications of archaeological practice for contemporary communities, and how these communities can mediate identity and cultural capital through various interpretations of the past.¹⁰² Many scholars now agree, it is necessary to understand the broader social context of the power and meaning infused in archaeological sites, objects, and interpretation, bring together different disciplines, and include alternative histories that challenge dominant hegemonies.¹⁰³ For far too long have museum collections and the discipline of archaeology dominated a discourse of heritage, identity, and the past, one that represented a modernist Western view and centred around typologies and established orders.¹⁰⁴ Indigenous people are amongst the fiercest critics of archaeology, as their histories are mostly pre-histories and they therefore rely heavily on archaeological interpretation of their past. Their artefacts, religious sites, and ritual places are more than mere physical entities, but are imbued with spiritual qualities, particular cultural meaning and cultural knowledge, they are part of who they were, who they are now, and where they are going. These are meanings that cannot be captured with archaeological 'data', values that defy objective quantification or scientific definition, and meanings that were mostly incompatible with Western (colonial) thinking and (conservation) practice. Indigenous 'immateriality' has thus become problematic within the museum and conservation profession.¹⁰⁵ Dean Sully notes, by 'acknowledging the existence of alternative stories and parallel ways of understanding, utilising and caring for the material past', we will be able to reconceptualise and re-evaluate traditional cultural heritage paradigms of power, authority, and control, and it is then possible 'to 'other' ourselves within the discourse of heritage conservation'.¹⁰⁶ The widening of a heritage discourse, including the notion of heritage as social action, that all heritage is 'intangible', new value constructions, or new disciplines, such as museology, is also the subject of Samuel's formulation of 'history from below'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ L. Mortensen and J. Hollowell (eds.), *Ethnographies & Archaeologies. Iterations of the Past*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2009.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ L.N. Stutz, 'Claims to the Past. A Critical View of the Arguments Driving Repatriation of Cultural Heritage and Their Role in Contemporary Identity Politics', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2013.

¹⁰⁵ Garbutt, 'The Care of Living Objects ...', pp. 111-112.

¹⁰⁶ D. Sully (ed.) *Decolonizing Conservation. Caring for Maori Meeting Houses Outside of New Zealand*, Walnut Creek, Left Coast Press, CA, p. 19.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*.

As the meaning-making of the past and heritage is understood to be tied to culture and place, new understandings of heritage theory and practice increasingly challenge and decentre a globally accepted AHD, or at least try to make it more relevant locally. For example, in the Chinese context, Wu attempts to re-theorise heritage from the perspective of the local community and the Confucian sense of the past, a Chinese sense of cultural heritage ‘that is attentive to localities and indigeneity’. Specifically he asks: (1) what in the Confucian tradition in today’s China could be drawn upon for the interpretation, preservation and uses of its endangered cultural heritage, especially vernacular heritage in the countryside which is often considered ‘mundane’, ‘inauthentic’ and ‘low value’? (2) How can cultural heritage be practised in China in a way that engages the present with the past in its ancient perspective? (3) What is an appropriate way of ‘discoursing’ (naming, describing, analysing and narrating) to establish the meaning of heritage whose cultural significance is hard to define under the dominant criteria for heritage designation, and thereby render its value visible and useful for local cultural dynamics? By answering these questions he juxtaposes the rational form of contemporary thought on heritage with those meanings carried in the fragments of ancient discourse and the practices of the local community, that is, with the past that is inscribed in the cultural fabric of people’s daily lives.¹⁰⁸ While the ‘local’ and its relationship with ‘meaning-making’ and ‘identity’ have meanwhile become part of the contemporary (universal) heritage discourse, it is created from rational (Western) thought of the present about the past. In contrast, Zhu uses concrete Confucian heritage practices and narrations of the past to make them relevant in the present. What becomes clear here also is that countries not only adopt the ‘global grammar’ of a universal heritage discourse, but actively construct and manipulate it. As Yan explains, ‘the institutional and discursive formations of China’s cultural heritage are exogenously framed with a world cultural model provided by the *World Heritage Convention*. But this process is not coercively imposed by a dominant world (Western) power. Instead, 1) it entails the active involvement of the state, 2) the state involvement is constitutive of national identity in two dimensions – domestic homogenization and international recognition, and 3) the world cultural model serves as a set of scientific and rational scripts that empower the state’s cultural legitimacy’.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, while the argument of a dominant and authorised heritage discourse as laid out by Smith has been widely acknowledged and perpetuated in the heritage community, recent efforts on a local and global scale have shown vast improvements in policy and practice of heritage conservation by departing from colonial and pre-colonial concepts of (mainly archaeological)

¹⁰⁸ Z. Wu, ‘Let Fragments Speak For Themselves: Vernacular Heritage, Emptiness and Confucian Discourse of Narrating the Past’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2014, Vol. 20, Nos. 7–8, pp. 851-865.

¹⁰⁹ Yan, ‘World Heritage in China...’.

preservation, as well as from late twentieth century emphasis on Western (European) value concepts, such as *authenticity*, *aesthetic*, and *universalism*. However, this hegemonic, modernist Western view, or ‘scientific’ approach in archaeology, has still much appeal in a country such as China, where ‘science and technology’ - considered the chief productive force affecting economic development, social progress, national strength, and living standards - has been made the basis of national development rationale. China is extremely rich in under-ground cultural relics and the importance and control of the ‘science’ of/in archaeology in nation-making is - as we will also see below in the context of regional histories - therefore still undisputed.

Heritage Conventions, Charters, Guidelines: Evolution and trends

'Culture' found new prominence and institutionalisation in the later decades of the twentieth century when multi-culturalism, regionalism, and localism became an entrenched vocabulary of globalism. In fact, and paradoxically, fragmentation, localism, the persistence of the nation-state, and the revival and survival of (endangered) minority cultures around the world, has proven the assumption of a real threat of cultural homogenisation in a globalising world mostly wrong. Over the last few decades, world-wide, ancient traditions and ethnic cultures have been experiencing revival and revitalization unlike in any period before (but at the same time are also under severe threat from the impacts of modernization) and the ‘local’, while increasingly integrated in the wider world, has gained new forms of power and identity. Globalization was underpinned by ideas of cosmopolitanism, where the idea of 'One World' and 'World Citizenship' had found much resonance, in particular after World War II with the establishment of the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The UN's portrayal of 'World Citizenship' as 'the path to permanent world peace and as a necessary step in the evolution of mankind from tribes to nations, from national consciousness to 'One World', 'world citizenship' was celebrated the 'adjunct of an anti-chauvinist *raison d'etre* and as a cultural manifestation of the Enlightenment premise that humanity was evolving socially, politically, technologically, and even psychologically towards a ‘world community’.¹¹⁰ The formation of these organisations reflected the key elements of a modernist outlook and the spirit of goodwill and optimism that infused twentieth century modernism.¹¹¹ This new 'One World' consciousness, while very much a creation of its time, lives on in UNESCO'S various international institutions, including that of World Cultural Heritage. From the beginning then, World Heritage was associated with a universalistic narrative, a 'rhetoric

¹¹⁰ G. Sluga, 'UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley', *Journal of World History*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2010, pp. 393-418; there was also the term 'world government' associated with it in this discussion, which, however, found many critics.

¹¹¹ Cited in Logan, Langfield and Craith, 'Intersecting Concepts and Practices'.

of a universal humanism', alleging that the heritage sites of 'outstanding value' belonged to the world.¹¹²

a) *UNESCO World Heritage*

In November 1972, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) adopted the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*.¹¹³ Cultural World Heritage is clearly defined in categories in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*¹¹⁴ and consists of cultural, natural, and mixed cultural and natural heritage, where Article 4 of the Convention clearly states the duties and responsibilities of the State Parties, while Article 6.1 refers to its recognition of the heritage as a world heritage.¹¹⁵

While many countries have passed national legislation or created preservation societies for their country's heritage that often pre-date UNESCO charters and conventions, it wasn't until the formation of UNESCO and its affiliate global organisations such as the *International Council on Museums (ICOM)*, the *International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property International Centre for Conservation in Rome (ICCROM)*, and *International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)*, that for the first time, international standards in heritage protection, identification and designation were applied. Now signatories to the Convention, or State Parties, were invited to submit nominations for cultural or natural heritage of 'outstanding universal value' (OUV) and meet a set of selection criteria, including 'authenticity' and 'integrity', in order to be included on the World Heritage List administered through ICOMOS.¹¹⁶ The world heritage preservation program is also supported by a number of intergovernmental (IGOs) and regional organizations (e.g. European Union), non-governmental organizations (NGOs)¹¹⁷, non-profit organizations, such as the *World Monuments Fund (WMF)*, or the *Global Heritage Fund*

¹¹² D. Barthel-Bouchier and M M Hui, 'Places of Cosmopolitan Memory', *Globality Studies Journal*, No. 5, 2007, p. 5.

¹¹³ The Convention was a result of earlier efforts to globalize cultural and natural conservation, UNESCO had orchestrated a number of safeguarding campaigns for threatened cultural heritage through the 1960s, most famously for the Nubian monuments of Abu Simbel threatened by Aswan Dam waters, but also for Borobudur, Moenjodaro and Venice, the latter resulted in the drafting of the Venice Charter, the foundational document of modern historical conservation. In, Brumann and Berliner, 'UNESCO World Heritage – Grounded?' Introduction.

¹¹⁴ See, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>

¹¹⁵ See World Heritage Convention, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/> ; initially, world heritage was divided into 'cultural' and 'natural' category, where a mixed cultural and natural category was added later.

¹¹⁶ See, UNESCO Operational Guidelines (2008) <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/> and World Heritage Convention Text (1972) <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/> . Until the end of 2004, World Heritage sites were selected on the basis of six cultural and four natural criteria. With the adoption of the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, now only one set of ten criteria exists.

¹¹⁷ Currently, UNESCO is enjoying official partnerships with 373 international NGOs and 24 foundations and similar institutions.

(GHF), *The Ghetty Institute*, as well as a diverse private sector.

All the selection criteria for nomination are regularly revised to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself.¹¹⁸ Further, the Committee has established and continues to regularly revise a series of instructions for State Parties called the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. On an international level the *World Heritage Convention* maintains two monitoring systems, (a) reporting (to the Committee) on the state of conservation (SOC) of properties and (b) Periodic Reporting, to ensure the integrity and proper protection of the world heritage site.¹¹⁹ Likewise, the initial definition of heritage has been extended numerous times and is reflected in the adoption of new and updated conventions, charters, rules and regulations, declarations, documents and recommendations. Notably, these include the 1994 *Nara Document on Authenticity*, the 2001 *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*; and the 2003 *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. They indicate a turning point in the history of heritage legislation, practice and theory, a ‘cultural turn’ in global heritage legislation where world heritage increasingly ‘moved into what was conventionally seen as anthropological ground’.¹²⁰

The idea of intangible cultural heritage, or rather the lack of accommodating cultural differences in definition and practice of heritage, was already recognised in the earlier years of the 1972 *Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* as, for example, underscored in the *UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* of 1989, and later the launch of the *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* in 1997. But it was only in 2003 before it became adopted by ICOMOS as the fully-fledged *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICH), including ‘practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage’.¹²¹ It specifically recognized the deep-seated interdependence of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and natural heritage. But the importance of intangible cultural heritage is not so much the cultural manifestation, or object, itself but rather ‘the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next’, while the social and economic value of this is more

¹¹⁸ See, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>

¹¹⁹ See for example, World Heritage Committee Periodic Reporting (SOC) of the Old Town of Lijiang, WHC-ICOMOS Joint Mission to the Old Town of Lijiang January 2008.

¹²⁰ Burman and Berliner, ‘UNESCO World Heritage – Grounded?...’.

¹²¹ UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/home>

relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State.¹²² It has as its aim to ensure the survival of, or at least minimize the threat to the 'living heritage' of these groups and has especially given scope to resource-poor and underdeveloped countries with little material heritage. The Convention promotes grass-roots diversity and emphasis is given to the involvement of communities, groups, and individuals to safeguard their heritage, but often it is state-parties that select which aspects of the intangible heritage to preserve rather than communities themselves. China has especially embraced this Convention as it is a multi-ethnic country with fifty-five highly diverse minority groups and has also drawn up its own national *Law on the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Chinese Nation*. In the same way as the perceived but increasingly untenable separation between tangible and intangible cultural heritage prompted new thinking and new legislation, these new developments also addressed the problematic relationship of cultural and natural heritage. In many cultures this dualism, or a 'culture-nature divide' does not exist and was only formally addressed in 1992 with the addition of the category of 'cultural landscape' on the UNESCO world heritage list. Feng Han speaks of a 'cross-cultural confusion' present in the Convention and which is difficult to apply in Chinese Scenic Areas where nature and culture are deeply entwined and have associated cultural significance (see also Chapter III).¹²³

This theme of cultural diversity and cultural development within this later Convention has its roots in the various discourses of human rights of the 1960s, in particular of 'second generation' human rights, that is social and economic rights, which were increasingly recognised to have relevance to cultural heritage, in fact human rights have come to include specifically the maintenance of one's culture.¹²⁴ The 1966 *Declaration on the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation* states that: 'Each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved', and 'every people has the right and duty to develop its culture', and 'in their rich variety and diversity, ... all cultures form part of the common heritage belonging to all mankind' (sic).¹²⁵

Thus there has been a move away from mainly physical heritage such as historic monuments and buildings, historic urban and rural centres, historic gardens, landscapes and streetscapes, to non-physical heritage including environments, social factors and, lately, intangible values. The scope of heritage has widened so much that it now also includes: underwater cultural heritage, industrial heritage, cultural routes, cultural landscapes, biological diversity, built vernacular heritage, historic towns, and many more. The inclusion of heritage of the 'contemporary' or 'recent past', and

¹²² UNESCO Infokit 2009 - "What is intangible cultural heritage?"

¹²³ Feng Han, *The Chinese View of Nature: Tourism in China's Scenic and Historic Interest Areas*, PhD Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2006.

¹²⁴ Logan et al., 'Intersecting Concepts and Practices'.

¹²⁵ Logan et al., 'Intersecting Concepts and Practices'.

pertaining in particular to post-industrial or late modern societies, has found increasing interest within the fields of heritage and archaeology.¹²⁶

b) Heritage at Risk

In light of the above analysis, it becomes clear that cultural heritage - or cultural patrimony - matters to individuals, ethnic groups, nations, and the international community. Therefore, many problems can arise when the values attached to heritage, including religious, aesthetic, economic, historic, and symbolic values, are compromised, damaged, destroyed, or removed from its context.

Historically, all types of heritages have suffered greatly in times of war and conflict, dynastic changes and natural disasters, but it has been clearly evidenced in recent history with global conflicts such as WWII, the wars in the Middle East (Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and recently Syria), the ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia, and the conflicts in northern Africa (Libya, Egypt), where the destruction of other countries' cultural heritage has often been deliberate. It has become increasingly apparent that warring tribes (and nations) often have little empathy and appreciation for what constitutes a world heritage for UNESCO, indeed, defying UNESCO and the 'international community' can be precisely the objective of their destructive acts.¹²⁷ The 1954 *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* sets out the major obligations for warring states and it states that 'damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind'.¹²⁸ However, while the *Hague Convention* together with the *Geneva Conventions* and those on Genocide and Torture present some of the great humanitarian legal instruments, they are near worthless in the face of renegade warring groups, such as (presently) the Islamic States, Boko Haram, or the Taliban.¹²⁹

Another risk, both in peace and war times, constitutes the looting and theft of cultural relics, including the looting of museums and theft of art works, and in particular that of archaeological remains. Looting has a long history but has become more rampant as the antiquities trade has flourished in recent times.¹³⁰ For example, antiquities are the largest single class of items smuggled

¹²⁶ R. Harrison and J. Schofield, *After Modernity. Archaeological Approaches to the Contemporary Past*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010. This 'nostalgia for modernism' has found expression in ICOMOS' *Montreal Action Plan* and the findings of the *Heritage at Risk 2000 Report* recommended to include more 20th century heritage on the World Heritage List.

¹²⁷ Referring to Timbuktu and Mali, in Burmann and Berliner, 'UNESCO World Heritage – Grounded?' Introduction.

¹²⁸ L. Prott, 'Protecting Cultural Heritage in Conflict', in N. Brodie et al. (eds.), *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade*, University Press of Florida, 2006, pp. 25-35.

¹²⁹ Ibid. The author rightly asks the question why 182 out of 192 Party States have signed the 1972 World Cultural Heritage Convention, whereas only 114 of these Party States have signed the Hague Convention.

¹³⁰ D. Wilson, 'Return and Restitution. A Museum Perspective', in I. McBryde (ed.), *Who Owns the Past?* Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 99-106.

out of China and it is estimated that more than 200,000 ancient tombs have been looted in China in the last few decades.¹³¹ The illicit art trade is one of the most profitable criminal activities in the world, outdone only by the global drug and arms trade with an annual turnover estimated at six billion USD and with many international auction houses involved.¹³² In spite of national and international laws, including the 1970 *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*¹³³, illegal diggings and excavations are widespread - often carried out by poor farmers to supplement income ('subsistence digging') - and inflict irreparable damage, loss of archaeological information and ultimately historical knowledge.¹³⁴ But while some historical relics were given as gifts, sometimes in a 'genuine spirit of scientific enquiry'¹³⁵, other cultural relics were - often with the consent of the owner country - 'appropriated' to save them from oblivion, as museums had the expertise to look after the collections.¹³⁶ This 'cultural colonialism'¹³⁷ and spirited away of ancient artefacts must however also be seen in the context of its time, as well as be given its due in saving innumerable treasures of mankind. For example, in Australian Aboriginal culture, as in many other cultures, preservation of the material past is and was hitherto not a feature of their culture, therefore many relics only survived because of their legal and/or illegal 'appropriation' by private collectors or museums.¹³⁸ These latter self-interestedly argue that repatriation of relics could lead to irreparable damage and create more demand for their return and would therefore drain the collections of (European) museums.¹³⁹

Sites under 'serious threat' from armed conflict and war, earthquakes and other natural disasters, and

¹³¹ S. Gruber, 'Protecting China's Cultural Heritage Sites in Times of Rapid Change: Current Developments, Practice and Law', *Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law*, Vol. 10, Nos. 3 & 4, 2007, 253-301. See also, C. Ge, 'China's ancient treasures under siege from army of tomb raiders', *South China Morning Post*, 4 December 2015, <http://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/article/1885832/chinas-ancient-treasures-under-siege-army-tomb-raiders>, accessed 5 December 2015.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Illicit trade in antiquities is covered in the 1970 *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*. Thefts of art work of both private and public collections and the looting of antiquities from archaeological sites are major international crimes;

¹³⁴ C.H. Roosevelt and C. Luke, 'Looting Lydia', in N. Brodie et al. (eds.), *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade*, pp.173-187.

¹³⁵ Wilson, 'Return and Restitution ...', p. 104.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Wilson, 'Return and Restitution ...', pp. 104.-105, the author here makes a valid case for the retention rather than the restitution of cultural objects by example of the British Museums that has been most under attack; the cultural exploitation of the Mogao grottoes at Dunhunag, PRC, by Aurel Stein in 1907 and Paul Pelliot (in *Valuing the Past*); see also, J. Greenfield, *The Return of Cultural Treasures*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

¹³⁷ J. Mulvaney, 'A Question of Values. Museums and Cultural Property', in I. McBryde (ed.), *Who Owns the Past?*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 86-98.

¹³⁸ Ibid., Mulvaney, 'A Question of Values...'; see also, Yagan (web page), n.d., <http://www.noongarculture.org.au/yagan/> accessed 20 March 16.

¹³⁹ Top Ten Plundered Artifacts, *Time* online, n.d., http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1883142_1883129_1883001,00.html , accessed 5 February 2016.

pollution and poaching, pose major problems to World Heritage sites and may be included in the List of *World Heritage in Danger* (currently 48 properties).¹⁴⁰ This then allows the World Heritage Committee to immediately allocate resources from the World Heritage Fund, and it also alerts the wider (international) community in the hope they will join in to save the endangered site.¹⁴¹ Other sites that are considered under severe threat and that are not on the World Heritage list - such as Shaxi, the authors field site in rural China - can be nominated to be put on the World Monuments Fund Watch list of the '100 Most Endangered Sites' in the world.¹⁴²

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an overview of Western approaches to heritage protection in theory and practice, including a literature review of scholarly discussions on the subject. I have given an account of some broader meanings of the concept of 'heritage' and its embeddedness in the global heritage system as represented by UNESCO and its associated advisory bodies. There we have seen an evolution from a narrowly defined text rooted in 19th century European Enlightenment thinking represented by a mainly material and grandiose heritage and the dominance of expert and scientific knowledge, to a broadening of the concept of heritage and the heritage discourse where cultural and geographical diversity persist. Heritage, some argue, is becoming more like 'culture', where the World Heritage understanding of 'culture', through 'ethnographies of encounter', has converged with an anthropological one (similarly as with the word 'culture' in wider society).¹⁴³ This means a moving away from an essentialization of 'culture', while at the same time, however, it could mean an overemphasis on difference and a neglect of connections and shared reference points. This was also a critique within the discussions of 'Asian' or 'Eastern' values and the ideas of a culturally-specific 'authenticity' which resulted in the drafting of ground-breaking legislation as seen above. UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee have set a global heritage regime, a kind of 'cosmopolitan law'¹⁴⁴, where State Parties voluntarily subscribe to universal norms and values in heritage protection and preservation that also impacts their political, cultural, economic and social life. Therefore, an increasing politicization (and corruption) of not only heritage but the global heritage regime is almost a 'natural' outcome and undermines the rhetoric of this global model of

¹⁴⁰ UNESCO, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/158/>; accessed 4 April 2013; in 2013, six sites of the Syrian-Arab Republic were inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., UNESCO, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/158/>

¹⁴² Shaxi Market Place, *World Monument Fund*, <https://www.wmf.org/project/shaxi-market-area>

¹⁴³ Brumann and Berlinger, 'UNESCO World Heritage – Grounded?' Introduction.

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Yan, 'World Heritage in China ...'.

goodwill. However, at the same time, and despite its many criticisms, the popularity of the World Heritage List and the World Heritage label has no par, the efforts taken and successes achieved in global heritage protection and conservation by the World Heritage regime in over forty years of its existence are phenomenal. For these reasons, and what is the topic of the next chapter, State Parties, or member nations to the World Heritage Committee, such as China, voluntarily and enthusiastically adopt the rhetoric and practice of a global heritage 'supra-regime' and with it accepts its global responsibility towards its national and world heritages.

Introduction

In 2016, the *Zuojiang Huashan Rock Art Cultural Landscape* and *Hubei Shengnungjia* were added as China's 49th and 50th items respectively on the UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL).¹⁴⁵ In just a



FIGURE 2: ZUOJIANG HUASHAN ROCK ART

short period of time, from its first inscription in 1987 to its latest inscription in 2016, China has added 50 items on the World Heritage List, ranking now 2nd in the world (after Italy and overtaking Spain) of most sites listed (see Appendix 2). Adding to this a long list of tentative sites (54) intended for nomination, China could be seen as being in a veritable World Heritage application 'frenzy'.¹⁴⁶ China has particularly embraced the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) which it joined in 2004, and has since added 38 Elements to the List.¹⁴⁷ While the designation and

'branding' of *World Heritage* plays a considerable role in the

development of tourism and local economies, China has also created an extensive national list of cultural heritage properties (*guojiaji wenwu baohu danwei* 国家級文物保护单位), thus showing its commitment to both international agencies (such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, the World Bank, and the Getty Institute) in protecting the world's heritage under the banner of 'heritage for all humanity', and to the Chinese nation and people to preserve its tangible and intangible cultural heritage. But the enthusiasm for World Heritage designation *and* the listing and ranking of items and sites on China's own national heritage register goes far beyond a purely national (government) and elite-centred preoccupation and has been readily adopted by all levels of government and all groups of society in China. In particular the close link and relationship with tourism and economic and social development has furthered and legitimised the spread and popularity of heritage.

Despite these advances and embracing of a universal heritage discourse, China has long had a

¹⁴⁵ See, UNESCO World Heritage List, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1508> and <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1509>; see also List of World Heritage Sites in China, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_China

¹⁴⁶ 'World Heritage List Heat Hit China', *People's Daily Online*, 12 August 2010, <http://english1.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90782/7101992.html>, accessed 12 August 2010.

UNESCO Tentative List <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/state=cn>; World Heritage List Statistics <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat#s1>

¹⁴⁷ See, UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00311&cp=CN>; While China signed the *Law on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2004, it did not submit Elements to the list until 2008.

complicated relationship with its cultural heritage and its tumultuous past and it was only with the launch of 'Reform and Opening Up' in the early 1980s that different approaches and attitudes to culture, tradition, and the past emerged. While in the Maoist era (1949-1976) and the early reform era China's heritage and past were defined more in a 'mechanistic deterministic'¹⁴⁸, Marxist-Leninist socialist context and used in terms of the 'nation', that is, largely as a 'domestic' issue, they have gradually come to be one of the defining characteristics of a modernizing and globalising China. The renewed interest in culture and tradition over the last two decades was manifest in the eager participation of China in regional and global political, cultural, and economic forums (ASEAN, UN, APEC, WTO), its signing of economic, environmental and cultural treaties (Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (Rio 21), G20 Summit), and in particular the ratification of laws, charters, conventions and declarations of international or intergovernmental organizations, including UNESCO and its World Heritage program.

To understand how cultural heritage in China 'works' it is necessary to outline the main features of its contemporary cultural heritage discourse. This can be approached in many different ways, but in this chapter I will first draw attention to what I consider the three mainstays of the Chinese heritage discourse: the global, the national, and the local. By addressing these we can discern: 1) the strong desire of a rising China to 'go out to the world' (*zou chu qu* 走出去) by using cultural soft power; 2) underpinned by political rhetoric and sloganeering, a national narrative of historical continuity, multi-culturalism, and ethnic unity, and a genuine concern to preserve its past, the Chinese state provides a comprehensive 'platform' on which to build a new 'cultural industry' and which also promotes the construction of relevant chain industries; 3) the 'local' has undergone a party-state sanctioned revival of culture and traditions which has served both the people and the state in modernizing the countryside; and 4) a strong top-down approach in the politics of heritage preservation and cultural revival which locals have 'learned' to manipulate and negotiate to their own advantage through a new cultural economy.¹⁴⁹ I will then turn to China's heritage legislation and will finish with cultural heritage in discourse and practice by putting theory and practice (or rhetoric and reality) into context. Finally, this chapter will set the framework for the following chapters by arguing that China's over-arching project of modernization is still the basis of all political and rational policy-making, and where the rationale of a developmental state under-writes this goal. But first, a brief analysis of the central terms of 'culture' and 'modernization' in China in

¹⁴⁸ D. Lary, 'The Uses of the Past. History and Legitimacy', in A. Laliberte and M. Lanteigne (eds.), *The Chinese Party-state in the 21 st Century: Adaptation and the Reinvention of Legitimacy*, Oxford and New York, Routledge, 2008, Chapter 7.

¹⁴⁹ T. Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, London, Routledge, 1998.

the context of this thesis will be given.

Modernization in China: China's unique path of development

Modernization is one of the most discussed and researched academic subjects in China, not least because it has been the basis of its development path since – as a Western development construct – it first entered the Chinese intellectual sphere in the late 19th century. Since then, China has experimented with ‘modernization’ in different ways to arrive at a model which – at first glance – clearly sets it apart from the Western model of modernization, and which has lately triggered much discussion at both national and international level as the ‘China Model’ of modernization and development.¹⁵⁰ While this suggests a new or unique path of modern development independent of the Western model, it is not entirely so. From the very beginnings of China’s modern encounter with the West, Chinese intellectuals became obsessed with borrowing and imitating ideas, concepts, and technology from the scientifically, politically, and culturally advanced West. They became acutely aware of the constraints that Chinese traditional culture put on China’s development, and Western scholars likewise attributed the lack of (modern) scientific development to China’s ‘great inertia’, that is China’s ‘backwardness’.¹⁵¹ Short of a wholesale adoption of Western values, this resulted in the adoption of a more pragmatic dogma of ‘Chinese thought – Western use’ (*zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong* 中学为体，西学为用), while at the same time ‘Westernization’ vs ‘Sinization’ constituted the ‘ineffaceable paradox within China’s modernization’.¹⁵²

Throughout the last one and a half centuries of political upheaval in China – and mirroring the political struggles from democratic to revolutionary, communist to socialist, leftist, centre and rightist movements, and from class struggle to consumer society - Western liberal ideas (freedom, democracy, science) have been variously put into practice, banned and abandoned, taken up again, and finally ‘localised’ and ‘indigenised’ as ‘modernization (of culture, society, economy, and so on) with Chinese characteristics’. Important in this trajectory was the realisation that the imposition of

¹⁵⁰ The ‘China Model’ has gained currency with the publication of J. C. Ramos’ (2004) article on the ‘Beijing Consensus’, referring to China’s unique model of development, distinct from the ‘Washington Consensus’ of development that follows Fukayama’s doctrine of the ‘universalization of liberal democracy’. However, the concept of ‘Beijing Consensus’ is largely unsustainable (as the ‘Washington Consensus’) and mostly refers to aspects of China’s unique approach of political and economic reform. In S. Zhao, ‘The China Model: Can it Replace the Western Model of Modernization?’, *Contemporary China*, Vol. 19, No. 65, 2010, pp. 419-436.

¹⁵¹ See for example, Wen-yuan Qian, *The Great Inertia. Scientific Stagnation in Traditional China*, Sidney, Croom Helm, 1985. See also, J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1956.

¹⁵² Y. Keping, ‘“Westernization” vs “Sinicization”’: An Ineffaceable Paradox within China’s Modernization Process’, in T. Cao et al. (eds.), *Culture and Transformation in Reform Era China*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 153-196.

modernization ‘under duress’ and ‘by force of arms’ in the 19th century happened in a quite different historical and cultural environment to that of the European Enlightenment period and, therefore, Chinese thinkers had to continually re-examine both the origins and consequences of Western (and Japanese) modernity in China.¹⁵³

The new socialist period during Mao's leadership – marked by political and social turmoil and resulting in a decade of cultural annihilation during the Cultural Revolution - emphasised the CCP's struggle with its own culture (wenhua 文化) and civilization (wenming 文明), its becoming modern, and which had enormous impact on the psychological fabric and practical goals of post-Mao society. While CCP rhetoric hailed the socialist state as the most advanced civilization and considered it the vanguard of scientific progress that represented the height of modernity, Mao Zedong increasingly rejected both China's 'feudal' heritage and condemned all Western ideals and values associated with capitalism and imperialism. Even Stalinist Russian communist ideology was considered 'revisionist' and was under attack. At the end of the Cultural Revolution and his time of death there was little left for the Chinese socialist state to build on and the concepts of 'culture' and 'civilization' were largely neglected and only gradually found new meaning in the openness of the reform era of the early 1980s.¹⁵⁴

By the 1990s, at the height of China's modernization and marketization, debates about China's path of modernization had resurfaced and produced (in particular amongst the younger generation of researchers) substantial academic work, deconstructing both ‘Western’ and ‘Asian’ grand narratives and conceptual frameworks, and inquiring into alternative paths of modernization and modernity.¹⁵⁵ A popular trend in the 2000s - supported by academics and policy-makers - was, rather than seeing China's modernization as a process of socialization (to international/global/Western norms), recognising that China follows its own path of modernity based on ‘exceptionalism’.¹⁵⁶ Huntington and others also held the view that different cultures in the world do not have to entirely adopt Western values, institutions and practices, but can realize different modernizations, consistent with their own unique environment and cultural traditions.¹⁵⁷ Barabantseva argues, however, that ‘China's current development model is informed and constrained by the paradigm of modernization as the only right path to development. That is, debates about ‘China's ‘unique’ path of development

¹⁵³ S. Golden, ‘The Modernization of China and the Critique of Chinese *Modernity*’, *Orientalis*, 2006.

¹⁵⁴ G. Wang, *Renewal: the Chinese State and the New Global History*, Chapter 5: Modernity, the State and Civilization, Chinese University Press, 2013.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ W. Callahan, ‘Sino-speak: Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 71, No.1, 2012, pp. 33-55.

¹⁵⁷ B. Hu, *Informal Institutions and Rural Development in China*, Hoboken, Routledge, 2007, p. 272.

- or the China Model - are deeply rooted in and limited by a particular way of thinking about modernity where the domination of the modernization discourse restricts alternative paths of development possible within China (dominated by a 'hierarchical view of the world').¹⁵⁸ China's modernization process thus at once emphasises an evolutionary, linear development and, as the 'reinvention' of a unique China Model, emphasises oppositions such as China and the West, eastern and western regions, Han majority and ethnic minorities, rural and urban, and tradition and modernity.¹⁵⁹ Modernization in China is thus inherently hybrid and a 'contradictory and paradoxical experience'¹⁶⁰. However we look at it, the adopted path of 'socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics' enabled the emergence of a hitherto successful and diversified development model (which is considered a serious challenge to the dominant Western modernization model) which strikes a balance between a market-oriented economy and an authoritarian state to sustain its continued economic growth in its modernization effort.¹⁶¹

After the initial efforts of modernization during the Mao period, the introduction of the 'Four Modernizations' in 1975 (agricultural, industrial, defence, and technological modernization) set the pace for further modernizations of China as a socialist, modernized country, resulting in the radical economic development policies of 'reform and opening up' initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. From this point onward, modernization was primarily equated with economic development and based on pragmatism and scientific knowledge, later popularized as 'scientific development'. During the last thirty years of China's 'reform and opening up', this pursuit of modernization has caused extensive destruction of China's physical and cultural landscape and brought with it massive societal change. As we will also see in the following chapters, the unyielding pursuit of modernization by the Chinese state has had a particular impact on Chinese culture and tradition through the encounter with tourism. Tourism, Oakes aptly explains in *Tourism and Modernity in China*, 'is a particularly meaningful metaphor for the experience of modernity in that it displays both modernity's relentless objectifying processes as well as its promise of new and liberating subjectivities for those participating in either side of the tourism encounter'.¹⁶²

Culture in China: New Meanings

In every society, culture takes on different meanings as it is highly conditioned by its specific

¹⁵⁸ E. Barabantseva, 'In Pursuit of an Alternative Model? The Modernisation Trap in China's Official Development Discourse', *East Asia*, Vol. 29, 2012, pp. 63-79.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, Introduction.

¹⁶¹ Zhao, 'The China Model ...'.

¹⁶² Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, Introduction, p. 11.

historical, political, economic, socio-linguistic and socio-cultural environment. Some (nation) specific views on aspects of culture have found world-wide acceptance with profound implications, including theories on evolution and race (Social Darwinism). Considering the many uses of culture and its value-added meanings in the context of a globalizing world, in particular through tourism, culture, like heritage, defies definition. As a country that claims more than five thousand years of continuous history, culture, in its myriad interpretations, has always held an important position in China. Lately, in the endeavour of modernization and finding a unique path of development, the 'utility and values' of traditional culture, including Confucianism, have resurfaced.¹⁶³ While 'Confucianism' itself went through many re-incarnations and re-interpretations, and there arose other important faiths and philosophies, such as Buddhism and Daoism, as well as various traditional folk culture that still persist, Confucianism and its philosophy of a fixed hierarchical order and relationship between the human world and nature, and between heaven and earth (*tianxia*), has become the basis of the Chinese and other Asian countries', such as Korea and Japan, world order.

In China, culture has also always been important in state politics.¹⁶⁴ Mao in particular stressed the ideological nature, class status, and the tool/weapons function of culture as it fitted neatly into the base/superstructure theory of Marxism/Leninism.¹⁶⁵ While successive leaders (Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao) fundamentally adhered to Mao's doctrine in terms of culture, ideology, and the guidance of Marxism/Leninism, Deng focused more on economic development than on class, and culture gradually became more neutral. Culture was also seen as a means of unifying China's ethnically diverse people and to raise the overall quality (*suzhi* 素质) of the population.¹⁶⁶ Since the cultural revival of the early 1980s, culture has increasingly become an object of consumption and marketization, which prompted a state-sanctioned dual-role approach marrying profit and propaganda to be implemented. The 1990s were marked by a burgeoning cultural market, the 'phenomenon of mass culture', where the Party for the first time officially acknowledged the

¹⁶³ Ibid., Barabantseva, 'In Pursuit of an Alternative Model? ...';

¹⁶⁴ In the Chinese imperial examinations system, bureaucrats necessary for the administration of the government were selected on the basis of intellectual and literary competence, creating a situation of complicity between intellectuals and policy-makers that continues to be important today.

¹⁶⁵ W. Su, 'From Culture for the People to Culture for Profit: The PRC's Journey Toward a Cultural Industries Approach', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 21, No. 5, 2015, pp. 513-528. Mao Zedong's two seminal articles: 'On New Democracy' (1940) and 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art' (1942) fundamentally set the parameters for the CCP's notion of culture.

¹⁶⁶ The discourse of 'population quality' (*renkou suzhi* 人口素质) in contemporary China seeks to make people more adaptive to the modern reality, encouraging one's own socioeconomic development, and describes a person's quality measured in refinement, education, civilized behaviour, ethics, ambition, and more. One can either have or lack *suzhi*, and the government frequently invokes the 'low quality of the population' of its citizenry, in particular in the context of a modernizing China that increasingly encounters the world.

entertainment function and commercial value of cultural products.¹⁶⁷ A newly established ‘cultural industry’ sector soon became a significant part of China’s economic and social development strategy. The adoption of ‘advanced modern culture’ in the early 2000s under Jiang Zemin signalled a ‘radical shift’ in Party cultural policy (and a break-through in classical Marxist theory) to develop a socialist culture geared to the needs of modernization and a modern world.¹⁶⁸

In the contemporary world, however, culture has become an ‘artefact’, has lost its ‘authentic self’ and is dominated by ‘invented traditions’, which also acknowledges, perversely, that ‘people - and not only those with power - want culture, and they often want it precisely in the bounded, reified, essentialized and timeless fashion that most of us do now reject’.¹⁶⁹ As we shall see throughout this thesis, the re-invention and commodification of culture and the past encompasses and engenders dichotomies of fake vs authentic, of real vs simulacra, popular vs official, and traditional vs modern, and is particularly pertinent in tourism and the cultural and heritage industries in China, and largely dominates official discourses of culture and its interpretations. This then also raises concerns of a possible wholesale ‘creative destruction’ of traditional culture. However, culture has played, and continues to play, a very important and constitutive role in the complex process of China ‘becoming modern’ and of formulating a distinct Chinese modernity.¹⁷⁰

Cornerstones of the Chinese Cultural Heritage Discourse: the Global, the National and the Local

The Global: ‘Imagineering’ and ‘Soft Power’

In recent times, the world (including the Chinese themselves) has been intrigued and puzzled by new president Xi Jinping’s vision of the ‘Chinese Dream’ of the ‘rejuvenation of the Chinese civilization’. Both the Western and Chinese media have run countless articles on the ‘Chinese Dream’, wondering what it really means, and because of its vagueness, speculations have been rampant.¹⁷¹ Due to its strong nationalistic undertones there has been inevitable pondering on prospects of political reforms and democracy, on a strong military and naval power, rule of law, and

¹⁶⁷ Su, ‘From Culture for the People ...’.

¹⁶⁸ President Jiang Zemin’s contribution of the ‘Three Represents’ were a ‘radical shift’ in party ideology as for the first time the entrepreneurial class was included in the ‘broad masses’: the CCP ‘should represent the advanced productive forces in society; should represent advanced modern culture; and should represent the interests of the vast majority of the people’ (Jiang Zemin), cited in Su, ‘From Culture for the People ...’.

¹⁶⁹ Sahlins, ‘Two or Three Things I know ...’.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., Sigley, *The New Ancient Tea Horse Road*, forthcoming.

¹⁷¹ ‘Chasing the Chinese Dream’, *The Economist*, 4 May 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21577063-chinas-new-leader-has-been-quick-consolidate-his-power-what-does-he-now-want-his>

so on, while Xi emphasised the building of a ‘moderately well-off society and ‘turn[ing] China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious when the PRC marks its centennial’¹⁷². Wang Zhan, President of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, urged ‘bringing Chinese culture into the world mainstream values should be a part of the dream’¹⁷³. In essence, the ‘Chinese Dream’ – while very much a ‘national dream’ and a vision for the future of the Chinese people – is also meant to be a ‘world dream’ by connecting with a vision that the world shares.¹⁷⁴

Intent on seeking recognition of its peers, spreading soft power, and of further enlarging its 'cultural footprint' globally, China has been engaging with the outside world in many ways. This is evident, for example, in the staging of major global cultural events, such as the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the Shanghai Expo in 2010. These events (where representations of a hegemonic state discourse of the past were plentiful and *de rigueur*) show-cased the uniqueness of Chinese culture and testified to the meta-narrative of a multi-cultural, united, and harmonious society, or of the ‘plurality and organic unity’ of the Chinese nation.¹⁷⁵ In the exhibition pavilions of the Shanghai Expo, for example, tradition-style and symbolic-laden designs showed the world that the Chinese see themselves as a modern, forward looking nation, seemingly comfortable with one foot in the future and one in the past, a country where simultaneous presents co-exist.¹⁷⁶ But China’s cultural ‘charm offensive’¹⁷⁷ is largely demonstrated through its rich and colourful performance culture (as folk culture is more neutral), in particular ethnic mega-performances of song and dance that are being staged with great success nationally and world-wide. Further, regular art exhibitions and the exchange of cultural treasures have long enriched gallery and museum displays around the world. With the establishment of Confucius Institutes around the world which have been promoting China’s unique culture and history and written and spoken language for many years, Chinese

¹⁷² ‘Xi Jinping: Pursuing a Dream for 1.3b Chinese’, *China Daily*, 17 March 2013, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013npc/2013-03/17/content_16313950_2.htm

¹⁷³ ‘‘Chinese dream’ is a world dream’, *China Daily*, 26 March 2013, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013chinastudies/2013-03/26/content_16347214.htm

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., ‘‘Chinese dream’ is a world dream’.

¹⁷⁵ J. Leibold and Y. Chen (eds.), *Minority Education in China: Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2014. Available online at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vj8vd>., page 28, accessed 10 April 2016. This notion of China as an ‘ethnic plurality within the organic unity of the Chinese nation (Zhonghua minzu duoyuan yiti geju 中华民族多元一体格局) by China’s foremost anthropologist Fei Xiaotong, is a guiding concept of Chinese ethnicity. For more information on the representation of China in public performance and national identity, see, Barabantseva, ‘In Pursuit of an Alternative Model?...’.

¹⁷⁶ T. Winter and P. Daley, ‘Heritage in Asia. Converging Forces, Conflicting Values’, P. Daley and T. Winter (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Heritage in Asia*, New York, Routledge, 2012. See also, Edson Roy G. Cabalfin, *Identity Politics in the Architectures of Philippine Displays in International Expositions, 1887-1998*, PhD Thesis, see Dissertation Reviews: <http://dissertationreviews.org/archives/author/genevieve-gamache>

¹⁷⁷ Cited in B. S. Glaser and M. E. Murphy, ‘Soft Power With Chinese Characteristics. The Ongoing Debate’, in C. McGiffert (ed.), *Chinese Soft Power and its Implications for the United States. Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, March 2009.

culture went truly global. Along this line, the Chinese (bi/multi-lingual) foreign language media, including *China Daily*, *Global Times*, *Xinhua News*, *CCTV*, *China Radio International*, and many more, contribute considerably to the 'foreign propaganda work'.¹⁷⁸ Another trump card of China's soft power is the membership and active participation in the UNESCO world heritage regime which has raised the country's cultural exposure and profile abroad. The world heritage sites, such as the Great Wall, the Terracotta Warriors, the Forbidden Palace, or the Grand Canal, are easily recognizable as national symbols of China's rich and glorious past. Considering these efforts, why then have China's efforts in creating soft power mostly failed and its image is 'generally mixed to poor and declining'?¹⁷⁹

Soft power, as defined by Joseph Nye in 1990, refers to an actor's (such as a nation-state, corporation or institution) ability to use the power of attraction rather than coercion in influencing other actor's behaviour and achieving desired outcomes.¹⁸⁰ Soft power resources and assets, or 'primary currencies', include values, culture, policy and institutions. China observers, however, have been critical of China's use of the concept of soft power, in particular as China predominantly uses culture as soft power tool. In general, there is an uneasiness amongst target audiences when national culture is merely deployed 'to advance the state's interests, whether ideologically, politically or commercially'.¹⁸¹ Recently, some countries have rejected the establishment (or continuation) of Confucius Institutes which have become 'the most prominent and most controversial tool of China's public diplomacy to generate soft power'.¹⁸² For the global audience, the lack of attraction of Chinese soft power is in part because the government confuses public diplomacy with soft power. As it is the main creator of soft power, the government 'does not know how to get out of the way', as was discernible in Xi Jinping's pledge to raise China's "soft power" by developing China into a "socialist cultural superpower".¹⁸³ However, its suppression of an independent civil society stifles exactly that part of China's society that is essential to the generation of soft power on a global scale.¹⁸⁴ Adding to this, China's image abroad is tainted because of its (authoritarian/totalitarian,

¹⁷⁸ K. Edney, 'Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System', *Journal of Contemporary China*, iFirst Article, 2012, pp. 1-16.

¹⁷⁹ See for example, 'Why is Chinese Soft Power Such a Hard Sell?', *China File* (blog), <http://www.chinafile.com/why-chinese-soft-power-such-hard-sell/>, accessed 30 April 2013. Here a number of 'old China hands', writers and scholars, debate China's shortcomings in its pursuit of soft power.

¹⁸⁰ J. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, 2004.

¹⁸¹ N. Knight, 'Reflecting on the Paradox of Globalisation: China's Search for Cultural Identity and Coherence', *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1, March 2006, pp. 1-31. The quote was taken in the context of the capacity of defence of national culture in the face of globalization and Western cultural values.

¹⁸² F. Hartig, 'Confucius Institutes and the Limits of Attraction', University of Nottingham, UK, Blog Post, March 21, 2016, <https://cpianalysis.org/?s=confucius+institutes+and+the+limits+of+attraction>, accessed 22 March 2016.

¹⁸³ B. Buzan, 'Confusing Public Diplomacy and Soft Power', University of Nottingham, UK, Blog Post, 10 March 2016. See, <http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2016/03/10/confusing-public-diplomacy-and-soft-power/>; accessed 11 March 2016.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

self-serving) political system and opposition to (Western) democracy, and violations of human rights.

But this meanwhile widely used term in international affairs has great significance in present-day Chinese politics as part of the nation's comprehensive power (*zonghe guoli* 综合国力) and in building an international image.¹⁸⁵ President Hu Jintao in the 17th Party Congress called for the need to increase China's soft power, and foreign minister Yang Jiechi emphasized increasing soft power 'through strategies such as making full use of events such as the Olympics, major news stories such as the Wenchuan Earthquake, engaging with local media, scholars and the public in foreign countries, and increasing the country's international broadcasting capability and interpersonal and cultural exchanges (*renwen jiaoliu* 人文交流)¹⁸⁶. But the inference was also that China would not let the Western-centred definition of 'soft power' with its focus on human rights issues, political values, free press and so on, come between this official rhetoric and China's own interpretation thereof. That is, in Edney's words, 'how the soft power concept relates to the party-state's existing propaganda system', and how it can 'balance the goal of promoting cultural creativity and variety with the goal of national cohesion'.¹⁸⁷ The building of soft power in China is thus largely interpreted in terms of both international relations but with a strong focus on domestic development and has been closely linked to nation-building, in particular in the realm of culture.¹⁸⁸ The 'going out to the world' not only serves to increase China's new (power) status, but should also act as a defense mechanism for its own culture from being subverted and replaced by Western cultural values. This paranoia with 'spiritual pollution' through Western values is a deep-seated and ongoing struggle for the Chinese government and one we also see in the World Heritage debate on 'universal values'.¹⁸⁹ But while soft power is critical for China, there is yet no comprehensive and coherent national strategy formulated, and China's soft power 'is largely reactive, ad hoc, aiming to counter the China Threat Theory, and improve its image abroad'.¹⁹⁰

The National: Providing a Platform

¹⁸⁵ See above China File blog: 'Why is Chinese Soft Power Such a Hard Sell? ...'.

¹⁸⁶ Cited in Edney, 'Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System'.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., Edney, 'Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System'.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Edney, 'Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System'. For many countries, especially in the developing world, China's socialist culture 'with Chinese characteristics' has become a powerful and inspirational attraction, but so far propaganda officials have not included it in their official soft power policy.

¹⁸⁹ See, S. Wade, 'Unravelling China's Campaign Against Western Values', *China Digital Times*, 5 March 2015, <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2015/03/unraveling-chinas-campaign-western-values/>, accessed 10 July 2016; for more information see, J. Barne, 'The Spiritual Pollution Thirty Years On', *China Story*, 17 November 2013, <https://www.thechinastory.org/2013/11/spiritual-pollution-thirty-years-on/>, accessed 10 July 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Glaser and Murphy, 'Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics ...'.

But if the Chinese party-state is preoccupied with creating an international image to showcase its cultural assets to the world, it is especially vying for audiences of those same assets at home. This means that China uses culture as soft power not only on a global level but also at home to acquiesce, attract, and co-opt its people.

As part of the ongoing government agenda of deepening cultural reforms, the government now actively supports the construction of a ‘culture industry’ and ‘culture industry bases’. In the last two decades or so, the Chinese party-state has pushed the production and consumption of its heritage assets, tangible and intangible, at home as never before. In particular, in order to use the abundance of ethnic cultural resources, local governments are keen to accelerate the development of ‘ethnic cultural industry bases’, develop ethnic cultural products, forge ethnic cultural brands, and support key cultural industry projects.¹⁹¹ Traditional festivals and folk song and dance performances are



FIGURE 3: BAI MUSICIAN PERFORMING IN BEIJING

being revived and recreated and are fostered through competitions and awards and widely distributed in the national media. Temples are being restored or newly built and are more numerous now than before. More heritage sites have been opened up, in particular throughout China’s west, as heritage and ethnic tourism have become an integral part of China's ever-growing tourism industry, both as a leisure and educational activity.

China is the only nation world-wide that

celebrates a National Intangible Cultural Heritage Day every year and the government designates special funds to ‘representative inheritors’ of national intangible cultural heritage.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ ‘Preservation and Development of National Minority Cultures in China. State Ethnic Affairs Commission, September 21, 2006’, *Chinagate*, http://en.chinagate.cn/reports/2006-10/10/content_2448941.htm

¹⁹² Luo Dan, ‘China Raises Allowance for Intangible Heritage Inheritors’, *crienglish*, 31 March 2016, <http://english.cri.cn/12394/2016/03/31/191s922517.htm>, accessed 1 April 2016. The amount was recently raised from Rmb 10,000 to Rmb 20,000.

Epic dramas and historic tales are repackaged into modern digital versions and are immensely popular, while they are also used in ‘branding’ locations.¹⁹³ The annual Spring Festival New Year Gala on national TV, dominated by ethnic performances, is the biggest TV event of the year and viewed by the majority of Chinese.¹⁹⁴ Cultural heritage quarters and rebuilt ancient towns spring up all through the countryside, and thousands of museums and old living quarters/residences of notable figures have been opened or revamped.

By potentially engendering a subset of local enterprises, such as tourism, news and entertainment, film and TV, antiques, reproduction, handicraft and so on, culture has become a viable pillar industry of local economies.¹⁹⁵ In fact, the cultural industry is currently one of the most vigorous sectors of China’s economy with a current output value of RMB 3.9 trillion, and contributes to GDP in excess of three percent.¹⁹⁶ That is, cultural innovation and cultural creativity - or the modernization of the culture industry - are greatly supported by the government through favourable policies so as to create a ‘healthy and orderly cultural market with optimization of industrial development’.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, the term ‘cultural industries’ in China is literal in its meaning where culture and industry are mingled, but which raises the problem of the ‘industrialization’ of culture (and which is very much the anti-thesis of the original intention of the term ‘culture industry’ as proposed by the Frankfurt School). As Su argues, ‘the Chinese party-state legalizes ‘cultural industries’ by extending the market mechanism into the cultural arena, and acknowledges the triple statuses of culture as a public service provider, a market profit contributor, and an essential builder of the ‘socialist core value system.’¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ See for example, Dali film city *Tianlongbabu* (天龙八部城), in Notar, *Displacing Desire*;

¹⁹⁴ The annual Spring Festival Gala broadcast by China Central TV (CCTV) has set a Guinness World Record in 2012 for ‘Most Watched National Network TV Broadcast’ with 498 million viewers, making it the most watched national variety entertainment show in the world. *China & the World Cultural Exchange Magazine* (hard copy), Beijing, China, Vol. 163, May 2012.

¹⁹⁵ This also entails an overhaul of relative administrative systems (policy regulation, market supervision, social management and public services); integration of business and finance sector; attraction of local government funding for major private cultural enterprises; establishment of trans-local and regional ‘cultural networks’ that encourage cultural resource information sharing with local communities by relocating, renovating, reviving, and constructing cultural venues and facilities, incorporating landmark public services such as museums, libraries, exhibition halls, art galleries, and cultural centres; present awards for cultural development and cultural preservation; promote ‘branding’ of cultural events, organize cultural festivals and activities (folk singing and dancing contests) to enrich the cultural lives of local peoples, and broaden cultural exchange programs to national and international audiences; push forward cultural innovation and enhance quality performance. See, *China & the World Cultural Exchange Magazine*.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Culture-Powered Economy’, *China Today Magazine* (hard copy), Vol. 61, No. 3, 2012.

¹⁹⁷ Y. Yang, ‘Ningxia: Putting Money Down on Culture’, *China Today Magazine* (hard copy), December 2011. In fact, the Frankfurt School (T. Adorno, M. Horkheimer) whose members first coined the term ‘cultural industry’ strongly opposed the ‘cultural industry’ for its business-focused commercial nature and for its representation of ‘the absolute power of capitalism’, see, Su, ‘From Culture for the People...’.

¹⁹⁸ Su, ‘From Culture for the People ...’; see also, J. Li, ‘The Making of Ethnic Yunnan on the National Mall: Minority Folksong and Dance Performances, Provincial Identity, and “The Artifying of Politics” (Zhengzhi yishuhua)’, *Modern China*, Jan 2013, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 69-100.

These are important developments, and in Foucauldian terms, culture and the cultural industry, in this way also function as a form of governance by the Chinese state and become a technology of power.¹⁹⁹ While the state may have ulterior (ideological), or even adverse motives to those of the public (entrepreneurs, heritage experts, local people) in pursuing them, the public is deeply entangled in and affected by them, and therefore an accomplice to ‘state graft’ (such as forging identities). The examples above especially emphasise the important role of culture in building a Chinese national identity ‘both in terms of a unified ‘national culture’ - often manifest in the form of ‘cultural nationalism’ - and the myriad of ‘cultures’ that form regional and ethnic identities’.²⁰⁰

The Local: Revival, Re-Claiming, Re-Building, Re-Creating, Re-Inventing

Following the extensive destruction of the material and cultural past throughout much of the 20th century, the liberalization of the early reform era (1979-1985) sparked a wildfire of cultural renaissance. All through the country, temples, towers, and ancestor halls were being re-claimed, restored or rebuilt, and old traditions, rituals and practices of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, revived.²⁰¹ Intangible cultural heritage, such as the spiritual culture of China’s past, as well as



FIGURE 4: RELIGIOUS RITUALS AT SHAXI LOCAL BAI TEMPLE

folklore tradition, such as song, dance and rituals of the agrarian and human life cycle, had found new life and had become a viable source for tourism development and China’s greater national agenda of modernization. While this revival was essentially led by local popular initiatives, it was also largely state-sanctioned and even encouraged by the state in the 1980s. In many

localities government cadres were actively involved in this revival, even in aspects of religious rites and practices. It none-the-less occurred within the boundaries of a national narrative of (Marxist)

¹⁹⁹ T. Oakes, ‘Resourcing Culture: Is a ‘Prosaic’ Third Space Possible in Rural China?’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2009, Vol. 27, pp. 1074-1090.

²⁰⁰ G. Sigley, ‘The New Ancient Tea Horse Road: Change and Continuity in Southwest China’, forthcoming.

²⁰¹ See also, Svensson, ‘In the Ancestor’s Shadow ...’. Initially this comprehensive revival was funded by local communities themselves, but increasingly funds were drawn from more diverse sources, in particular overseas Chinese, local *dakuan*, as well as the government.

socialist development, in particular where religious practices of a superstitious and feudal nature, such as Shamanism, transgressed the permissible borders of religious liberalization. By the 1990s, in line with the rapid progress in the new market economy, as more stakeholders (cultural relic bureaux, small-scale entrepreneurs and businesses, tourism industry) became involved in the economic production of cultural heritage, the control over space, place, and memory, not only between state and local, but between local communities themselves became more fluid and frequently contested.²⁰² Increasingly, however, this pluralism of power holders in cultural heritage policy and management (foremost the party-state) has threatened the ‘local’.

These new (mostly non-local) power holders usually act in their own interests, which often results in a highly inequitable distribution of benefits, high commodification and over-commercialisation. We can see this specifically with new tourism developments in remote ethnic villages that are being led by outside contractors without the adequate consultation or participation of locals. Importantly, what comes to light here is that through a variety of national (and increasingly international) agendas that are integrated into local development strategies, ‘heritage is something that local communities find themselves obliged to engage with’.²⁰³ This is a very important observation considering that heritage (protection) awareness in general is still very low, and therefore has many implications. It implies that heritage preservation is something that is mostly imposed on them, rather than their own choice. And it also implies that someone else (government, developers) decides which characteristics or part of their heritage will be preserved. This has become especially contentious around the preservation efforts of ethnic and local languages, religious rites and popular traditions that are regarded backward or not in line with state imaginings of a civilized populace. Locals have little power in the face of spatial and social change, which then greatly impacts on their relationship with the state and how they see their own heritage and past. For local communities, although their attachment to place and heritage might be very different within the group, the right to their own heritage (or to own their heritage) is an important aspect of their identity (construction) and well-being.²⁰⁴ It goes back to what we said earlier, that heritage, as something handed down to an individual, group, or a nation, is deeply entangled in ownership of the past and identity-making. Indeed, and we will see this later, asserting long established (ethnic) identities or creating new identities on the basis of new heritage construction and tourismification and commercialization of ethnic resources, are at the core of local discontent. As we shall see in the next section, with the

²⁰² Ibid, Svensson, ‘In the Ancestor’s Shadow ...’.

²⁰³ H. Evans and M. Rowlands, ‘Reconceptualizing Heritage in China: Museums, Development and the Shifting Dynamics of Power’, in P. Basu and W. Modest (eds.), *Museums, Heritage and International Development*, New York, Routledge, 2015, pp. 272-294.

²⁰⁴ Svensson, ‘In the Ancestor’s Shadow ...’.

signing of some of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee's recent charters and declarations many of these issues have found new challenges, but also rectification and validation.

Cultural Heritage Protection and Preservation in China: Historical Perspective

China's move into cultural heritage protection and the drafting of appropriate heritage laws happened rather late in the modern period, although the recording of historical writing has a much longer tradition in China than anywhere else in the world. In actual fact, China possesses the longest uninterrupted historiographical tradition, and key texts of Confucianism (mostly attributed to Confucius, China's most revered ancient philosopher) left a lasting influence and legacy on the discourse tradition of meaning (making) of the past and heritage.²⁰⁵ Some form of antiquarianism already appeared during the late Tang dynasty²⁰⁶ (A.D. 7-10th century), but developed into more comprehensive and artistic forms of the past during the Song period (A.D. 960-1279), including archaeology, the collection of antiquities and the recording and compilation of epigraphs.²⁰⁷ Throughout the millennia, however, the common practice in China's imperial past was to destroy the achievements and treasures of conquered dynasties and 'loving the ancient' was mainly equated with 'knowledge' and 'love of learning' and ebbed and flowed with different understandings and intensities since then.²⁰⁸

Republican Era (1911 – 1949)

It was only in the early twentieth century, that modern theories of material preservation were introduced into China. One of the first ordinances for cultural property protection was the *Measures for the Protection of Ancient Sites* in 1909.²⁰⁹ A number of preservation laws were passed before

²⁰⁵ These include the *Confucian Canon*, *The Five Classics*, *Sacred Books of China* and *Traditional Chinese Beliefs*. The *Annals of Spring and Autumn* (春秋) are considered the origin of historical narration (and are usually attributed to Confucius), while the work of grand historian Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian* (史记) followed these philosophies. For example, the *Shu Ching* (Five Classics), or *Book of Historical Records*, describes events dating back to the third millennium B.C.E., and was written down during the Han dynasty (23-220 C.E.). See also, Z. Wu, 'Let Fragments Speak for Themselves: Vernacular Heritage, Emptiness and Confucian Discourse of Narrating the Past', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 7-8, 2014, pp. 851-865.

²⁰⁶ The Tang Dynasty is considered one of the four great Chinese Dynasties, and its artistic contributions were sophisticated figure painting, tricolored ceramic tomb figurines, and exquisite porcelain. A significant development of this period is the use of rare, cobalt blue glazes. The Tang revered both horses and camels, figures of which were placed in the burials of the royalty and aristocracy, along with gold and silver ornaments.

²⁰⁷ P. Ryckmans, 'The Chinese Attitude towards the Past', *China Heritage Quarterly*, No. 14, 2008.

²⁰⁸ G. Wang, 'Loving the Ancient in China', in I. McBryde (ed.), *Who owns the past?* Papers from the annual symposium of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 175-195. The 'ancients' included the Confucian down to the Warring States period just before the Ch'in unification of China in the second century BC.

²⁰⁹ G. Lai, M. Demas and N. Agnew, 'Valuing the Past in China: the Seminal Influence of Liang Sicheng on Heritage

the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, most importantly the *Law on the Preservation of Ancient Objects* in 1930 that claimed state ownership of all subsurface relics and required approval of all excavations and any participation of foreigners.²¹⁰ This was in response to almost a century of destruction, looting and plunder by external forces and marked the beginnings of a legal framework and an awakening consciousness for the need to protect cultural objects.²¹¹ It also delineated more clearly the state as the owner and guardian of cultural relics. The period from 1929 to 1949 was an open, fundamental, and exploratory period, with substantial achievements by the Chinese pioneers of the conservation movement.²¹² They established the *Society for Research in Chinese Architecture* (1929) and were supported by returning students of ancient architecture, archaeology and history who were trained in the West and Japan, and who introduced modern concepts of heritage preservation to China.²¹³ Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) already played a vital role in this period, while academic and financial support also came from abroad.²¹⁴ At the time, both Eastern and Western approaches and views of cultural heritage and preservation prevailed.

Maoist Era (1949 - 1976)

Ancient traditions of conservation in China were mainly expressed in the 'harmony between the heavens and humankind', or human and nature, but were literarily thrown out in the Maoist/Marxist era.²¹⁵ At the same time, Mao Zedong appreciated the use of some aspects of the past, resulting in his famous quote of 'use the past to serve the present (and make the foreign serve China)'.²¹⁶ In the early 1950s the newly established People's Republic of China embarked on a nation-wide effort of cultural identification and categorization of its many minority peoples (*minzu shibie* 民族识别). Apart from its controversial motives and outcomes, and what is often forgotten, this project was the first comprehensive effort to research, collect, collate, and translate minority histories, their cultures

Conservation', *Orientalism*, Vol. 35, No 2, 2004, pp. 82-89.

²¹⁰ L. Rogers, "'The Heavens are High and the Emperor is Far Away': Cultural Heritage Law and Management in China', *historic environment*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2004.

²¹¹ Ibid., Lai et al., 'Valuing the past in China ...'. These included the looting by English and French of the old Summer Palace in the 2nd Opium War (1840s and 1860), destruction of relics during the Boxer rebellion, the Japanese Invasion of the 1930s, and extensive excavations by foreigners (e.g. Aurel Stein, or Paul Pelliot).

²¹² G. Zhu, 'China's Architectural Heritage Conservation Movement', *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, Vol. 1, 2012, pp. 10-22.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid. The Society was established in Beijing by Mr. Zhu Qiqian, who was the former Minister of Public Works and Deputy Premier of the former government, and who invited two young professors, Prof. Liang Sicheng and Prof. Liu Dunzhen to be Deputy Directors of the Society's two sections.

²¹⁵ Rogers, 'The Heavens are high ...'.

²¹⁶ Mao Zedong, 'Collected Works', see e.g. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/>; see also Li Shu, 'A Correct Understanding of 'Making the Past Serve the Present'', *Chinese Studies in History*, No. 11, Issue 4, 1978 (Published online 8 December 2014).

and traditions.²¹⁷ In 1961 the *Provisional Regulations on Protection and Administration of Cultural Relics* came into force, prohibiting the export of any cultural relics from before 1795. In general, during the Maoist years, and more so during the Cultural Revolution, the question of what to preserve was mainly influenced by ideological considerations and many relics that were deemed bourgeois, elitist, feudal, or pre-revolutionary, were destroyed. However, most of the nationally listed sites could be saved because they were under government control and not accessible to the public.

Early Reform Era China (1979 – 1992)

In 1982, however, at the time of ‘opening up and reform’ (*gaige kaifang* (改革开放), China promulgated the centrepiece of the protection of cultural heritage, the *Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics* (*Cultural Relics Law*, updated in 2002) and the *Rules for the Implementation of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics* (*Rules for Implementation 1992*, updated 2003). These two sets of legislation provide the fundamentals governing heritage protection in China and were enacted ‘to strengthen the state protection of cultural heritage, to preserve the splendid historical and cultural legacy for future generations, to provide patriotism and the revolutionary tradition, and to build a society with advanced culture and ideology’.²¹⁸ In 1985 China ratified the UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972), thereby officially aligning its conservation practices with that of the world community of nations. *The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import and Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Properties* (UNESCO, 1970) was signed by China in 1989, and in the same year, China also promulgated the *Regulations Concerning the Management and Protection of Underwater Cultural Relics*. Collectively, these laws now form part of China’s national cultural heritage policy.²¹⁹

The globalization of China’s heritage (1992 – present)

Since the 1980s heritage conservation in China has increasingly moved towards international standards of good practice and has been integrated into the official rhetoric of modernisation. In response, cultural heritage conservation became an issue in China’s Five-Year-Plans (since 1996). By the 1990s, at the height of economic construction and material destruction, it had become

²¹⁷ Wu Gu, ‘Reconstructing Yi History from Yi Records’, in S. Harrell (ed.) *Perspectives on the Yi in Southwest China*, Berkeley, California University Press, 2001, pp. 21-34.

²¹⁸ WY Chan and SY Ma, ‘Heritage Preservation and Sustainability of China’s Development’, *Sustainable Development* 12, 2004, pp. 15-31.

²¹⁹ See for example, Rogers, “‘The Heavens are High ...’; or Gruber, ‘Protecting China’s Cultural Heritage ...’.

increasingly clear that China's cultural heritage needed better protection and that China needed its own guidelines for heritage conservation practice and management.²²⁰ The landmark achievement was the signing in 2002 of the *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*, or 'China Principles', which were drawn up in cooperation with the *Getty Conservation Institute* (US) and the *Australian Heritage Commission*.²²¹ The 'China Principles' are an important indication of China's willingness to adhere to international heritage legislation on the one hand, whilst at the same time showing considerable flexibility in its use and interpretation.

In 2001, China launched an application to UNESCO's *Proclamation of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity"* and where in the same year China's *Kunqu* opera, *Guqin* art, *Uyghur Muqam* art of Xinjiang Autonomous Region and the Mongolian ethnic *Long Song* were added. In 2002, the Chinese government referred the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Folk and Ethnic Traditional Culture* to the National People's Congress, and in 2004 it became a signatory to the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.²²² This convention has been adopted and renamed in China in 2011 as the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage*.²²³ A number of documents on strengthening and intensifying the protection of intangible cultural heritage were issued over the following years.

Theory was followed by practical action, in particular the setting up of an 'inventory system of intangible heritage masterpieces on state, provincial, municipal and county levels. From June 2005 to the end of 2009, China deployed its third national survey on its intangible cultural heritage, where a staggering number of 870,000 items of intangible cultural heritage were designated.²²⁴ As an effective way of protecting a nation's heritage - and also referring to Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention of duties and responsibilities of Party States - China has created institutions for cultural heritage protection at all government levels and maintains a comprehensive national registry of cultural heritage sites from which it then selects sites for nomination to the World Heritage Tentative List. The national list is compiled from the most significant sites - or sites with

²²⁰ At this time, and following the Rio Earth Summit in 2001, China also formulated its *Agenda 21 White Paper on China's Population, Environment, and Development in the 21st Century* that set out a strategic framework for long-term, integrated sustainable development. Chan and Ma, 'Heritage Preservation and Sustainability ...'.

²²¹ N. Agnew et al., 'The Begetting of Charters: the Genesis of the China Principles', *historic environment*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2004.

²²² Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture, <http://chinagate.cn/english/reports/48277.htm>

²²³ S. Pan, 'Law Is a Key to Protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage. A Closer Look at the Legislation of Intangible Cultural Heritage', *Beijing Review*, 8 June 2013, http://www.bjreview.com.cn/culture/txt/2013-06/08/content_548379.htm, accessed 15 June 2016.

²²⁴ R. Hou, 'Ancient Culture Revitalizes in Modern China', *China Today*, Vol. 60, No. 8, August 2011. China has conducted three National Cultural Heritage Surveys and Registration in the past, the first in the early 1950s, the second in the 1980s, and the third finished in 2011.

important historical, artistic, and scientific values - at county, provincial, autonomous regional and municipal levels. From this group, the State Council declares the most important sites as *National Priority Protected Sites* ('key cultural relics protection units'), which are afforded the highest level of protection. In addition, the State Council has also designated '*Historically and Culturally Famous Cities*' (and a number of other categories) which are also accorded statutory protection at the province and autonomous regions level.²²⁵

China's abundance of cultural resources constitutes a clear competitive advantage, but it also means that large numbers of relics cannot be identified, or even unearthed, and therefore have no real protection.²²⁶ However, cultural relics that *are* identified are also often unprotected because of inadequate laws, ignorance, lack of awareness and scientific knowledge (research and education), insufficient resources and personnel, and outright breaches of laws.²²⁷ Adding to this, until the 2002 Cultural Relics Law, the definition of what 'cultural relics' *are* was unclear.²²⁸ As one cultural official concluded, 'the best thing that can be done currently for underground antiques is to leave them in the place where they are discovered, if practical'.²²⁹

Heritage administration

The architecture of the heritage administration in China is conducive to overlapping which creates 'institutional confusion' and a platform for misuse, corruption, and inefficiency.²³⁰ At the highest level operates the *State Administration for Cultural Heritage* (SACH) for all cultural heritage and museum affairs, and the policy making thereof. Therein operates a hierarchy of National, Provincial and Municipal/County Major Heritage Protection Units. All local governments and their respective organs of cultural heritage protection are set up in a strict hierarchy and are responsible for the

²²⁵ In line with this registry exists a national rating system for tourist sites for the purpose of promoting high-quality tourist destinations in China, rated from A to AAAAA, according to the quality of the site's tourist products, services, environment, and the degree of tourist satisfaction.

²²⁶ This is not only a national problem. According to a Jianchuan government official, the county's cultural relics are so abundant that the government has neither the financial means nor other resources to unearth or otherwise comprehensively preserve and protect its cultural treasures. LIJT interview, 28/12/2011.

²²⁷ See for example, Gruber, 'Protecting China's Cultural Heritage ...'; It is important to know, that law in China provides for considerable flexibility and wide interpretation as ambiguity is considered the centrepiece of Chinese language, therefore, implementation of norms established in the (heritage) law are inherently discretionary; see also, Rofel, "'The Heavens are High ...'.

²²⁸ The term 'cultural heritage' (wenhua yichan) was only introduced later and is mostly referred as such in international documents, while 'cultural relic' (wenwu) is the term still used in China's domestic discourse. See, Yan, 'World Heritage in China ...'.

²²⁹ W. Li, 'Uncovering the Colors of the Terracotta Army', *China Today*, Vol. 60, No. 8, August 2011. The official is the curator of the Qinshihuang Mausoleum of the Terracotta Warriors that have faced particular problems in the process of unearthing and restoring. Similar problems are faced with the protection of the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, which increasingly succumb to wind damage, rain erosion, humidity, as well as aspects of climate change.

²³⁰ X. Su, 'Urban Conservation in Lijiang, China: Power Structures and Funding Systems', *Cities*, Vol. 27, 2010, pp. 164-171.

management and protection of the cultural heritage in their respective districts and are required to report back to SACH. Most heritage sites in China, however, are not under legal protection, as decision-making about the cultural and historical value is the responsibility of the authorities at the appropriate level.²³¹ UNESCO-inspired cultural heritage protection is still a new concept in China and many Asian countries and local authorities often cling to traditional ways of conservation, such as copying, rebuilding, or renewal of sites.²³² While the criteria of ‘outstanding universal value’ of the Operational Guidelines includes ‘authenticity’ and ‘integrity’, they also allow for certain modifications and additions of artistic and historical value which were added over the years. In general, however, following the (heritage) law is not sufficiently transparent as the ‘reporting chain’ is long and therefore an attitude in preservation of ‘the emperor is far away’ prevails. Also, the language of heritage law is often ambiguous and therefore flexible and open to wide interpretation.²³³ As we shall see below, heritage governance in China at a crucial time of social and material transformation, faces many challenges.

Government Discourse and Heritage Protection in Theory and Practice: Disjuncture of Narratives

Party, Peasant, Policy, and Property

Over the last few decades, Yan observes, World Heritage designation in China has become both a national obsession and a new ‘nationalistic sensation’, and World Heritage rhetoric and discourse is meanwhile ‘cognitively and practically entangled with not only substantive issues of historic preservation but also the discursive structures of history, culture and politics.’²³⁴ In contemporary China, the discursive framework of ‘cultural heritage’ is almost exclusively defined by the state (and its auxiliary administration), and the production, promotion, and management of its cultural heritage is also largely the domain of the nation-state as the primary agent and main stakeholder. As the UNESCO world heritage discourse focuses on universal values, this helps states claims of authority over culture in the name of nation-building, such as in Tibet.²³⁵ Through its heritage

²³¹ Gruber, ‘Protecting China’s Cultural Heritage ...’.

²³² For example, the Ise Shrine in Japan, is dismantled every twenty years and an exact replica is rebuilt on the neighbouring platform. It is a religious rite of renewal which started in the seventh century AD, however, the Japanese do not recognize the rite of renewal as restoration. The Ise Shrine was highly influential in the drafting of the *Nara Document of Authenticity*.

²³³ Rogers, ‘“The Heavens are High ...’.

²³⁴ Yan, ‘World Heritage in China ...’, p. 2.

²³⁵ R. Shepherd, ‘UNESCO and the Politics of Cultural Heritage in Tibet’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2006, pp. 243-257.

legislation and the production of historical and socio-cultural narratives of heritage, the state becomes highly interventionist and dominates the construction of national, ethnic and cultural identity.²³⁶ In defining, creating, selecting, and promoting specific cultural heritage, the state propagates its ideological priorities and agenda. These are often the important national symbols that perpetuate this narrative, such as the Terracotta Warriors, the Great Wall, or the Grand Canal, or in more recent times, the push for nominations that transcend the nation-state and emphasise the importance of China in world history, then and now, such as the various Silk Roads. The ‘revival’ of the Silk Roads - including the Ancient Tea Horse Road - has lately become as much part of the heritage discourse, as of a national discourse of regional and supra-regional economic development.²³⁷

In the recent past, and drawing on China’s long history and cultural diversity, many regions in China have begun challenging the state narrative of a continuous and homogeneous past. Underpinned by major archaeological findings, many regions now have proof of alternative histories and the dominant Han-centric historical narrative of the North, and the Yangtse delta being the ‘cradle of the Chinese civilization’, has been largely undone.²³⁸ The histories and geographical reach of the *Silk Roads* also testify to regional China's once deep involvement with the rest of the world, as well as the existence of an extensive Pan-Asian trading and cultural network, and strong local independence. However, as major regional histories as those of the south (Guangdong), south-west (Yunnan, Sichuan, Tibet) and north-west (Xinjiang, Mongolia) are re-written and associated and linked with other ancient cultures and regions (South-east Asia, Mongol, Manchu, Korea), they are mostly repressed and the dominant version of China's historical past remains the only official version.²³⁹ The claim and appropriation of cultural relics, community memory, or regional histories by the party-state and its affiliates are often resisted, in particular where the narrative of ‘treasures of ancient China’ clashes with that of historically independent cultures such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia (and their ethnic and cultural identities). However, fearing retributions, the regions know

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ding Ying, ‘Silk Road Revival’, *Beijing Review*, 5 November 2013, http://www.bjreview.com.cn/Cover_Stories_Series_2014/2013-11/05/content_609244.htm ; accessed 4 March 2014.

For Maritime Silk Road, see Shi Wei, ‘Fujian to Thrive on ‘Maritime Silk Road strategy’, 27 March 2013, http://en.ce.cn/Insight/201403/27/t20140327_2561306.shtml, accessed 4 March 2014. Here it is expressed: ‘The proposal of Deputy Zheng Xincong represents Fujian people's hope and aspiration for the prosperity of the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" and is consistent with Fujian's need to integrate into the new era's major strategy of constructing the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’.

²³⁸ The Yangtse and Yellow Rivers are very symbolic in Chinese nation-making and identity construction, as for example expressed in the popular state-sponsored TV series ‘River Elegy’, or the Yangtse Model that serves to illustrate China’s unique development and path to modernization; see e.g., Barabantseva, ‘In Pursuit of an Alternative Model? ...’.

²³⁹ D. Lary, ‘The Uses of the Past. History and Legitimacy’, in A. Laliberte and M. Lantaigne (eds.) *The Chinese Party-state in the 21st Century: Adaptation and the Reinvention of Legitimacy*, New York, Routledge, 2008.

better than to challenge the centre directly, therefore the challenges are cautious and rely on implication rather than bold statements.²⁴⁰

In spite of its great strides towards marketization, modernization and globalization, the 'cultural tradition' of the Party acting as 'vanguard of the people' and 'speaking for the people' has prevailed, and as in the past, one has to read between the lines in any government dialogue. As Ai argues, the government has long used 'ambiguous language' in its cultural heritage discourse that would allow the CCP to use and appropriate it for its own needs.²⁴¹ These needs, commonly acknowledged, extend to the Party's re-legitimization as the ruling party by using culture and tradition as new ideological tools as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism have been replaced by Capitalism-Consumerism-Individualism, leaving a disquieting void, a 'crisis of faith'.²⁴² Ai further cites Mao's theory of 'critically inheriting China's cultural traditions', that is, to 'select the refined and discard the dross', and shows how subsequent leaders have adopted this principle. However, while the Chinese government continues to promote certain heritages over others, contemporary social, economic and political agendas reflect more a 'glossing over' of the dross than discarding.²⁴³ Here, I believe, Ai is being too kind and is glossing over her own more 'un-subtle' empirical findings. There is ample evidence in Chinese heritage practice and management, where the dross is not only 'discretely' discarded, but intentionally and openly destroyed.

In the run-up to the Beijing Olympics, for example, the Beijing Municipal government targeted some of its most iconic heritages for destruction to 'clean up' and 'beautify' the city for international visitors.²⁴⁴ This included the erasure of a large part of its traditional *hutongs*, or neighbourhoods, which have been the life blood of 'old' Beijing for many centuries. Similarly, the old neighbourhoods in Shanghai had to make way during preparations for the Shanghai Expo in 2010. The destruction of these old neighbourhoods constitutes a significant loss of a distinct Chinese past and identity as it uprooted large numbers of people, deprived them of their social life and alienated them from their cultural traditions as they were separated from their life-long neighbours and friends and relocated into non-descriptive high-rise buildings on the outskirts of the ever growing

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ J. Ai, "Selecting the Refined and Discarding the Dross", in P. Daley and T. Winter (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Heritage in Asia*, New York, Routledge, 2012, pp. 129-138.

²⁴² See e.g., H. Holbig and B. Gilley, 'Reclaiming Legitimacy in China', *Politics & Policy*, Volume 38, No. 3, 2010, pp. 395-422.

²⁴³ Ai, "Selecting the Refined ...".

²⁴⁴ See, for example, J. Kessel and K. Gillet (directors), 'Fate of Old Beijing', n.d., <http://sites.asiasociety.org/chinagreen/feature-hutong/>, accessed 8 May 2013; or 'Hutongs Disappearing as China Rebuilds its Past', *Live Auctioneers*, 18 January 2013, <https://c1.liveauctioneers.com/top-news/antiquities-and-cultures/hutongs-disappearing-as-china-rebuilds-its-past/>, accessed 10 May 2013.

metropolis.²⁴⁵ This same pattern can be seen all over China's bigger cities, as well as in the smaller towns and villages where people are relocated into 'new towns' while their homes are either destroyed, or renovated and gentrified, and become part of the new cityscape of 'ancient towns and villages'. This paradox of preservation and renewal through destruction is particularly unscrupulous, as we will see later, in Lijiang 'old town'. While these 'residents resettlement projects' always come under the guise of 'modernization', in some ethnic areas they also serve to better control and manage ethnic identity and strife.

In this sense, the ongoing demolition of parts of the more than 2000 year old Muslim Uighur town of Kashgar in Xinjiang province, a cross-roads between civilisations and a once major trading centre on the *Ancient Silk Road*, speaks of the 'opposing ideas that relate directly and personally to the many people affected: of tradition vs modernity, conservation vs construction, and assimilation vs resistance'.²⁴⁶ Here, the reach of the state is far but considered necessary, and the central government exerts control over the local Muslim Uighur population through managing their cultural traditional life, past and present. This is also still the case in Tibet, where Han in-migration and major infrastructure projects are feared to dilute the ethnic Tibetan culture and cultural landscape.²⁴⁷ Examples like these abound throughout China and the government discourse on this forced destruction or re-development of old neighbourhoods is usually couched in terms of health, security, safety, and modernization. They also show that it has become a matter of sacrificing one heritage to save or reconstruct another, often with the result of museumization or theme-parkization of the saved heritage.²⁴⁸ This will be part of further investigations in the following chapters.

More often than not, these neighbourhoods are erased to make way for government infrastructure and development projects, and more recently to re-create heritage enclaves. Ironically, the former residence of Liang Sicheng and his wife Lin Huiyin, two of the most famous architects of 20th century China, was destined to be torn down and was only saved by lengthy negotiations of the *Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Centre* (a Chinese NGO) with the Beijing municipal and other

²⁴⁵ See for example, I. Johnson, 'In China: Once Villages Are Gone, the Culture is Gone', *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/02/world/asia/once-the-villages-are-gone-the-culture-is-gone.html?hp&r=2&utm_content=buffer8f5ad&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer, accessed 1 March 2014.

²⁴⁶ H. Szadziwski, 'Kashgar's Old City. The Politics of Demolition', *openDemocracy*, 3 April 2009, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/kashgar-s-old-city-the-politics-of-demolition>, 13 August 2013.

²⁴⁷ These infrastructure developments include the re-development of the Potala square in Lhasa (Jokhang), and a planned Tibetan ethnic theme-park in the outskirts of Lhasa. See also, T. Woesser: <http://tibetwrites.org/?Woesser>; and Shepherd, 'UNESCO and the Politics of Cultural Heritage in Tibet'; Tibet now has more than 1700 venues for religious activities, and about 46000 monks and nuns (China Today, Vol. 54)

²⁴⁸ What is noteworthy in most of these cases is the imbalance of spending on destruction and reconstruction to a hypothetical cost of maintenance of the material and cultural heritage of a (disappearing) culture. However, lack of consulting local people and their lack of power in decision-making in these projects, leads to disempowerment, discontent, and marginalization.

national level administrative bodies in heritage protection, as well as through the lobbying of scholars and the wider public.²⁴⁹ This 'high-profile' case, supported by media such as *People's Daily*, *CCTV*, or *Guangming Daily*, by public participation and a new law called the *Provisional Regulations Governing the Management of the Designation of Cultural Relics*, shows the complexity of heritage protection in China. While it 'showed that when people, law, and media unite, they can make great progress and achieve goals', this case is far from over and the future of the historic residence remains uncertain.²⁵⁰

One of the pitfalls of effective protection of cultural relics as mentioned above, is China's system of cultural heritage protection, where administrative bodies on all government levels independently manage their respective heritages and, therefore, laws and regulations pertaining to their protection and preservation often overlap and annul the decisions taken at another level. Du Cros et al. also conclude in their study that the real threat to Beijing's *hutongs* is 'urban redevelopment, supported by the devolution of power to district councils that grant approvals to construction projects without referring them to the [Beijing Cultural Heritage Bureau]', as is the law.²⁵¹ In many cases construction companies act without the approval of local heritage protection authorities (also because the required archaeological surveys and cultural heritage assessments are considered to be too expensive and lengthy) and instead seek approval from people inside the local government. If any breaches to the Cultural Relics Law, such as the destruction of important cultural relics or archaeological sites are found out, these go often unpunished as the construction company's investments are considered too important to the local government.²⁵² Further, a lack of coordination between government departments prevents other stakeholders taking on a greater role, and the community in general has little power in decision making. Therefore, the public sector is not enforcing adequate control in construction, planning, and development.²⁵³ Du Cros et al. also noted

²⁴⁹ See, e.g. *Beijing Cultural Heritage Centre*, http://en.bjchp.org/?page_id=2676, accessed 27 April 2013; there are number of similar cases of destruction of *siheyuan* residences in Beijing, i.e. residence of Zhao Zichen, Christian scholar and patriot during Nationalist period; or the former residence of Cai Yuanbei, first Vice-chancellor of Beijing University;

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, *Beijing Cultural Heritage Centre*.

²⁵¹ H. du Cros, T. Bauer, C. Lo, and S. Rui, 'Cultural Heritage Assets in China as Sustainable Tourism Products: Case Studies of the Hutongs and Huanghua Section of the Great Wall', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2005. For other significant examples, see also, Gruber, 'Protecting China's Cultural Heritage ...'.

²⁵² In 2005, a hundred Chinese tombs more than 2,000 years old were destroyed during construction works for a housing project in Helinge'er County in Inner Mongolia. The site was one of the best preserved and largest sites in China, dating back to the Warring States period during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770–221 BC) and placed on the list of important national sites. The destruction was fully backed by the local government, which acted without submitting a cultural heritage assessment that is required by the Cultural Relics Law. Officials from the Cultural Relics Department of Inner Mongolia tried to stop the construction, but county government and police refused to cooperate. When officials from China's Cultural Relics Bureau travelled from Beijing to the site to save the remains of the tombs, they were threatened by the workers who put up resistance. The construction continued. Despite the very drastic violations of national law, no one was arrested. See, e.g. Gruber, 'Cultural Heritage Protection in China in Times of ...'.

²⁵³ du Cros, et al., 'Cultural Heritage Assets ...'.

a contradiction in the way large amounts of funding were being spent on restoring historic relics of national importance to be showcased at the Olympics, while only minimal funds were allocated to watch for illegal destruction in the designated zone.²⁵⁴ Zan and Baraldi, based on results of their research of the Chariot museum in Luoyang, Henan Province, also point to a number of deficiencies and conflicts that can be easily traced within what they call the 'heritage chain', including normative concepts, institutional settings, division of labor, and administrative interchange.²⁵⁵ In the Chinese context, they argue, it is important to first explore the legal and administrative framework of preservation, in particular the specific power that key governmental institutions, such as SACH, and the Cultural Relics Bureaux (CRB) at all levels of government inhabit. A number of procedural and behavioural problems are also discernible within the system, such as highly unequal economic incentives for archaeological teams for 'salvage' excavation (the main type of excavation in China) and 'on purpose' excavation (desk research, preservation), with the latter being '*de facto* penalised'.²⁵⁶ The inequality and division of labor results in poor knowledge diffusion (and learning), lack of systematic reporting and minimal professional exchange within the institutions and therefore also often results in 'unvirtuous behaviour and "localism"'.²⁵⁷

Ultimately, most of the claims and negotiations in China's push for heritage protection are the result of land disputes for local infrastructure development and urbanization (*chengzhenhua* 城镇化) projects. The potentially aggravating implications of (mostly illegal) 'land grabs' create a huge problem for the government as an increasingly empowered, underprivileged and marginalized group (mostly farmers), contest developers 'legal' documents for repossession of their land. Most recently this has been experienced in Wukan, a fishing village in the south of China, where villagers stood firm against developers and authorities in their demand to return illegally seized land.²⁵⁸ In other cases, individuals have refused to give up their land and construction and destruction continued around a single standing house, now appropriately termed China's 'nail houses'.²⁵⁹ Land sales are highly lucrative for government officials, but those officials that are involved in heritage protection

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ L. Zan and SB Baraldi, 'The Heritage Chain'. General Issues and a Case Study, China', *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, May-June, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2013, pp. 211-9.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., Zan and Baraldi, 'The Heritage Chain'.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ This case has received considerable attention in the media. See e.g. B. Spegele and J. T. Areddy, 'China Village Hits Democracy Limits', *The Wall Street Journal* online, 8 November 2012,

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324073504578106164215405612.html?utm_source=Sinocism+Newsletter&utm_campaign=4c282abc75-The_Sinocism_China_Newsletter_For_11_09_2012&utm_medium=email

²⁵⁹ K. Rahman, 'Steamrollered by the Chinese Miracle: Pictures Show what Happens AFTER the Defiant Homeowners Who Bravely Stood Up Against Official 'Progress' Finally Have to Admit Defeat', *Daily Mail* online, 9 June 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3115761/These-amazing-pictures-happens-homeowners-living-nail-houses-stand-way-official-progress-China.html>

usually have less power than those who sell land that requires demolishing built heritage.²⁶⁰ Also, the loss of agricultural land since the 1980/1990 development boom has been enormous, and was often uncontrolled and unsystematic, destroying valuable cultural heritage and biospheres. The contestation of land use and development in general is dominated by a number of stakeholders, such as the government, business and industry, tourism industry, or local people, but McLaren draws attention to the importance of ethnographers, scholars of popular culture, and folk artists, without whose effort many tangible and intangible heritage expressions would not be identified and therefore lost.²⁶¹

In practice, as we shall see below, at the local level, cultural heritage protection and conservation and environmental protection and sustainable development are often left to grass-roots social and environmental initiatives and domestic and foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These often hinder other projects of modernization and development that government officials are held accountable for and according to which they are promised an advancement in their career.²⁶² In particular these are infrastructure projects with high visibility, such as ultra-modern buildings, highways and bridges, or even whole towns. However, as McLaren observes, the survival and sustainability of culture and tradition is highly dependent on a sound eco-system 'as an item of cultural heritage, be it a song, tradition or indigenous economic and medicinal knowledge, is inseparable from the eco-site that nurtured it'.²⁶³

While in the recent past local people have been mostly powerless in influencing official policy on preservation practices of their cultural and natural/ecological environment, increasingly this is being realised by policy-makers and local traditional knowledge and initiatives of preservation are more widely promoted. As we will see in the case study chapters, in many villages - in particular those that are promoted for tourism - a return to traditional practices ('original ecology' *yuanshengtai*) in recent years has been very popular, both with visitors and locals themselves. In promoting and 're-learning' local culture and traditions, such as collecting wild medicines, herbs, and mushrooms, planting traditional crops, building or renovating houses in traditional style, using the local

²⁶⁰ H. Silverman and T. Blumenfield (eds.) *Cultural Heritage Politics in China*, Introduction, New York, Springer, 2013.

²⁶¹ A.E. McLaren, 'Environment and Cultural Heritage in China: Introduction', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 429-437.

²⁶² By extension, this behaviour is part of the problem of the administrative career cycle, where government cadres only serve five years in office, therefore they are reluctant to advance projects, such as environmental and cultural protection, as the outcomes are generally not as spectacular as, for example, the building of a new bridge or highway, or the creation of a high-tech park. Only in some areas, as mentioned above in the case of Luoyang (Zan and Baraldi), where cultural heritage protection is already widely institutionalized and supported by the state government, is it 'safe' to spend resources. See e.g. Gruber, 'Cultural Heritage Protection in China in Times of ...'; see also, 'China Presses Officials for Better Heritage Protection', Xinhuanet, 26 February 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-02/26/c_135135172.htm, accessed 10 April 2016.

²⁶³ McLaren, 'Environment and Cultural Heritage in China ...'.

language, and practicing traditional song and dance not only in a tourism environment, but as activities that are part of their lives as a local community, born out of their own desire of preserving the ‘old ways’, not only installs new pride and self-confidence in local (ethnic) people, but can also empower them and improve their lives. This is also the ground where local and other grassroots initiatives meet to bring about change.

Cultural Heritage and Grass-roots Support

The importance of the engagement of national and international NGOs in China cannot be overstated, in particular foreign NGOs secure funding, have expertise and know-how in many areas of environmental and heritage protection, and are extensively involved in building community participation, education, and training. As such they serve as 'conduits for cosmopolitan environmental practices and ideas such as sustainable development, recycling, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and anthropogenic climate change.'²⁶⁴ Since the early 1980s, there has been a growing number of foreign and national NGOs, amongst them *The Nature Conservancy* which has been working very successfully in Yunnan Province in collaboration with local and national government agencies. Others include *The World Wildlife Fund*, *The Global Heritage Fund*, *The Getty Institute*, and *the Ford Foundation*. Within the central government's promotion of the notion of “small government, big society” (*xiao zhengfu, da shehui* 小政府，大社会) and “social management innovation” (*shehuiguanli chuangxin* 社会管理创新) over the last decade or so, domestic NGOs have also blossomed, including *Friends of Nature*, *Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Centre*, *Morning Tears* (a hybrid advocacy group)²⁶⁵ and many more - as more citizens become active in charity work, disaster relief work, or the protection of the environment and cultural heritage. However, the lobbying power of these and other preservationist groups in China is still weak and they are not clearly visible and well understood by the larger Chinese and

²⁶⁴ R. Efirid, 'Learning the Land Beneath Our Feet: NGO 'Local Learning Materials' And Environmental Education in Yunnan Province', *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 21, No. 76, 2012, pp. 569-583.

²⁶⁵ See, F. di Fabio, 'A Chinese NGO with International Characteristics: The Morning Tears Advocacy Model', *China Development Brief*, 8 August 2013, <http://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/articles/the-morning-tears-advocacy-model/>, accessed 10 July 2016.

international community.²⁶⁶ As well, both foreign and domestic NGO's face many administrative and political constraints.²⁶⁷

This resurgence of a Chinese civil society has recently also been closely linked to the use of the Internet as a powerful tool to support their cause – a kind of digital activism - that Yangze Sima argues, 'effectively empower resource-poor activists in their self-representation, information brokering, network building, public mobilisation and construction of discourse communities'.²⁶⁸ The Internet therefore contributes to the nascent formation of a green public sphere in China by fostering a discourse that counterbalances rapid economic development. It is also increasingly used as a platform by ethnic minority people, in particular (performing) artists, to promote the preservation of ethnic languages, art and culture, as well as to sell ethnic products, which shows that they not only seek 'self-representation' but 'self-reliance' away from state regulation.²⁶⁹ There are also internet websites and blogs that openly criticize state politics, such as Tsering Woesser's, a renowned Tibetan activist.²⁷⁰ These new forms of citizen activism, centred on environmental and social issues, as well as cultural expression and preservation, clearly reveal the desire of Chinese individuals and (ethnic) groups to be heard and seen, not only locally, but nationally and globally. It seems, the 'Chinese Dream' can also be a dream of the ordinary people who wish for a better life in a better world, and increasingly - through 'acts' of cultural heritage and environmental preservation - they are doing their part to make it happen.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have given an account of (world) heritage politics in China in theory and practice. China has a long history of preserving its cultural treasures, but it has only been since it joined the World Heritage regime in the mid-1980s that more comprehensive efforts to international standards were undertaken. However, the reform period of the 1980s and early 1990s was marked by

²⁶⁶ S. Shieh and A. Brown-Inz, 'A Special Report Mapping China's Public Interest NGOs', in *Chinese NGO Directory: A Civil Society in the Making* (A China Development Brief publication, 2013); for more information see also, <http://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/publications/cdb-special-report-mapping-chinas-public-interest-ngos-january-2013/>, accessed 11 January 2013.

²⁶⁷ For more information on NGO sector in China, see *China Development Brief*, <http://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/>; for example, all NGO's in China have to be registered and affiliated with relevant government departments and thus become non-governmental government organization, or GONGOs.

²⁶⁸ Y. Sima, 'Grassroots Environmental Activism and the Internet: Constructing a Green Public Sphere in China', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 477-497.

²⁶⁹ This is often done by using Internet chat forums (Weibo blogs, Wechat), video channels, such as *Yukou* (equivalent to Youtube), and Internet e-business through Wechat store (*weixindian*).

²⁷⁰ T. Woesser, <http://highpeakspureearth.com/category/woesser/>

unprecedented material destruction and re-construction as a result of the intense modernization of the country, which left little room for other considerations, such as cultural heritage and environmental protection. Increasingly however, at this crucial time, a new awareness of the need to save what was left of China's tangible and intangible past set in and the government embarked on a large-scale national project of cultural heritage protection and preservation. This was marked by signing international charters and documents and creating its own national system of heritage conservation, including improved legislation (according to Western heritage standards, but allowing local flexibility). But most of all, it was marked by China's enthusiastic participation in the application for World Heritage listing.

The new-found fervour for heritage protection has brought the use and meaning of 'culture' again into the foreground. 'Culture' in China is a highly value-loaded term and has been at the centre of socio-political struggle for more than a hundred years. Chinese traditional culture and values have been variously banned, attacked, destroyed, but more recently celebrated again as their 'utility' was recognized in furthering new state ideologies focused around modernization, a capitalist market economy, international affairs, and promoting the unity of all Chinese nationalities. As a result, material and immaterial 'culture' have become an 'artefact' and a commodity where the real and fake, the authentic and the re-invented, are continually set against each other or merge.

China's efforts of heritage protection have not only been undermined by its most important national project of modernization, but by its own (overlapping) bureaucracy and political apparatus which allows for favouritism and corruption, in particular in regards to land sales for real estate development and circumventing regulations that often result in the destruction of valuable heritage. This has had tremendous impact on local people's lives resulting in uprooting, resettlement, and loss of culture and local identity. Further, at a local level, heritage protection still encounters many problems, such as awareness and understanding the need of heritage protection, as well as limited rights and opportunities for locals to have an equal voice and determine what is rightfully theirs.

While one can say that China has fully embraced the World Heritage canon, it also has done so on its own terms. Through its heritage legislation and the production of historical and socio-cultural narratives of heritage, the state becomes highly interventionist and dominates the construction of national, ethnic and cultural identity. The state is also the owner and guardian of the nation's cultural heritage and is therefore also often the main stakeholder and business entity in the production of 'culture', and the main decision-maker in tourism and heritage development. All this becomes clear in the following chapters that discuss the interplay of tourism, minority culture, and heritage preservation.

Introduction

Global tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing industry sectors world-wide and has spurred unprecedented economic development and social change in many countries. In fact, the world-wide economic growth of the tourism industry outpaces growth in gross domestic product (GDP).²⁷¹ According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2012



FIGURE 5: TOURISM KEY FIGURES (ASIA PACIFIC NEWSLETTER NO. 41)

international tourist arrivals exceeded the 1 billion mark (1,035 million) globally for the first time in history. By 2014 tourist arrivals had grown to 1133 million, with tourism revenues of US\$ 1245 billion. Tourism in the Asia Pacific Region saw robust growth of 5%, while China's outbound travel has been growing by around 20% every year in the past decade. China extend its lead as the fastest growing source market and top spender with outbound tourism expenditure of US\$ 165 billion, an increase of 27% from 2013.²⁷² China generates 13% of global tourism receipts. Domestic tourism in China rose by 12% in 2012 with 3611 million tourist activities.²⁷³

The relationship between tourism and cultural heritage protection is often described in an antithetical and non-complementary manner, such as a two-edged sword, two sides of the same coin, an oxymoron, and so on.

While such statements have gained currency world-wide where fragile natural and cultural environments are exposed to masses of visitors, they find particular resonance in China. China has the largest number of domestic tourists in the world based on a fast growing middle-class (including the elderly) with increasing disposable incomes. It has a huge reservoir of tangible and intangible

²⁷¹ S. Lyon and E.C. Wells (eds.), *Global Tourism. Cultural Heritage and Economic Encounters*, Lanham, Maryland, AltaMira Press, 2012, p.1.

²⁷² World Tourism Organization, UNWTO, Asia Pacific Newsletter, 2015, No. 41, and UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2015 Edition. Boosted by rising disposable incomes, a relaxation of restrictions on foreign travel and an appreciating currency, Chinese tourism spending has increased almost eightfold in 12 years, up from US\$ 13 billion in 2000. In 2005 China ranked seventh in international tourism expenditure, and has since overtaken Italy, Japan, France and the United Kingdom. With the 2012 surge, China leaped to first place, overtaking both long-time top spender Germany (US\$ 84 billion) and second largest spender United States (US\$ 83 billion), which are now 2nd and 3rd in the ranking.

²⁷³ Statistic, China domestic tourism, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/277254/number-of-domestic-trips-in-china/>, accessed 10 October 2016.

cultural heritage treasures, but tourism still tends to concentrate in only a limited number of designated sites for visitors, in particular those that are already highly visited and popular (and that have a high entertainment value). All this is putting enormous pressure on cultural resources as millions of people visit China's World Heritage sites, national-level heritage sites, heritage landscapes and nature parks, famous historic towns and villages, and other famous 'scenic spots'. Hence while tourism can have many positive impacts on socio-economic development and the preservation of cultural heritage, it is also a potential destructive force for China's ancient culture and traditions and the greater natural environment. As in other areas of life in China, it is the sheer scale of things that often creates seemingly insurmountable problems and chaos, but also opportunities.

In this chapter, I will introduce the reader to the development of tourism in China, with emphasis on domestic, rural, and heritage tourism. I will give a brief historical account of an early travel culture in China based around landscape appreciation and the creation of 'scenic spots' as put forward by Pal Nyiri. I will then discuss the introduction of modern tourism in the late 1970s post-Mao era, its steady progress through the 1980s, and the phenomenal growth of domestic tourism from the early 1990s (post-Tiananmen era) to the present. By highlighting constants and variables that engendered this unprecedented growth, we can have a better understanding of how current tourism developments in China can be evaluated. In this way, it is necessary for us to also look back to the previous chapters and revisit heritage practice and discourse both in a global and local context. Further, this chapter provides us with ideas and knowledge to confront the challenges unfolding in the following more empirically-based chapters, and finally in the case-study chapter which has the contesting notions of tourism development and cultural heritage preservation at its core.

Tourism in China: overview

China is immensely rich in material and cultural legacies of the past. Its diverse topographical and cultural landscape, its ancient history and abundant natural resources, create places of 'intensified collision and assemblage' (of class, gender, ethnicity, indigeneity, nature, and sexuality), and coupled with a new environment of greater economic liberalization (globalization and glocalization) are now providing a platform for the development of tourist sites that are highly 'seductive' and give China a comparative advantage in travel and tourism, in particular in domestic tourism.²⁷⁴ In

²⁷⁴ J. Bao and L. J.C. Ma, 'Tourism Geography in China, 1978–2008: Whence, What and Whither?' *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2010, pp. 3-20.

most countries in the world, domestic tourism (and regional tourism) outweighs international inbound travel. This is especially true in China, and yet it also takes on a different level. Tourism has become the largest growth industry in China, and its development has to be seen in the context of a developing economy and a developmental state. In fact, in China, to a large extent, tourism development is interchangeable with economic development, and while the motivation for cultural heritage preservation in China is mainly linked to tourism and the lure of tourism dollars, the bigger picture is economic development and modernization.

In the Maoist years (1949-1976), tourism was considered a 'bourgeois' activity and was quasi non-existent except for diplomatic or political reasons, or as tourism to political educational sites. Tourism development played no role in economic planning and social development, and it was only in the reform era in the late 1970s that its socio-economic function was recognized, and tourism became an 'active policy area'.²⁷⁵ Agrarian reforms initiated in 1978 had immediate effects on the economy and people's growth of income and within only a few years tourism grew so rapidly that neither the central nor local governments were prepared for it.²⁷⁶ Privately financed individual and pleasure-seeking travel was still marginal, and the majority of this early tourism derived from public institutions, enterprises, and other types of *danwei*²⁷⁷, and later from business travel and 'business transaction meetings', which were also used as a strategy to promote famous tourist cities.²⁷⁸ Initially, however, domestic tourism was only of moderate urgency and the focus was on international tourists²⁷⁹ (mostly overseas Chinese compatriots) who were 'steered' to a designated number of 'scenic spots' that were already developed, in particular the larger cities and other well-known cultural and scenic spots along the eastern seaboard of China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou and Hangzhou, and the newly created water towns (*shuixiang*) of Jiangsu and Zhejiang province.²⁸⁰ These destinations were mostly inhabited by the more prosperous and advanced Han majority and were considered key areas for investment of tourism resources.²⁸¹ The focus on travel

²⁷⁵ D. Airee and K. Chong, 'National Policy Makers for Tourism in China', *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol.37, No. 2, 2010, pp. 295-314.

²⁷⁶ J. Bian, 'Tourism in China', *World Leisure & Recreation*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1990, pp. 27-31.

²⁷⁷ These were primarily the employees of China's State Owned Enterprises (SOE's) who are commonly organized into work units (*danwei*). Paid travel had become the most popular kind of incentive used by work units in China. Many work units used paid package travel to reward their model workers (and family members);

²⁷⁸ G. Xu, *Tourism and Local Economic Development in China. Case Studies of Guilin, Suzhou and Beidaihe*, (Curzon Press, 1999), New York, Routledge, 2013.

²⁷⁹ International tourists were mostly organized tourists and were divided into a) foreign non-Chinese tourists, b) overseas Chinese tourists, and c) Chinese tourists visiting relative and friends (VRF's) who were mainly day-trippers from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan crossing into border towns for shopping.

²⁸⁰ As these sites were already developed they did not need extra resources, therefore the government was working on an industrial pattern of 'low input, high output'. See B. Wu et al., 'Trends in China's Domestic Tourism Development at the Turn of the Century', *Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 12 (5), pp. 296-299.

²⁸¹ Overseas Chinese (Taiwan, Hongkong) and domestic Chinese tourists could travel throughout the country, while foreign tourists concentrated in the bigger cities and notable tourist spots. In those days, overseas tourists mainly travelled in groups and had to get permission for the intended travel itinerary.

to these 'key tourist cities' was necessary as tourism infrastructure, such as hotels and roads, was still very basic, in particular in more rural areas, but led to the preferential and explicit spatial concentration of both tourist activities (in coastal cities) and tourists.²⁸²

In the 1980s tourism increased manyfold and increasingly overseas tourism had to compete with an unstoppable growth in domestic tourism. What was once an elite experience (government officials and foreign tourists) was now increasingly being democratized into mass tourism.²⁸³ As a result, China also had to open up non-urban and interior regions and finally grant access to remote minority areas, such as the ethnically diverse regions of Yunnan and Guizhou, and also Tibet. Ethnic tourism - or folk tourism - soon became popular with both Chinese and overseas tourists and has been at the heart of cultural tourism ever since.²⁸⁴ For example, even before domestic tourists arrived, Dali, in Yunnan province, was already a Western backpacker haven in the early 1980s. For domestic tourists, ethnic tourism then was mainly about 'discovering' the internal 'Other' and, at the same time, was about self-discovery, both by the (mainly Han) tourists and the local (minority) people, and was therefore much centred on identity and ethnicity and less on deeper understandings of the cultural experience. While the diversity of culture was appreciated and especially sought out by tourists, it was a superficial knowledge fed by romantic and sexualised marketing images of a treasure trove of exotic peoples and landscapes, 'painted with a brush of romantic femininity', whilst also loaded with communist rhetoric about minorities being 'primitive' (*yuanshi*), 'backward' (*luohou*) and in need of 'progress' (*fazhan*).²⁸⁵ This new travel boom also prompted the central and local governments to allocate funds to restore historic sites, ancient villages, ruins and relics, and to create attractions for (international) visitors, such as traditional festivals and special-themed tours. But Zhang notes that already in the early years of tourism development (1980s), mistakes were made in creating tourist attractions, for example, by blindly copying something foreign (such as amusement parks) and simply restoring anything old regardless of its true value or market demand.²⁸⁶

In the following decades the tourism industry would re-invent itself many times over, catering for millions of tourists every year that were demanding a much more diverse array of tourism products

²⁸² J. Wen, 'Tourism and the Regional Development of China: Its Role and the Experience of Yunnan', in C.A. Tisdell and J. Chai (eds.), *China's Economic Growth and Transition. Macroeconomic, Environmental and Social/Regional Dimensions*, New York, Nova Science Publishers Inc., 1997.

²⁸³ Barthel-Bouchier, *Cultural Heritage and the Challenge ...*, p. 154.

²⁸⁴ This was also the time when, after long absence, the social sciences were re-introduced into Chinese Universities, and studies of both anthropology and sociology were newly directed at the minority peoples within China; the discipline was largely led by China's foremost anthropologist Fei Xiaotong.

²⁸⁵ Walsh and Swain, 'Creating Modernity by Touring Paradise ...', pp. 59-68

²⁸⁶ G. Zhang, 'Ten Years of Chinese Tourism. Assessment and Profile', *Tourism Management*, March 1989.

and experiences and policy-makers were now also paying more attention to the tourism system and structure itself. The tourism industry steadily went from underdeveloped, basic, prescribed, and non-diverse, to cater for all budgets, tastes, and occasions, including luxury resort hotels, backpacker hostels, package tours, luxury coach travel and self-drive tours, which were supported by an increasingly large infrastructure network of air, road and rail. Outbound tourism also grew to new heights as China relaxed visa regulations for its citizens and signed agreements with dozens of new destination nations. Eco- and sustainable tourism, *nongjiale* farm-stay tourism, adventure tourism, tourism to ancient towns, theme parks and nature parks, or simply leisure tourism, became part of the new tourism product and changed the tourism landscape in China forever. But in all this the Chinese were holding on to a distinct tourist ‘gaze’.

The Chinese tourist gaze

Pal Nyiri in *Scenic Spots* asserts that Chinese tourism is distinctly different from Western tourism or tourism in other socialist/communist countries, such as the Soviet Union.²⁸⁷ Likewise, Chinese tourists behave distinctly different, and many stereotypes have been formed about them.²⁸⁸ China has a long tradition of travel culture oriented around nature and landscape appreciation (*shan shui* 山水) and which dominated travel for almost 1500 years until the 19th century.²⁸⁹ During this period, unique socio-political conditions and influences from Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, encouraged philosophical and artistic activities that were conducive to landscape appreciation and travel.²⁹⁰ (One such ‘traveller’ was Xu Xiake, the most revered ancient travel writer (Ming dynasty), whose travel diary (*youji*) is of unique historical value.²⁹¹) A similar claim is made of a distinct Japanese tourism culture, with the travelogue as a literary form going back to at least the tenth century, and later with the emergence of ‘mass’ tourism during the Edo period (1603-

²⁸⁷ P. Nyiri, *Scenic Spots. Chinese Tourism, the State, and Cultural Authority*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2006, p. 8.

²⁸⁸ CY Wah, ‘Disorganized Tourism Space. Chinese Tourists in an Age of Asian Tourism’, in T. Winter et al. (eds.), *Asia on Tour. Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 67-77; for example, Wah, in his study of Chinese outbound tourists to Japan, Singapore and Hongkong, encounters mainly negative stereotypes of Chinese tourists, one a publication in the *Straits Times*, called ‘The Rise of the Ugly Chinese Tourist’, pp. 73-74. Also, the Chinese government has at various occasions published disciplinary behavioural guides for outbound tourists;

²⁸⁹ L. Yan and B. McKercher, ‘Travel Culture in Eastern Jin China (317–420 Ad): The Emergence of a Travel Culture of Landscape Appreciation’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 43, 2013, pp. 20–36. Also, in contrast to Europe, China has a long history of *recording* travel writing, while Western-oriented tourism histories usually start with the European Grand Tour and which mostly focused on elites.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Yan and McKercher, ‘Travel Culture in Eastern Jin China ...’.

²⁹¹ T. Perrottet, ‘Retracing the Footsteps of China’s Patron Saint of Tourism’, *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 2015, www.smithsonianmag.com, accessed 10 July 2016. In recent times the Xu Xiake persona has been newly embraced as a kind of ‘patron saint’ for tourism, ‘giving a gloss of ancient tradition to the lucrative new industry’. His ancestral home near Shanghai is now a national monument with a tourist park attached.

1868) built around pilgrimages to temples and shrines.²⁹² However - and not unlike the Chinese case - in spite of the 'heavy referencing of the past, ... the traditions that imbue Japanese tourism culture with its distinctiveness are, à la Hobsbawm, very much invented ones and, as such, a quintessentially modern phenomenon'.²⁹³

While Chinese 'travel culture' is steeped in tradition - and travels on the Silk Roads come to mind here - tourism is also a very recent and modern phenomenon and shows similarities with other forms of tourism which are 'all part of the ubiquitous spread of "globalisation"'.²⁹⁴ However, like Nyiri above, Li argues, borrowing Urry's concept of a 'tourist gaze', that there is a distinct Chinese tourist gaze, what she calls a 'relational tourist gaze', which is highly structured through socio-linguistic parameters that require correlative and relational thinking.²⁹⁵ Her analysis brings to light how this cultural heritage, a Chinese tourist gaze, has been transmitted over the centuries and has persisted to this day. Unlike in the West, Li argues, the tourism 'product', or object of tourism, usually has its own cultural history, an inherent value or referent, which is understood by the majority of the Chinese population and becomes part of a 'shared cultural grammar'.²⁹⁶ Scenic sites or sights are imbued with this 'common knowledge' but are incomprehensible to non-Chinese visitors as there are no interpretations provided, since none are needed.²⁹⁷

This recognition of representations of a site has its origin in the canon of 'scenic spots' (*jingdian*, *mingshengqu*, *fengjingqu*), where scenic spots, complete with their historical and poetic references - left by a succession of scholar-officials and literati throughout the millennia - were assembled into sets of views and became part of an obligatory travel itinerary.²⁹⁸ They were later put into writing (*youji*) and disseminated through encyclopaedias, local gazetteers, and guide books, and importantly, and very unique to Chinese travel writing, through engraved texts at the original sites of their inspiration, a kind of 'literati graffiti'.²⁹⁹ These marked spaces and inscribed texts 'altered the scene by shaping the perceptions of later travellers'³⁰⁰, and as such they were then not a personal

²⁹² S. Guichard-Anguis and O. Moon (eds.) *Japanese Tourism and Travel Culture*, Routledge, 2009. For more information, see also N. Graburn, *To Pray, Pay, and Play: The Cultural Structure of Japanese Domestic Tourism*, Les Cahiers du Tourisme, 1983.

²⁹³ Ibid., Guichard-Anguis and Moon, *Japanese Tourism and Travel Culture*.

²⁹⁴ FMS Li, 'Chinese Common Knowledge, Tourism, and Natural Landscapes', PhD Thesis, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia, 2005.

²⁹⁵ Li, 'Chinese Common Knowledge ...'; see also, J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, Sage Publications, 1990.

²⁹⁶ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, p. 12.

²⁹⁷ Li, 'Chinese Common Knowledge ...'; it can be deduced, that the provision of interpretative signs at China's cultural sites are then mainly in response to international heritage regulations and for the convenience of international visitors.

²⁹⁸ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*; see also, R.E. Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes. Travel Writing from Imperial China*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.

²⁹⁹ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*; Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes*.

³⁰⁰ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*.

response, but a mimetic experience to an already existing response. The canon of scenic spots was re-introduced and re-worked with new referents after the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, and again in the post-Mao reform period when tourism officially became one of the major industries to support economic growth.

While early travel, both in China *and* the West, has been mainly associated with learning and educating oneself (European ‘Grand Tour’, travelling scholars and literati), in China, in more recent times, it has become a tool of the state to educate (indoctrinate) and civilize travellers/tourists by actively (re-) creating tourist sites, such as theme-parks, political sites, or nature sites, and imbue them with (new) historical, ideological and cultural narratives that (still) only Chinese could understand. The association of nature with language and history has continued into the present age of mass tourism and scenic spots are still marked in this ‘sets of views’ tradition with plenty of ‘literati graffiti’ and conveniently selected photo ‘ops’. They are now disseminated through new technologies, such as TV and other digital media (advertising, virtual travel, travel shows and images, and travel blogs) and, as in the past, the new readership recognized the representations of the scenic spots, its referents now changed, simplified, and updated to become intelligible and digestible for a much larger, yet more superficial and ignorant audience.³⁰¹ It is then still important to adhere to the proven formula of the ‘scenic spot’ canon when (re-) creating a tourism site and product for consumption. As one official stated, ‘the construction of scenic spots and scenic areas must both fully reflect modern material civilization and fully display the positive and advancing spiritual civilization of the Chinese race’.³⁰² We can see evidence of this in many ancient towns where signs are omnipresent reminding visitors/tourists of proper civilized behaviour. Of course, and as we will see in the following chapters, such ‘requirements’ then also result in the ubiquitous standardization and homogenization of tourist and heritage sites/ sights and China’s rural and urban landscape, especially prominent as the phenomenon of the ‘new ancient towns’, and by extension, that of ‘traditional’ performing arts.

In this context also, the (tele-)visual representations of CCTV’s Spring Festival Gala (and other national show-case events), dominated by ethnic song and dance performances, have one ‘index’³⁰³ only, that is, the ‘shared grammar’ here is the universal narrative of a hegemonic state-discourse of a five-thousand year old history, culture, and national unity. This means, there can only be one index of representation, and ‘one encounters no dissent at scenic spots’.³⁰⁴ Importantly, tourists and

³⁰¹ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, p. 12.

³⁰² Breidenbach and Nyiri, “Our Common Heritage ...”, pp. 322-330.

³⁰³ Rojek defines ‘indexing’ as the creation of ‘an index of representations’, that is, a range of signs, images and symbols which make a site familiar to us in ordinary culture. Cited in Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, p. 78.

³⁰⁴ Nyiri, *Scenic Spot*.

tourism producers can create new sites by ‘dragging’ new information/cultural referents (symbols, images, associations) by means of ‘advertising, cinematic use of key sites, and traveller’s tales’, into a new index of representation.³⁰⁵ In a similar fashion, and as we shall see later, this occurs with the production of themed cultural sites all over China, where mythical or historical figures (Xu Xiake above) are used in telling the story of a site and make it the core of the tourist experience. Similarly, this occurs using varieties of culture, for example, as in our context, ‘tea culture’, and ‘dragging’ them into a new index of representation (that is, the cultural production of the New Ancient Tea Horse Road), and therefore also marking its uniqueness and distinctiveness. Tourism in this way resembles much of what Rojek sees as the emergence of postmodernity, where authenticity is of lesser concern for the post-modern or post-tourist than ‘the experience of switching codes or rules of patterned behaviour’.³⁰⁶ However, Rojek’s theory of the post-tourist here derives from a Western tourism context of themed landscapes, but in a Chinese context, Nyiri notes, authenticity has never been a concern of the modern, and ‘theming’ is more likely embedded in the high-modern project of the nation-state (rather than the post-modern).³⁰⁷

Li’s argument of a distinct Chinese tourist gaze is persuasive but becomes problematic within the context of a ‘constructed’ site/sight, or when the tourism product/object (or cultural heritage) is viewed, as in this thesis, as an ‘artefact’. While the ‘product’ seemingly has its own ‘cultural history’ and inherent value (transmitted through commonly comprehensible referents or markers), today not one, but multiple readings or interpretations of it are in fact possible. For example, as seen above, in this new digital age the scene has often been altered through ‘dragging’ and ‘indexing’ and the ‘shared grammar’ has become ever more blurred or illegible for today’s tourists. Also, in tourism’s global encounter, other (Western) ‘gazes’ may be adopted, for example, how many Western tourists/backpackers embrace environmental concerns in their travelling behaviour. Therefore, today, typologies such as ‘Chinese’, ‘Japanese’, or ‘Asian’ tourist/tourism become problematic and would be regarded as narrow-minded and empirically untenable, but at the same time, to completely ignore these differences, traits, or characteristics, would be equally reductive and simplistic.³⁰⁸ In a global context, such ‘biases’ inevitably exist and fluctuate between universalism and cultural relativism, in particular expressions of ‘authenticity’, ‘aesthetics’, or ‘cultural commodification’ are questioned when considering for example, buying preferences of

³⁰⁵ Cited in Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, pp. 78-79.

³⁰⁶ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, p. 78-90.

³⁰⁷ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*;

³⁰⁸ M. Hall, ‘A Long and Still-Unfinished Story?’ Constructing and Defining Asian Regionalisms’, in T. Winter et al. (eds.) *Asia on Tour. Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism*, Introduction, New York, Routledge, 2009.

souvenirs of non-Western tourists.³⁰⁹ By extension, Notar for example challenges the association of the quest for ‘authenticity’ as a modern and largely Western pursuit, showing that Dali local people and villagers, as well as transnational travellers, expressed ‘authenticity anxiety’ in their role as consumers, producers and distributors (of souvenirs), in particular in times of intense commodification and exchange in an increasingly globalised economy.³¹⁰

Keeping in mind the above abbreviated history of a sightseeing canon that was firmly established and highly influential throughout the centuries, I turn to evaluate the political, social and economic parameters to demonstrate the particular way of tourism development in China in the reform era, that is, how these forces impact(ed) on the (distinctive) development of China's tourism industry.

Forces of Change in Tourism Development

Political and Economic Impacts

When modern tourism was first introduced to the Chinese people it could not be considered an industry, nor an economic activity, because of its scale, purpose, and method of operation.³¹¹ In the national scheme, priority for tourism in the early reform-era was only of moderate urgency and primarily served the goals of enhancing communication and cultural exchange with other (China-friendly, socialist/communist) nations, furthering international relations by using tourism as a vehicle of diplomacy, earning foreign exchange, and attracting investment to support China's modernization. Tourism, like other industries, was designed to serve the state.³¹² This collusion of tourism with nationalism was common throughout ASEAN countries at the time, where economic structural adjustments were needed to off-set declining foreign exchange and where tourism was seen as a vehicle for nation-building amidst cultural and ethnic diversity.³¹³ However, already in the beginning of the ‘reform and opening up’ period, Deng Xiaoping, in a series of five directional talks

³⁰⁹ T. Winter, ‘Destination Asia: Rethinking Material Culture’, in: T. Winter et. al. (eds.), *Asia on Tour. Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism*, New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 52-66. Tourism and tourist are routinely regarded as Western (European) constructs, therefore a ‘natural’ bias exists in the various discourses of tourism and tourists, i.e. when comparing tourism systems, tourist behaviour, etc.

³¹⁰ B. Notar, ‘Authenticity Anxiety and Counterfeit Confidence: Outsourcing Souvenirs, Changing Money, and Narrating Value in Reform-Era China’, *Modern China*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 64-98.

³¹¹ D. Gao, and G. Zhang, ‘China's Tourism: Policy and Practice’, *Tourism Management*, June 1983, pp. 75-84. According to Jian Bie, the first Chinese international travel agency, Chinese Travel Service, was established in 1923, and the first official organisation of international tourism in the new China (CITS) was set up in Beijing on 15 April 1954. A travel service for overseas Chinese was established in 1953 to enable the overseas Chinese to visit their families and tour the new China.

³¹² DJL Choy and CY Gee, ‘Tourism in the PRC - Five Years After China Opens Its Gates’, *Tourism Management*, 1983, pp. 85-93.

³¹³ Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, pp. 38-39.

(Oct 1978-July 1979), voiced his enthusiasm for tourism and pointed out the significance of tourism in economic development at a transitional stage of the regime.³¹⁴ These talks have been of strategic and historic significance for tourism development in China, they were published widely, and 'read and re-read as a discourse of power for China's tourism'.³¹⁵ However, the future of the expansion of *domestic* tourism was rather uncertain and a contentious issue within government circles until the late 1990s (post Asian financial crisis).

None-the-less, both international and domestic tourism increased dramatically, as discussed above, but created many ideological and planning problems, in particular regarding internal organisation and bureaucratic control, lack of experience, inadequate infrastructure and shortage of facilities, product quality, and political readjustments.³¹⁶ As a consequence the government introduced new forms of tourism and also encouraged the cooperation of the private sector (collectives and individuals) to build up tourism infrastructure.³¹⁷ A turning point in regional development was reached in 1992 when Deng Xiaoping on his famous 'Southern Tour' announced the further opening up of the economy and introduced policies of greater political and economic independence (investment, infrastructure and tourism development), giving regional and local governments greater power to take charge of their own development. Many regional and local governments 'grasped the historic opportunities', and ethnic (border) regions such as Yunnan soon fully integrated tourism, primarily based on nature and ethnic culture, as a development strategy.³¹⁸ One of the major contributing factors to the growth of tourism, however, was the continuing rise of Chinese people's income, and the restructuring of the (working) holiday scheme to create a system of extended leisure time - travel - increased spending, which then also greatly benefited the economy.³¹⁹ From the early 2000s, a number of important national government projects were instigated that also integrated tourism as a development force, including the 'Build a Socialist Country Side' (*jianshi nongcun shehuizhuyi*), and the 'Develop the West' (*xibu da kaifa*) programs.³²⁰

³¹⁴ H. Xiao, 'The Discourse of Power: Deng Xiao Ping Tourism Development in China', *Tourism Management*, Vol. 27, 2006, pp. 803-814.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Xiao, The Discourse of Power ...; Also cited therein: Mr. He Guangwei (General Director of CNTA) implied that, in addition to the much appraised title as chief architect (*zong she ji shi*) of China's reforms and modernizations, Deng was also the founder and creator (*dian ji ren he kai chuang zhe*) of China's tourism.

³¹⁶ Choy and Gee, 'Tourism in the PRC ...', pp. 85-93.

³¹⁷ Bian, 'Tourism in China', pp. 27-31.

³¹⁸ Chee-Beng Tan, et al. (eds.) *Tourism, Anthropology and China*, Bangkok, White Lotus Press, 2001; Wen, 'Tourism and the Regional Development of China ...'; for Yunnan, see Summers, *Yunnan – A Chinese Bridgehead to Asia*.

³¹⁹ In the early 1990s employees were granted 7-15 days annual leave and the 5-day working week was introduced, followed later by three one-week long national holidays respectively (Chinese New Year, May International Labour Day, and Chinese National Day).

³²⁰ See for example J. Chio, *A Landscape of Travel. The Work of Tourism in Rural Ethnic China*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2014; further, J.A. Donaldson, *Small Works. Poverty and Economic Development in Southwestern China*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2011; and D. Goodman, 'The Campaign to "Open Up the West"'. National,

Paradoxically, alongside these development programs, there was a shift to re-centralize power and control over land use and natural resources which again enabled a higher degree of state intervention.³²¹

The demand side in tourism development in China is firmly grounded in macro- and micro-economic development and has thus always been strongly tied to 'quantitative maximization', to imperatives of economic growth and development, but has also been subjected to short-term economic goals and increased commodification and exploitation of (ethnic) material culture.³²² When China emerged with its economy intact after the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s, growth in income, and as a consequence, growth in tourism was expected, and indeed, travel was identified as one of the three consumption hotspots, along with cars and real-estate.³²³ As Dredge observes, 'the ideological shift occurring in the Chinese socialist system has brought with it new cultural and economic interpretations of development.'³²⁴ And Sofield and Li rightly argue, macro and global forces alone cannot explain the tourism development in China, but the growth of tourism in China has to be attributed to the powerful role Chinese culture plays in shaping tourism development³²⁵, and 'the dynamics of internal forces (social, historical, political and cultural) cannot be denied in any discussion of the impetus for tourism development'.³²⁶ In a recent study, the tourism-led growth hypothesis in the Chinese economy has been confirmed and a 'greater emphasis and utilization of tourism to form the basis for long-run competitive advantage' to foster economic growth was recommended.³²⁷ Further, the study suggested increased foreign investment in the tourism industry in the less developed western regions (to use FDI effectively), the participation of

Provincial-level, and Local Perspectives', *China Quarterly Special Issues New Series*, No. 5, pp. 3-20, London, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

³²¹ N. Hellman, 'The Role of Tourism as a Strategy for Rural Community Development: Evidence from Yunnan, China', MA Thesis, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, May 2011. This re-shift in policy was mostly expressed in the introduction of large infrastructure construction projects (dams, transport, electricity) and the exploitation of the rich natural and mineral resources of the western regions (for the coastal regions), and even though deemed necessary, little was done to help mitigate the social, economic and environmental costs for communities at the local level.

³²² J. Li, 'Tourism Enterprises, the State, and the Construction of Multiple Dai Cultures in Contemporary Xishuang Banna, China', in B. Prideaux, et al. (eds.) *Cultural and Heritage Tourism in Asia and the Pacific*, Routledge: London and New York, 2008, pp. 205-220.

³²³ B. Wu. et al., 'Trends in China's Domestic Tourism Development at the Turn of the Century', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 12, No. 5, 2000, pp. 296-299,

³²⁴ D. Dredge, 'Development, Economy and Culture: Cultural Heritage Tourism Planning, Liangzhu, China', in B. Prideaux (Bruce), D.J. Timothy and K.S. Chon (eds.), *Cultural and Heritage Tourism in Asia and the Pacific*, London, Routledge, 2008, pp. 232-249.

³²⁵ Sofield and Li, 'Tourism Development and Cultural Policies in China'.

³²⁶ Cited in Dredge, 'Development, Economy and Culture...',

³²⁷ S. Tang, E.A. Selvanathan and S. Selvanathan. *China's Economic Miracle. Does FDI Matter?*, Cheltenham, UK, Edward Elgar, 2012. Tourism-led growth assumes that tourism brings in foreign exchange and contributes to government revenues, tourism spurs government to build infrastructure and consequently also improves quality of life for local people and facilitate tourism, tourism promotes regional economic growth by creating tourism cluster industries, and more.

local people to ensure that tourism is effectively linked with local sectors, and priority of local sectors over outside participation.³²⁸

As we can see from the above, the state played a decisive role in the creation of a tourism ‘market’ and created, almost in parallel, a ‘cultural market’ (therefore also acknowledging the strong dependence between them). At the same time the emergence of (mass) tourism in China has been largely a response to market forces, but state-led and state-promoted, and state/governments continue to dominate the tourism sector by participating/ intervening either directly, through state-owned travel agencies/hotels/ transportation, or other business.³²⁹ Direct control of tourism by the state occurs mainly through ownership of property and the control of natural resources.³³⁰ As with cultural heritage, China has long made strategic use of tourism and tourist sites to articulate hegemonic claims of cultural identity, state authority, or territorial sovereignty. These include claims in China’s SAR’s of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, but also the western regions of Xinjiang, Mongolia, and in particular Tibet. Rowen argues, in the case of China-Taiwan cross-Strait political relationships ‘tourism may be a problematic and unpredictable weapon in the arsenal of state power’ and, as tourism has instrumentalities that serve particular, even competing interests or programs of government, ‘tourism should be seen as a technology of state territorialisation’.³³¹ All this shows that tourism in China is much more diverse and contested, and above all, political, and tourist sites and places have to also be seen as the materialistic embodiment of administrative and capitalistic powers.³³²

Socio-Cultural Factors: Mobility, Modernity, and Social Resistance

Historically, China has been a peasant society, both geographically and psychologically³³³, and its population has been restricted in terms of spatial movement either by government decree, socio-cultural norms, or physical obstruction.³³⁴ Since the early socialist period, mobility was further

³²⁸ Ibid. Tang, Selvanathan and Selvanathan, *China’s Economic Miracle*.

³²⁹ Sofield, and Li, ‘Tourism Development and Cultural Policies ...’; Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*; Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, p. 71.

³³⁰ S. Dai et al., ‘Distortions in Tourism Development in the Dali Autonomous Region, China’, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2012, pp. 146-163. This was made very clear recently, when the Yunnan government, due to increasing environmental destruction of one of the most important waterways in the region, took over the administration and development of the whole of Lake Erhai.³³⁰

³³¹ I. Rowen, ‘Tourism as a Territorial Strategy: The Case of China and Taiwan’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 46, 2014, pp. 62-74.

³³² Bao and Ma, ‘Tourism Geography in China...’.

³³³ Xu, *Tourism and Local Economic Development in China*. p. 95.

³³⁴ These include, for example, resettlement of parts of the population into newly conquered lands, to keep stability in the borderlands, as well as, for example, during Mao’s era the ‘sent down’ cadres and youth to the countryside to learn from the masses, or to pre-empt strife due to problems of gender imbalance;

constrained by a politically created urban-rural division in the form of a *hukou* (户口) or 'household registration system' which would last until the present.³³⁵ In the reform period, when the economic potential of domestic tourism was recognized, restrictions on travel and population movement were slowly liberalized. Mobility now came to signify modernization, and one's modern subjectivity was increasingly linked to mobility, in particular travel and migration.³³⁶ In a reversal of previous policies, the state now not only encouraged domestic travel, but also international travel and migration, where the 'new migrant' was seen as a globally modern, yet authentically national (Chinese) figure, with strong loyalties to the homeland.³³⁷ Outbound international tourism now also represented the 'shake-off of tradition, poverty and political control' and a means to amass cultural capital as a world citizen.³³⁸

The 1990s were marked by a veritable '*luyou re*' (旅游热), or travel fever. Chinese tourists were heading overseas to seek other modern experiences than the ones at home which 'has produced an imaginative time/space to reflect on their inadequacies at home, which sheds a new light on Chinese modernity'.³³⁹ Here, an argument is also made, that if outbound travel was to seek different modernities, domestic travel was to seek different pasts.³⁴⁰ Wah's 'disorganized tourism space' of new host-guest relations, or a new hierarchical order of tourists from emerging nations (in particular Asia), is thus a complex one in the global tourism landscape.

The concept of a 'leisure culture' as a central feature of western tourism development was still unfamiliar in China and tourism was initially primarily seen as an educational tool and a strategy to further the state project of modernization, where tourism became a 'harbinger of a socialist spiritual society'.³⁴¹ This was particularly pertinent in the obligatory visits to ethnic theme-parks, where Chinese tourists were to experience the internal 'other' and learn about their country's history,

³³⁵ A legacy of the Mao period, household registration (*hukou*) restricted people, in particular the rural masses, from moving around or settling in areas outside their home/birth place, and its main purpose was to ensure adequate agricultural (food) supply for the city and avoid large rural migration into the cities. Increasingly, the *hukou* system is seen as an impediment to socio-economic equity and growth and is undergoing substantial reform.

³³⁶ P. Nyiri, 'Between Encouragement and Control. Tourism, Modernity, and Discipline in China', in T. Winter et al. (eds.) *Asia on Tour*, pp. 153-169. Oakes is highly conscious of the use of 'modern subjectivity' in a Chinese context, and he points out that the modern Subject is not its Western incarnation of High modernity but in China it is the periphery where modern subjectivity is articulated in often radically different ways. See Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, Introduction.

³³⁷ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, pp. 99-100. Nyiri here considers migrants as symbolic figures, as 'vanguards of modernity', because of their connection to more 'advanced' nations, and because of their mobility.

³³⁸ CY Wah, "'Disorganized Tourism Space. Chinese tourists in an Age of Asian tourism', in T. Winter et. al. (eds.) *Asia on Tour. Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism*, London and New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 67-77; The main destinations for Chinese international outbound tourism were initially (early 1980s) Hong Kong and Macao (to visit relatives), and soon after border tourism to China's immediate neighbours Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Burma, began to soar.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Cited in Nyiri, 'Between Encouragement and Control...'

cultural diversity and national unity, and also learn how to become modern tourists and ‘consume the nation’.³⁴² The theme park fever of the 1980s/1990s spread throughout East and South-east Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, and Indonesia, and its creation was subjected to the same political parameters of post-colonial/post-war nation-building and a ‘unity in diversity’ paradigm, or was otherwise marked in cultural terms by landscape ‘encodings’ of Asian (Confucian) alternative modernities.³⁴³ That is, tourism played an important role in building Asia’s alternative path toward modernity.

Considering the complexity of tourism’s use in government politics, like cultural heritage, tourism development does not always go uncontested and the state, as the primary policy maker, at times is likely to respond to societal pressure, including pressure from its own ranks, the local government.³⁴⁴ For example, in Dali, one of Yunnan’s premier tourist towns, government efforts to ‘correct’ distortions in the tourism economy (uneven distribution, or local and external domination of aspects of the industry) by increasing its own control, were met with local entrepreneurial resourcefulness that have impeded these government efforts.³⁴⁵ Similarly, in Qufu, Confucius’ home town, social pressure changed adverse government attitudes towards the selection of Confucius cultural heritage to be promoted for tourism.³⁴⁶ And in Zhaoxing, Guizhou Province, locals eventually ‘fired’ the government-appointed development company, thus proving that ethnic people negotiate tourism development in different ways.³⁴⁷ Because in most scenarios of tourism development there is now a wide range of stakeholders, including (different levels of) government, industry groups, interest groups, investors, developers, and community groups, which often have diverging ideas and objectives, in cultural heritage tourism development this diversity has become more problematic as the often fragile culture is the main tourist attraction and resource. Therefore, notions of local agency and community participation have increasingly been included in discourse and practice of tourism development, cultural heritage preservation and environmental sustainability, resulting in a more stable state-society relationship that also encourages a ‘harmonious society’.³⁴⁸ In particular, rural tourism in its many forms, has enabled new approaches and dialogues between state and society.

³⁴² See also, Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*;

³⁴³ Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, pp. 43-45.

³⁴⁴ H. Yan and B. Bromwell, ‘Cultural Tourism, Ceremony and the State in China’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2008, pp. 969-989.

³⁴⁵ Dai et al., ‘Distortions in Tourism Development ...’.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., Yan and Bromwell, ‘Cultural Tourism, Ceremony and the State in China’;

³⁴⁷ See, C. Cornet, ‘Tourism Development and Resistance in China’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, No.52, 2015, pp. 29-43.

³⁴⁸ See for example, feature story of the World Bank, ‘China: Empowering Farmers through a Participatory Approach’, *The World Bank*, September 24, 2012.

Cultural and heritage tourism in China: the same, but different

In the literature, the term ‘cultural tourism’ is generally recognized as an umbrella term for a variety of forms of tourism, including heritage tourism or ethnic and folk tourism. Heritage tourism, as a category (and an UNESCO-inspired Eurocentric way of viewing heritage), is often primarily associated with tangible heritage and monumentality (and a ‘passive activity’), while ‘cultural tourism’ expresses more the (active) experience and consumption of ‘lived heritage’.

This type of tourism has also become very popular in China since the government has already added a large number of national wonders to the World Heritage List, and the national list of heritage sites is growing by the day. For example, in 2011, a plan for "Chinese Cultural Tourism" was officially launched and later, keeping this plan in mind, “Tour China, Experience Culture” (*you zhongguo pin wenhua* 游中华品文化) was used as the main promotional theme throughout China's domestic tourism market. For the overseas market, China's National Tourism Office (CNTO) ran a tourism campaign in 140 countries and regions to promote China's rich and varied cultural resources. Since 2011, May 19 has been designated as ‘China Tourism Day’.³⁴⁹

China has an elaborate system of ranking scenic, nature, and cultural sites (and ranking usually comes with its own financial and political benefits) and domestic tourists pay great attention to it: internally, tourism sites are ranked at national and/or at lower government levels and are categorized from lowest A to highest 5-A or AAAAA sites.³⁵⁰ For example, the author’s field site, ‘Shaxi-Shibaoshan Scenic Area’, is rated AAAA while the World Heritage Site of nearby Lijiang is rated 5-A. This system has engendered strong competition amongst villages, towns, counties, and provinces. In general, all levels of government can create types of ranking according to their natural or cultural resources. For example, the famous ‘Water Towns’ (*shuixiang*) in eastern China's Jiangsu, Anhui, and Zhejiang provinces are ranked locally and individually, at province level and at state level, some of them are World Heritage sites. Other categories include (and usually come with the pre-fix ‘top’, ‘best’, or ‘excellent’): nature parks (Jiuzhaigou, Three-Parallell Rivers); holy mountains (Wutaishan); Six Great Tea Mountains (Yiwu); historic cities (Beijing, Xi'an); ancient towns and villages (Pingyao, Lijiang, Dali, Shaxi); historic and cultural villages; religious sites

³⁴⁹ This day was also partly created as an appreciation day for Xu Xiake (*xu xiake youji* 徐霞客游记) and partly to raise interest in domestic tourism (and spending);

³⁵⁰ Presently, there are 213 5A scenic areas nation-wide, 6 of them in Yunnan, including Kunming Shilin, Lijiang Yulong Snow Mountain, Lijiang Old Town Scenic Areas, Dali ‘Three Towers’ Cultural Tourism Scenic Area, Xishuangbanna Rainforest Garden and Deqin Tibetan Autonomous Areas Shangri-La Pudacuo National Park; see, ‘Nation-wide there are 213 5A Scenic Areas, 6 in Yunnan! Have you been there?’ (*quanguo 213 ge 5A jijingchu, Yunnan 6 ge* 全国 213 个 5A 级景区, 云南 6 个! 你都去过 吗?) *weixin*, 7 October 2016, http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Fr7zPbNDgIbhA9_8WuPOYg, accessed 8 October 2016.

(Qufu, Lhasa, Donghuang caves); and educational sites (Mao's birthplace). These ranked sites, including China's own world heritage sites, are very popular and amongst the most visited in the country. In this way, and especially in the Chinese context, we can confirm McKercher and du Cros' and other's findings that cultural tourism meanwhile enjoys a mass-market, however, *purposeful* cultural tourism (cultural tourism and a deep cultural experience as the primary motive) is still a niche market.³⁵¹

In general, the persistence of 'cultural tourism' is due to the increasing variety of motives of travel due to 'postmodern fragmentation', that is, instead of a cultural 'mass market', a large range of cultural 'niche markets' are created, such as museum tourism, or tea awareness tourism.³⁵² Cultural tourism's popularity then, in its many interpretations and fragmentations, is also due to its associated positive benefits as it helps create employment opportunities, generates income for investment, helps curb rural migration, preserves and protects heritage sites, develops cultural understanding, and nurtures a sense of pride and self-esteem among local communities, that is, overall it fosters more sustainable development. Cultural tourism as a form of sustainable tourism may then also help locals to challenge traditional views on tourism impact by demonstrating how their own efforts can secure access to tourism resources, that is, how they themselves can 'construct' tourists as a resource and take advantage of it without being subjected to the 'vagaries' of the travel industry.³⁵³

Complexities of the Tourism-Heritage Dichotomy

In recent times, with the growth of the heritage industry world-wide, this new cultural (mass) tourism has put the tourism industry on a track of increased tourist demand (product), increased conservation activity (cultural heritage), but increasing threat to the integrity (or even survival) of tourist assets (tangible and intangible).³⁵⁴ As du Cros and McKercher note, cultural heritage tourism and management operate in parallel, yet independent, with no real partnership, and except that they compete for the same resource base they have little in common.³⁵⁵ Also, conflicts amongst the various stakeholders make representing a heritage asset appropriately a difficult task.³⁵⁶ However,

³⁵¹ B. McKercher and H. du Cros, *Cultural Tourism, The partnership Between Tourism and Cultural Heritage Management*, New York, Routledge, 2010, Introduction.

³⁵² G. Richards, 'Tourism Trends: The Convergence of Culture and Tourism', *The Netherlands: Academy for Leisure NHTV University of Applied Sciences*, 2014.

³⁵³ K. Maxwell, 'Tourism as Transaction. Commerce and Heritage on the Inca Trail', in S. Lyon and E.C. Wells (eds.), *Global Tourism. Cultural Heritage and Economic Encounters*, AltaMira Press: Lanham, Maryland, 2012, pp. 105-120.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., McKercher and du Cros, *Cultural Tourism ...*

³⁵⁵ McKercher and du Cros, *Cultural Tourism ...*; 'ethnic' and 'cultural' tourism, in a confusion of definitions, are often differentiated, however a continuum exists.

³⁵⁶ McKercher and du Cros, *Cultural Tourism*.

as cultural tourists want to consume a variety of cultural experiences, cultural heritage assets have to be transformed into tourism products. As tourism is considered ‘the intimate and legitimate user group of heritage’, this leaves the cultural tourism sector to face the particular challenge of finding a balance between the consumption of extrinsic values by tourists and conservation of intrinsic values by cultural heritage managers.³⁵⁷ This is particularly relevant in the context of mass tourism which can inflict irreparable damage to a site’s physical and natural environment. The most often-cited examples here are Cambodia’s Angkor What temple district (primarily international tourists), and China’s Mogao Buddhist Caves in Gansu Province, primarily because of their particularly high visitation, but fragile state of preservation, their importance as World Heritage sites, and their significance both as national symbols and global tourism sites.³⁵⁸ On a local level, this tourism-cultural heritage conflict has been played out most clearly and dramatically, both in terms of development and management, in the ancient town of Lijiang in Yunnan Province, China.³⁵⁹

The importance of domestic tourists to China's tourism industry goes without saying, while international tourism is almost negligible. Considering the steep rise in domestic tourism in the last two decades, this, however, also touches on a more salient topic in the study of tourism impact. Robert Shepherd, for example, bluntly states that Tibet is ruined not only by tourism, but by Chinese tourism in particular.³⁶⁰ He reminds us that, in Tibet's case, paradoxically, the Chinese state authorities and Communist Party act as both guides of modernization (economic development) and protectors against the negative impacts of modernization (UNESCO world heritage listing of Potala Palace). Economic development policies, including (mostly Han) tourism, are transforming Tibet into a de-politised space of culture and tradition within the Chinese nation, thereby the Chinese state is also laying claim to a unitary past and defining contemporary boundaries and national standing.³⁶¹ One African intellectual writing about his homeland, likened such behaviour to applying a kind of ‘cultural bomb’, the effect of which is to “annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves”.³⁶² Through the *aesthetization* of Tibetan culture, Shepherd

³⁵⁷ McKercher and du Cros, *Cultural Tourism*.

³⁵⁸ See, UNESCO World Heritage List, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list> ; the international preservation community and the Chinese government have been working on very innovative methods to counter over-visitation and the ensuing damage, including compulsory viewing of videos of all the caves before visiting the caves, limiting visitor numbers per day, and more. However, the caves are so popular, that such measures have always proven difficult to implement.

³⁵⁹ See, for example, Su and Teo, 'Tourism Politics in Lijiang, China ...'.

³⁶⁰ R. Shepherd, ‘Cultural Preservation, Tourism and ‘Donkey Travel on China’s Frontier’, in T. Winter et. al. (eds.), *Asia on Tour. Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism*, New York, Routledge, 2009, p. 253-263.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Cited in, Yeshe Choesang, ‘Chinese Colonialism in Tibet Causes Cultural Identity Crisis’, deLiberation:

<http://www.deliberation.info/chinese-colonialism-tibet-causes-cultural-identity-crisis/> , accessed, 22 May 2014.

Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, a highly-regarded intellectual, dubs such behaviours as a “cultural bomb” in his

argues, the state wants to undercut claims of cultural and hence historical differences. This claim has also been made of the 'Open Up the West' (*xibu da kai fa*) program initiated in the Jiang Zemin era in the late 1990s, which had at its core not only social and economic development (and military security)³⁶³, but to speed up the integration and development of ethnic minorities 'to solve China's nationality problems under new historical circumstances (author's emphasis)'.³⁶⁴ As the author observes, the rationale of applying economic development (= tourism development) as a 'cure-all' for China's nationality problems, reflects the state's strong conviction that development and national unity are interlinked.³⁶⁵ The *aesthetization*, or de-politization of Tibetan culture is certainly being sped up as Tibet is on track to become a global tourist destination, which has recently been reinforced through the decision to build a multi-billion dollar Mega-theme park near Lhasa.³⁶⁶ Such projects are seen as culturally insensitive by Tibetans, but they also point to the particular historical development of domestic tourism and a Chinese tourist gaze, where the search for the experience of the real and authentic is less desirable than to 'partake in the broader state tourism projects that promotes the (Western) Shangri-la image of Tibet (but without the political implications) and the universal portrayal of minorities as happy and colourful'.³⁶⁷

The (shared) tourism and cultural heritage assets, as mentioned above, are commonly exposed to economic, cultural, and environmental exploitation (and other unsustainable practices), including the commodification and commercialization of ethnic culture and identity. As part of this, 'representation' and 'authenticity' have attracted considerable attention in recent times and have become major topics in tourism, anthropology, and cultural heritage research. Many of these concerns already go back a long time. The anthropological study of the tourist, of travel, leisure and other touristic systems, represented by the pioneers in the field (Mead, Wolfe, Nunez, Smith, Graburn, Greenwood, MacCannell, Nash) was initially concerned with the tourist as an agent of contact between cultures (Nash) and the consequences of this cultural encounter on the host society (Nash and Smith), and was generally deemed a negative influence. The debate about this impact of external economies on local communities was also expressed through Nunez' concern with the 'cocacolonization' of native peoples and lives on in our present debates of 'Disneyfication' or

book, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language and African Literature*. Incidentally, there has recently been a push for Tibetan and Mongol names to be changed to be legible in Mandarin for official use, e.g. pass port.

³⁶³See P. Perdue, 'Identifying China's Northwest', in Jing Wang (ed.), *Locating China. Space, Place and Popular Culture*, New York, Routledge, 2005.

³⁶⁴ M. Clarke, 'China's Internal Security Problems and the "Great Western Development Program": The Dynamics of Integration, Ethnic Nationalism, and Terrorism in Xinjiang', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 31, 2007, pp. 323-342.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, Clarke, 'China's Internal Security Problems ...';

³⁶⁶ See, 'Tibet launches \$4.7b tourism park construction', *China Daily*, 9 July 2012,

http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2012-07/09/content_15562420.htm, accessed 10 January 2013.

³⁶⁷ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*.

‘themeparkization’.³⁶⁸ Similarly, early literature focused on the ‘victimization’ and ‘passivity’ of the native, but is now dominated by discourses on (ethnic) ‘agency’ and participation. Much has been written about the impacts of tourism on cultural heritage, the environment, and local traditional communities in these terms and we will analyse some of this in more detail in the following chapters.

Rural Tourism: Heritage Tourism in Rural China

In most parts of the world, the assumption or promise of economic gains and betterment are the main stimulus for tourism development. This is particularly important for underdeveloped, (resource-) poor countries or poor local economies, as tourism’s opportunities in creating local employment (even for unskilled labour) are also thought to reduce poverty and are therefore seen as an optimal development tool. Rural tourism has long been recognized world-wide as an effective tool in rural socio-economic regeneration, in particular in meeting challenges of agricultural restructuring and decline, rural-urban migration, but also to support sustainable development and environmental protection.³⁶⁹ There has also been notable literature in recent years regarding the complexities and paradoxes of tourism’s potential in poverty reduction on a local level in China, in particular case studies in the minority regions of Guizhou and Yunnan.³⁷⁰ For the last thirty years rural tourism in China has been an ‘important new type of tourism’ due to its role in developing rural economies, and the government has introduced many policies and guidelines to stimulate the rural economy.³⁷¹ Agricultural diversification through tourism, or ‘to leave the fields without leaving the countryside’ (*li tu bu li xiang* 离土不离乡), was part of the push to counter rural outmigration

³⁶⁸ D. Nash and V.L. Smith, Anthropology and Tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1991, pp. 12-25.

³⁶⁹ See, B. Su, ‘Developing Rural Tourism: the PAT program and ‘*Nong jia le*’ tourism in China’, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 15, 2013, pp. 611-619. RT has long been recognized and practiced in Europe and North America as an effective catalyst of rural socio-economic regeneration.

³⁷⁰ J.A. Donaldson, ‘Tourism, Development and Poverty Reduction in Guizhou and Yunnan’, *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 190, June 2007, pp 333-351; JJ. Wen and CA. Tisdell, *Tourism and China's Development. Policies, Regional Economic Growth and Ecotourism*, Singapore, World Scientific Publishing, 2001; other projects include growing of tea or coffee to increase local people's income. Important here is also the reference to Guizhou county as a state-level poverty alleviation county, that is, it finds policy and political support, such as internationally marketing the tea, making it a 'green' industry, and a model agriculture industry. See 'White Tea Lifts Guizhou County Out of Poverty', *China Daily*, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2013-01/01/content_16074155.htm, accessed 7 January 2013; or, 'Chinese Tea Farmers are Switching to Coffee', *LA Times*, http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-china-coffee-20121229.0.7074339.story?page=1&fb_source=other_multiline&fb_action_ids=185529858259560&action_object_ma_p=&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_ref=s%3DshowShareBarUI%3Ap%3Dfacebook-like, accessed 7 January 2013; this project is run by external and government initiative, such as Starbucks, Nestle, and the provincial government. See also, B. Zeng and Chris Ryan, 'Assisting the Poor in China through Tourism Development: a Review of Research', *Tourism Management* 33, 2012, pp. 239-248.

³⁷¹ This includes the ‘Poverty Alleviation through Tourism (PAT)’ program, initiated in 1996 by CNTA and the State Council, with 359 national rural tourism pilot sites set up throughout China; see also, Su, ‘Developing Rural Tourism ...’.

and is strongly supported by the Chinese government.³⁷² In this way, rural urbanization - another priority of the national government - can be sped up. As well, recognizing the contribution of rural tourism to poverty alleviation, the government has recently set aside special 'experimental zones for poverty alleviation through tourism' (*luyou fupin shiyanqu* 旅游扶贫试验区).³⁷³ Rural tourism in China has taken on distinct forms, foremost through the introduction of *nongjiale* (农家乐) tourism as a new form of privately-owned small enterprise in the early 1990s. It is firmly embedded within the state agenda of rural tourism development and indicates the 'emergence of a new politico-cultural regime that engenders a new hedonistic subjectivity of consumption replacing the old Maoist subjectivity of socialist production and aestheticism'.³⁷⁴ Importantly, in this way, the new regime of labor and leisure illuminates realities of how local people 'do tourism', do the work of tourism, and also shows the 'day-to-day collectivist capitalism' in rural China and what it means to be rural, ethnic, and modern in China today.³⁷⁵ As Chio further notes, the government programs of rural (tourism) development - especially in national campaigns in 2006 - 'went far beyond material improvements to offer new discourses of rural subjectivity and ways of imagining and contributing to Chinese modernity'.³⁷⁶ Here, the importance of gender in rural development must be noted. Findings, including the author's findings, show that rural (left-behind) women play a decisive role in managing household economies, and rural tourism is now dominated by middle-aged and young women who run small businesses with their parents or daughters.³⁷⁷ Women are also considered the biggest asset in the development of *nongjiale* programs, which, besides generating additional household income, substantially contribute to the preservation of local culture and sustaining traditional lifestyles, and therefore contribute to the sustainability of local villages.³⁷⁸

³⁷² See e.g., Chio, *A Landscape of Travel ...*; See also, J. Chio, 'Leave the Fields without Leaving the Countryside: Modernity and Mobility in Rural, Ethnic China', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp. 551-575.

³⁷³ Breidenbachand and Nyiri, "'Our Common Heritage'...".

³⁷⁴ CH Park, 'Delights in Farm Guesthouses: Nongjiale Tourism, Rural Development and the Regime of Leisure-Pleasure in Post-Mao China', PhD Thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2008. Other terms also exist for *nongjiale*, such as *minfukelejia*, 'the house of peasants getting rich, guests getting happy', or the *yujiale*, or 'happy fisherman's home' in coastal areas.

³⁷⁵ Chio, *A Landscape of Travel*.

³⁷⁶ Chio, *A Landscape of Travel*, p. 86. This re-iteration of rural tourism development coincided with the national campaign of a 'New Socialist Countryside', introduced in 2005/6, which was one of the many attempts by the government to address the growing east-west/rural-urban economic divide; this campaign included two aspects, 'scientific development' (*kexue fazhan*) and 'harmonious society' (*hexie shehui*) and also focused on social development, such as a healthy and stable lifestyle, neat and clean villages, and democratic management, which was often taken to the extreme.

³⁷⁷ RSJ Ling et al., 'Women's Role in Sustaining Villages and Tourism in Rural China', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2013.07.009>

³⁷⁸ Ibid.



FIGURE 6: POSTER ADVERTISING NONGJIALE IN SHILONGCUN. (TOP LEFT CORNER IS PICTURE OF DAUGHTER OF HOSTS WHO IS A DANCER WITH LI PING'S 'DYNAMIC YUNNAN')

Over the last few decades - amidst ongoing modernization, economic development and environmental pollution - city-weary tourists have been visiting the countryside in increasingly large numbers to feed their nostalgia for an overly idealised past. This is not an entirely new development, and has its roots in the early twentieth century *New Culture Movement* and *Folklore Movement*, whereby peasants were seen as the genuine source of a national heritage. China's foremost modern writer Lu Xun, for example, did not share this nostalgia, but thought of the 'native place' (*guxiang* 故乡) 'as a project, a site for reform, and a place where today's peasants are transformed into tomorrow's citizens'.³⁷⁹ This attitude still sits well within the 20th century socio-economic and-political development discourse of the Chinese government. As a result of this re-awakened nostalgia, all over China, decrepit, neglected, and abandoned villages and towns are being restored and rebuilt as 'authentic' ancient and historic tourist villages, and many *nongjiale* farmstays and *nongjiale* restaurants have opened throughout China's countryside to support a growing rural tourism infrastructure. From its earliest form as a simple farm-stay, the scope and interpretation of rural tourism have substantially widened. Rural tourism also comprises other categories, such as ethnic tourism, rural eco-tourism, agri-tourism, leisure farm tourism, and has therefore a strong affinity with cultural tourism. Besides accommodation, rustic (ethnic) food and a chance to experience 'authentic' rural lifestyles, *nongjiale* now include a range of activities based on nature, adventure, health, education, culture, heritage and more. In only a short time the countryside has become a hot-spot of consumption. Wu raises an important aspect of rural tourism, arguing that as a new tourism alternative the transference of *nongjiale* restaurants from the city

³⁷⁹ Cited in Oakes, 'Heritage as Improvement ...'.

(where they were purely restaurants offering wholesome ethnic or country foods mostly led by migrant farmers) to ethnic and remote areas constitutes a ‘new symbolic synthesis and rapprochement between what are commonly understood to be “farmers foods” and desires to experience an original ecology and understandings of ethnicity in China’.³⁸⁰ The *nongjiale* concept received a new validation through the introduction and incorporation of the idea of ‘original ecology’ (*yuanshengtai*) in China’s ethnic and remote areas, but where villages have to deal with the constructions of meaning and symbols related to ecology, foods and ethnicity.³⁸¹ As I will show in the case study chapter below, the idea of *yuanshengtai* tourism is very new, but has become an important feature in promoting those poor mountain villages where nature and ethnicity is the only resource.

However, while longing for an ‘original’ ecology and simple rural lifestyle, these modern urban tourists do not want to see poverty, primitiveness, back-breaking labour, or dirt, but want an ‘upgraded’ version of the past, a sanitised, clean version, with comfort, good food, and a hygienic environment that is familiar to them. They do not want the ‘reality’ of the past, but one where they are onlookers from the outside, visitors with a ‘distanced’ gaze. Evidence of this contradiction is very common, as Chinese tourists, paradoxically, even in the most pristine rural environment, often wear face masks in fear of germs and potential disease, and comment on the dirtiness of the countryside and unhygienic preparation of food, while they ‘revel’ in the often luxurious new tourist hotels and guesthouses.³⁸² Travel to such a ‘pseudo’ or imagined past therefore cannot take place in an ‘authentic’ place/space, but must meet the ‘inauthentic’, re-invented, hyper-real, or ‘pseudo’ world of fake/faux architecture, staged performance, folkloristic village, or theme parks, all a feature of the contemporary Chinese rural tourism-scape. In this landscape of confusion, brought about by the intersecting of tradition and modernity, Chinese people have developed a distorted view of their past as it is at once locally re-invented with a contemporary, modern interpretation to suit tourist demand, and nationally crafted with a selective, nationalistic stance and a universalistic historical narrative.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ X. Wu, ‘The Farmhouse Joy (*nongjiale*) Movement in China’s Ethnic Minority Villages’, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2014, pp. 158-177.

³⁸¹ Destinations of ‘original ecology’ are natural and ecological zones, that have rivers and mountains, plants and animals, are untouched by development, and have established farmhouses that provide bed and board and ‘farmer’s foods’.

³⁸² Author’s observations.

³⁸³ For example, in many traditional villages and towns, such as Lijiang, the government requires that people hang red lanterns on the roof as tourists perceive this as traditional Chinese. However, the tradition of hanging a red lantern relates to Imperial times when a lantern was hung on that concubine’s house whose turn it was to please the Emperor.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the features and origin of tourism development in China, with emphasis on the evolution of domestic tourism since the early reform era. It is argued that China has developed a unique system of tourism based on a historical travel culture of ‘scenic spots’ associated with poetry, literature, philosophy, and arts, and a contemporary travel culture, influenced by unique socio-economic, socio-cultural, and political characteristics of a modernising China in transition. The latter developments have been especially conducive to fundamental socio-economic transformation and change with often highly uncertain and contested outcomes as the ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ are continuously pitted against each other, clash, or are reconciled.

In pre-reform China (-1978), tourism was mostly cautious and of low urgency, and was largely confined to government officials, business trips, or visits to relatives. This changed in the late 1970s with the implementation of the new reform policies under Deng Xiao-ping that resulted in fast economic growth. Tourism was soon recognized as a key factor to contribute to economic development and priority was then given to foreign tourists (to generate foreign exchange income), but by the mid-1980s domestic tourism began to gain momentum. Two-digit economic growth, income growth, and major improvements in the provision of tourism infrastructure and supply throughout the 1980s and 1990s enabled the unstoppable expansion of domestic tourism to its current state (2015) as the largest domestic tourism market in the world, the largest source market of international travel, and Chinese tourists as the top spenders in outbound tourism expenditure in the world.

In parallel with these developments occurred a rural revival and revitalization of ancient cultures and traditions, which again stimulated the growing tourism industry, foremost as rural tourism. Cultural heritage and tourism became intricately linked and are both used as tools of economic and social development (and governance) by all levels of government. As a result, local people and their culture – the objects of both tourism and cultural heritage preservation - have been increasingly subjected to market forces (commodification, commoditization) and material and spiritual modernization.

Literature on the non-symbiotic, incompatible, or destructive relationship between heritage protection and tourism is abundant, and its arguments almost a truism. At the same time, arguments can be made of their mutually dependent and real and potential positive relationship, expressed in traditional and new forms of (sustainable) tourism, including rural tourism and cultural tourism and their derivatives, such as ethnic and folk tourism, eco-tourism, and *yuanshengtai* or ecological

tourism. While benefits from tourism are often distributed unequally, rural tourism in its many forms can help local economies in alleviating poverty and improving local people's lives. Diversification of livelihoods through non-farm employment has been particularly successful through the government-promoted establishment of *nongjiale* tourism since the early 1990s. The increasing number of stakeholders in rural development based on tourism and cultural heritage, however, is a mixed blessing for local people. As we will see in the following chapters, it is remote ethnic minority peoples that have to confront these mostly externally imposed changes and opportunities that tourism and modernization bring with them and find ways to turn them into their favour.

Introduction

The discursive framework of nation-building is intimately linked with the recognition of minority, ethnic, and national culture and identity. It seems that only if we (officially) recognize a group's or individual's place in time and space can we value their cultural existence and historic development, and by extension, their cultural and historical legacy. This recognition can empower non-majority groups, such as ethnic, religious, or other minority groups, and can more effectively address and minimize conflict and contestation in a multi-ethnic setting. This has been true for many indigenous and ethnic cultures around the world, in particular in a post-colonial or post-war context, as new nation-states were (re-) defining their territorial, ethnic, and historic boundaries.

However, this transition was not always smooth and formerly suppressed, forgotten, or displaced communities or ethnic peoples suffered further discrimination and marginalization in the effort of nation-building and integration into a new 'imagined community'³⁸⁴ and nation: groups were being either voluntarily integrated to form a cultural 'whole' and become part of a new (multi-cultural/multi-ethnic, multi-national) society, or forcefully assimilated. In many state-building processes, however, it had become of vital importance to state cohesion to abstain from cultural chauvinism and to recognize and value cultural/ethnic identity to avoid division. This has often entailed that existing minority culture(s), in order to become part of – not necessarily equal with – the new national community, had to be bestowed with a new or re-created ethnic or cultural identity.

The preoccupation with culture and difference and classifying people is not a new, nor a Western phenomenon, but had become an important aspect of control for colonial powers all over the world.³⁸⁵ However, while colonial powers classified other cultures (indigenous, aboriginal), the new nation-states classified their own unique cultures, and while promoting integration, cohesion and unity, they often masked domination and difference. In China, the national project(s) of classification of the 20th century have been extremely complex and have had long-lasting effect on ethnic minority groups and their identification, their economic and social development, and their

³⁸⁴ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, 1983.

³⁸⁵ M. Rack, *Ethnic Distinctions, Local Meanings. Negotiating Cultural Identities in China*, London, Pluto Press, 2005.

sense of belonging, as well as on subsequent minority policies which are still being reviewed and revised.

In this chapter I will first introduce the ethnic classification project as it unfolded in China in the 20th century and how this classification impacted on minorities' identities as these were either reconfirmed or reconstructed in a political, cultural, and socio-economic environment of great change. I will then show how categorization and identity construction has played out on the ground by introducing the Bai minority of China's south-west Yunnan Province, who are also the ethnic group inhabiting the field site as discussed in the following chapters. The Bai have recently undergone great transformation and change which has variously affected their traditional life and ethnic identity, in particular in the face of touristic commodification of culture and a state discourse and ideology of modernization and development. In the last section I will give a brief account of a personal experience of 'celebrating being Bai'.

Ethnic Classification (minzu shibie) in China

Nowhere has classification of national cultures been more pronounced and masterfully executed than in China's effort to create a multi-national and multi-ethnic nation-state following the Communist victory and the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Often decried as one of the great colonizing missions of the 20th century, a huge 'self-Orientalizing' mission (to use Said's term, where the Orientalised turns on its own internal other), designed to homogenize and reify internal cultural differences, it is important to point out, however, that it was primarily an ethnographic enquiry.³⁸⁶ Over the millennia of China's history, the (often forceful) migration and settlement of peoples and military garrisons, and the conquering of kingdoms and tribes from beyond imperial China's borders, has ultimately made China's western borderlands its most culturally diverse region. Therefore, the importance of knowing, locating, and defining the non-Han other was central to rulers throughout China's long history for the same reasons as it was for the new Chinese communist regime, and great efforts were made to record their customs, cultures, and social life.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ N. Tapp, 'In Defence of the Archaic. Reconsideration of the 1950s Ethnic Classification Project in China', *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2002, pp. 63-84.

³⁸⁷ See, J.E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist. China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2007, Introduction.

Categorization of China's minority peoples was undertaken by both the Republican government (Sun Yatsen's 'Republic of Five Peoples') and the Nationalists (Chiang Kai-shek's, adoption of a one-race model (*Zhonghua minzu, guozu*)). While for the Communists of the 1920s and 1930s the nationalities question was, at first, a rather practical issue, it soon took on important strategical dimensions during the Long March (1934-1935) and they developed a more comprehensive model that included recognition and self-determination of China's diverse ethnic groups. In the early years of the new communist regime under Mao (1949-1976), the government began to undertake the large-scale project of categorization of all of its ethnic people (*minzu shibie* 民族识别). But these and earlier categorization projects were borne out of different circumstances and thus were approached in ways that resulted in entirely divergent outcomes. Ultimately, the PRC project of the early 1950s aimed at knowing the number and composition of China's minority people (largely situated on China's western borders) and giving them due representation in the National People's Congress as by the Election Law (1954) of the new Constitution. Only by systematically identifying and classifying its minority peoples could China become a 'cultural whole', and by administratively organizing them, they became part of its territorial and political unity, and therefore part of a 'Chinese' identity. In an attempt to identify and verify the minority groups, teams of scholars, officials, minority specialists and university students were sent all over the country to participate in a nation-wide ethnographic and linguistic survey.

This gargantuan effort has been well documented and researched by both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars and has attracted world-wide attention. Most of the publications make reference to Mao's adoption of Stalin's definition of nationality (*natsia*) and a Morgan-Engels social-evolutionary theory which are underpinned by categories of stages of human development (primitive, slave and feudal) as well as by common language, common territory, common economic life, and common culture. The categorization project has often been criticized for its crude and discriminatory Stalinist methodological approach, and was often read as 'merely an exercise in representation', rather than being recognized as the expression of the 'consciousness of subjects'.³⁸⁸ However, such critiques also forget that this was not only a national and 'nationalist', but more so a 'socialist' project, aimed at 'liberating' the nationalities.³⁸⁹

A recent study by Thomas Mullaney tries to rectify many of the misconceptions and generalizations and minutely points to a number of new findings: 1) the overall success and accuracy of the project; 2) the importance of the post-categorization work by the communist state, which is still ongoing; 3)

³⁸⁸ Tapp, 'In Defence of the Archaic ...'.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.; see also S. Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2001, p. 35.

a large consensus and agreement by the ethnic peoples themselves of their identification and categorization; 4) the exceptional performance and resourcefulness of the sent-out categorization teams.³⁹⁰ These later findings not only ‘set the record straight’, but they have great importance in any inquiry into the lives and economies of China’s ethnic peoples of the western borderlands today. As we will see in the following sections, and relevant for this study, issues of integration and assimilation, the (re-) creation of ethnic identities, and the acceptance or negotiation of ‘ethnicity’ and the *minzu* label, are still rooted in the earlier categorization project(s), but have gained new meanings within China’s drive for modernization and a contemporary discourse of national unity and diversity.

Effects of Categorization: Ethnic (Lack of) Consciousness, Assertion and Identity Construction

The ‘process of groping and theoretical uncertainty’³⁹¹ or ‘selective adaptation’³⁹² for researchers on the ground greatly affected identifications as there were no consistent or standard criteria and classifications varied case by case.³⁹³ The result was that often groups were ‘lumped’ together in one *minzu* (ethnic group)³⁹⁴, although they possessed distinct cultural and linguistic characteristics which were different from other groups. Here, the Yi ethnic group, the largest ethnic minority group in Yunnan province, comes to mind, where a large number of ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse ethnonymic groups have been assigned under it³⁹⁵; or the Yao, who have been primarily identified by way of their territorial remoteness (and resistance).³⁹⁶ Other ethnic groups have been listed as ‘undefined’ (*ren*), such as the Chuanqing of Zhijin County in Guizhou province, but are classified as a local ethnic group.³⁹⁷ Again other groups, such as the Aka, Ache, Chesu, or Sha, were left unrecognized. Most of these are found within one or another of the recognized *minzu*, while others are in the yet-to-be-classified (*wei shibie minzu*) category. Some ethnic groups that

³⁹⁰ T. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012.

³⁹¹ R.A. Litzinger, *Other Chinas: the Yao and the Politics of National Belonging*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2000, p. 9.

³⁹² The idea of selective adaptation – a theoretical frame work borrowed from the post-modern literary critic Stanley Fish - is that laws, regulations, and standards are open to interpretation and may be significantly reworked in the processes of transmission and implementation. See, P. Potter, *Law, Policy, and Practice on China’s Periphery: Selective Adaptation and Institutional Capacity*, London, Routledge, 2011.

³⁹³ Yang, ‘Central State, Local Governments, Ethnic Groups ...’..

³⁹⁴ The term *minzu* can be translated as ‘ethnic group’, or ‘ethnicity’, but has also been used in the sense of ‘nation’, ‘nationality’, or ‘people’.

³⁹⁵ The Yi ended up inheriting over thirty sub-groups to become the fourth largest minority group in China (Ibid., Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*, p. 112); this was also true for the Zhuang, where a heteronym was used as official ethnonym for the wide array of disparate groups in Yunnan, also to avoid complications of identification with their counterparts in Guizhou where they are recognized as Buyi;

³⁹⁶ Ibid., Litzinger, *Other Chinas*, p. 10.

³⁹⁷ X. Xu, ‘Developing China: Influence of “Ethnic Tourism”’, in Tan, Cheung, and Hui (eds.) *Tourism, Anthropology and China*, White Lotus Press: Bangkok, Thailand, 2001. To classify some ethnic groups as both ‘undefined’ as well as a special kind of local ethnic group with ethnic particularities was a consideration to exploit a potential tourism resource.

have traditionally been considered not so different from, for example the majority Han, such as the Hui or Zhuang, however, show many distinctions.³⁹⁸ In fact, the Hui, who are Muslim, are considered ethnically Han Chinese, and are the only minority that qualified for minority status by religion alone, rather than language or ethnic identification.³⁹⁹ And Shih also notes, ‘there is little evidence to suggest that the Tujia or Miao are any different from the Han’.⁴⁰⁰ Indeed, many cases of ‘mistaken’ identification exist, such as the Tujia or Daur (a sub group of the Manchu), as ‘culture’ was never considered a criterion for classification, in fact, it was ‘descent’ that was universally used.⁴⁰¹

Chinese ethnographers were well aware of the difficulty of matching identification with realities on the ground, that is, they fully recognized the constructed nature of ethnic identity, and they intended to shape that construction.⁴⁰² When Francis Hsu studied a local community in the Dali region in the early 1940s, which in fact was a Bai community, he wrote that they were so amalgamated with the Han, that the people ‘would be seriously offended’ if their Chinese origin were denied.⁴⁰³ Fitzgerald also noted, around the same time, that many travellers regarded them (the Bai) as an ‘absorbed people hardly to be distinguished from the Han’, but rejects this suggestion on grounds of their spoken language which is ‘wholly unlike the Chinese language’.⁴⁰⁴ However, while the differences between two groups of Han (from different regions) and that between a Han group and a minority group are perceived as *ethnic*, being Han does not include a self-perception of being ‘different’ from mainstream Chinese culture.⁴⁰⁵ Harrell, in his ground-breaking work *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China*, confirms this complexity and dynamics of inter-ethnic relationships, of how ethnic identity is formulated, perceived and promoted differently by different communities at different times.⁴⁰⁶ He notes, while processes of acculturation to the ‘Han way’ have accelerated in recent times through the spread of transport, communication, education and economic development,

³⁹⁸ K.P. Kaup, *Creating the Zhuang. Ethnic Politics in China*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000; S. McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism. Ethnic Revival in Southwest China*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2009.

³⁹⁹ See e.g., J. Goodman, ‘Yunnan’s Muslims: The Hui Minority in Southwest China, *GoKunming*, 25 November 2015, http://www.gokunming.com/en/blog/item/3601/yunnans_muslims_the_hui_minority_in_southwest_china, accessed, 27 November 2015. Yunnan’s Hui today number around 700,000, making them the seventh largest minority in the province. There are ten different Muslim minorities in China, numbering more than 23 million people, amongst them the most populous and important are the culturally Chinese Hui and the Turkic Uighurs. See C. Mackerras, ‘Muslim Minorities in China’, *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism*, 2015.

⁴⁰⁰ C. Shih, *Negotiating Ethnicity in China. Citizenship as a Response to the State*, London, Routledge, 2002.

⁴⁰¹ DYH Wu, ‘Chinese Minority Policy and the Meaning of Minority Culture: The Example of Bai in Yunnan, China, *Human Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 1, 1990, pp. 1-13.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, Wu, ‘Chinese Minority Policy ...’.

⁴⁰³ Cited in Mackerras, ‘Aspects of Bai Culture ...’.

⁴⁰⁴ Mackerras, ‘Aspects of Bai Culture...’.

⁴⁰⁵ DYH Wu, ‘The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities’, in S. Blum and L. Jensen (eds.) *China Off Centre. Mapping the Margins of the Middle Kingdom*, Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2002, pp. 167-184.

⁴⁰⁶ S. Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2001.

individual cases are more complex than a mere unidirectional process of acculturation, sinicization, or Hanification, but can go in a number of directions.⁴⁰⁷

Minzu Label and Ethnic Identity

All this goes to show that *minzu* is very much a state invention and construction and as such it is perceived as a fixed, stable and mutually exclusive category of identity, whereas *ethnic groups* are defined by their identity which, in contrast, is described as discursive, fluid and flexible. However, while these attributes are largely accepted, the politics of identity construction around this label is not so clear-cut - there is a kind of 'semantic confusion' about the term⁴⁰⁸ - and reveals ongoing negotiations between the state and society. As mentioned above, there are marked differences between ethnic groups and these have at times led to open political challenge and demands for greater autonomy, such as in Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang, while at other times ethnic activism was linked to merely exploit minority peoples' *minzu* status to obtain more rights to develop their own cultures and economies. In actual fact, the policies of positive ethnic discrimination led to a rush in the early 1980s to be (re-/back-) identified as belonging to a minority ethnic group – even by those that had previously denied their affinity with minority status and claimed Han identity. They could thus take advantage of the privileges granted to minority groups, such as extra points on university entrance exams, bilingual education for ethnic children, having more than one child, and other rights.⁴⁰⁹ As Shih comments, the government's view is that ethnicity should be protected but de-politised - also a point that Shepherd makes in regards to tourism and ethnic policy in Tibet (see previous chapter) - while protection means exclusively policy privileges.⁴¹⁰ Indeed, preferential policies for minority nationalities were the key to the project's success. This also shows the problematic of minority policy and practice as the state was trying to shore up legitimacy by granting autonomy and preferential rights to minorities while, at the same time, restricting them so as they would not pose a threat to the new regime.⁴¹¹ For the Bai people for example, it meant to adopt the state-granted label and treat it as 'something to be strategically deployed and represented', in particular as their ethnicity was regarded as 'solid foundation on which to base the development of tourism, an alternative way to achieve modernity'.⁴¹² Therefore,

⁴⁰⁷ Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, p. 263.

⁴⁰⁸ Cited in J. Leibold, 'Ethnic Policy in China: Is Reform Inevitable?', *Policy Studies* 68, Honolulu, East West Centre,, 2013.

⁴⁰⁹ See for example, N. Tapp, 'Yunnan: Ethnicity and Economies—Markets and Mobility, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2010, pp. 97-110. Here Tapp cites, between 1964 and 1982 minority population increased by 68.6 per cent, as opposed to 43.8 per cent for the Han (Aird 1983; Hsu 1993), and also increased from 67 million in 1982 to 91 million by 1990;

⁴¹⁰ Shih, *Negotiating Ethnicity*, Chapter 5.

⁴¹¹ Potter, *Law, Policy and Practice at China's Periphery ...*.

⁴¹² Z. Bai, 'Ethnic Identities under the Tourist Gaze', *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2007, pp. 245-259.

to become a member of a newly assigned *minzu* was not only an identification process for one's own group and *ipso facto* becoming a member of the larger Chinese nationality family, but it also had the effect of deeply changing Chinese society.

In creating the *minzu* label, Mullaney points out the crucial importance and significance assigned to the post-project or post-classification work by the CCP, in particular relating to issues of autonomy and administration, (bi-lingual) education, health, and other preferential treatment, as well as the notion of equality and the fight against 'big Han chauvinism' (*dahan zhuyi*), without which the project could not have succeeded. Pivotal here were the experiences and expertise of local elites who were previously trained in ethnology, politics, linguistics, history, and cultural studies to carry out the project. Their recruitment was also beneficial as they could now reflect both on their own status and identity as a member of a minority group, as well as what it meant to be 'Chinese', in Litzinger's words, 'a new way of seeing themselves in the world'.⁴¹³ In retrospect, Mullaney concludes, the project was very successful and helped to integrate China's large numbers of minority peoples into the new Chinese nation-state so as to become a 'unitary multi-national state' (*tongyi de duominzu guojia*). While the 'nationalities question' (*minzu wenti*) has not been entirely resolved and is considered an ongoing project, many argue (and hope) that this will be less and less of concern in the future as new generations are born into the *minzu* label.⁴¹⁴ As well, as Shih argues of the Tujia and Miao ethnic group of Yongshuen County, there is a lack of a conscious discourse of ethnicity, and the ethnic label means more to visitors than the locals themselves.⁴¹⁵ Today, the categorization has been so deeply internalised, accepted and even favoured by both ethnic peoples and the majority Han, that, with the exception of Tibet and Xinjiang province, few question it or would consider themselves anything different than what they have been classified as. Above all, they all consider themselves to be Chinese.⁴¹⁶

On Being Chinese

Over the long course of its history, China - itself a difficult concept or a 'misconception' as it has always been defined by people, rather than by territory (all under heaven *tianxia*) - and the sense of 'Chinese-ness' have often changed as identity and place were far more fluid than today.⁴¹⁷ The question of what it means to be Chinese, to have a Chinese identity, national, cultural, ethnic or

⁴¹³ Litzinger, *Other Chinas*, p. 6.

⁴¹⁴ Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*.

⁴¹⁵ Shih, 'Clan Confucianism in Tujia-Miao Yongshuen, Western Hunan', in C. Shi, *Negotiating Ethnicity in China*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, pp.78-98.

⁴¹⁶ MySurvey, 2011/2012.

⁴¹⁷ G. Wang, *The Chineseness of China*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 2.

otherwise, had again resurfaced with the 20th century creation of China as a multi-national and multi-ethnic nation-state. Consequently, there was a need to reflect on the (collective) ethnic identity of the Han as the nationally recognized majority *minzu*. As Joniak-Luthi reminds us, while a unitary Han identity - a coherent, historically constituted community originating from one ancestor, the legendary Yellow Emperor - has persistently been promoted and favoured by 20th century governments as a handy political category for nation- and state making projects, its perceived homogeneity, however, is met by powerful fragmented local identities related to native place, occupation and family histories persist. ⁴¹⁸

Recent anthropological studies of China's ethnic groups by notable foreign scholars such as Gladney, Harrell, Schein, Tapp, Oakes, and others, studies that often take post-modern perspectives, also challenge the notion of a bounded and homogenous Chinese culture. Instead, they see its diversity, distinction and difference, and the important part this has been playing in defining the national self. Indeed, Wu contends, the essentialist and essentialized view of a uniform Han-exclusive China is a fiction, and its claim of a superior culture is, at best, a myth. ⁴¹⁹ This 'self-identification' has been important for all who see themselves as Chinese (*zhongguo ren*), that is all of China's ethnic groups (*zhonghua minzu*), including the Han majority, and also including the Chinese diaspora and 'overseas Chinese' (*huaqiao*). ⁴²⁰ That is, the state seeks to maintain a collective national/spatial Self as part of a single, unified, yet multi-ethnic Chinese nation/race. ⁴²¹ However, it is not the 'Self (hood)', but a shared national culture consisting of common symbols, myths, practices, and norms, that bonds the nation together, that gives it its legitimacy and identity, and which is inseparable from the idea of the nation and nation-building. ⁴²²

Minorities and the State: Minority in Public and State Discourse

Presently, China's official policy on minorities is premised on preserving and developing the cultures of ethnic minorities, regional autonomy ⁴²³, and adherence to unity and equality amongst all

⁴¹⁸ A. Joniak-Luthi, 'The Han *Minzu*, Fragmented Identities and Ethnicity', the *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 72, No. 4, 2013, pp. 849-871.

⁴¹⁹ Wu, 'The Construction of Chinese and non-Chinese Identities'.

⁴²⁰ Wu, 'The Construction of Chinese and non-Chinese Identities'; these terms are much more complex and are necessarily qualified in the written and spoken word by the Chinese themselves as they render such (recent and ancient) distinctions as *zhonghua ren*, *hua ren*, *zhonghua minzu*, *huaqiao*, *han ren*, *hua xia*, *zhongguo*, etc. which qualify cultural, ethnic, racial, and national differences.

⁴²¹ J. Leibold, 'Ethnicity and the Chinese Internet: Escape from Reality?', *China Policy Institute: Analysis*, n.d., www.cpianalysis.org, accessed 27 July 2016.

⁴²² McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism*, p.21.

⁴²³ In 1984, the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy* was adopted, which outlines the basic principles that guide regional autonomy, such as self-governance to exercise autonomy in areas where the ethnic minority population was concentrated. The head of a minority autonomous region must be a member of the relevant ethnic minority group, and the deputies from ethnic minority groups are elected to the National People's Congress.

ethnic groups. Included in these categories are, for example, ethnic identification and a series of preferential policies, including representation in local people's congress and participation in state affairs (aggressive cultivation of minority cadres); further, family planning and birth quota, access to education and employment, and special assistance in the form of finance, banking, tax to help economic development and poverty alleviation; seeking international trade relations and investment and other border trade opportunities; freedom of religious belief, development of their written and spoken language, preserving the culture and folkways, including traditional ethnic sports and traditional ethnic medicine. The government stance on its minority policies is that the policies have proven successful over the last fifty years and that 'China has blazed a correct way for handling ethnic problems and realizing the common prosperity of the various ethnic groups in conformity with China's reality'.⁴²⁴

In the past, China's ethnic people of the west and south-west were marked as poor (*qiong* 穷), backward (*luohou* 落后), and uncivilized (*mei you wenming/suzhi* 没有文明素质), but ever since tourism arrived in the late 1980s in these often remote ethnic borderlands, minority people have become appreciated as a colourful and exotic people who love singing and dancing. Increasingly, the 'stigma of ethnicity' has been turned into a discourse of 'ethnic capital' that includes minorities in the new socialist-capitalist economy, and which gives vigour to the nationalist cause of minority unity (*minzu tuanjie* 民族团结) and a multi-ethnic united Chinese nation (*duominzu guojia* 多民族国家). While only in the recent past ethnic customs and traditions were banned, they are now being 'championed as locally productive forces (technologies) of social order' as long as they do not threaten state ideology.⁴²⁵ Since the reform and opening up, the Chinese government has thus been actively guiding, supporting, and promoting minority cultural revival, to the extent of becoming 'a patron, curator and consumer' of minority culture and its institutions.⁴²⁶

However, inconsistency and arbitrariness in the state's decision-making processes to support or crack-down on certain traditions, such as religious vs cultural revival, have been common, and as Susan McCarthy notes, it seems that (state-sanctioned) minority cultural revival will support those 'who posit a less antagonistic, more interactive and mutually beneficial model of state-society relations'.⁴²⁷ While there is no doubt that state support for minority cultural revival has been benefiting ethnic peoples' lives in many ways, critiques also echo from many sides. These include

⁴²⁴ 'National Minorities Policy and Its Practice in China'. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, September 1999, Beijing.

⁴²⁵ Litzinger, *Other Chinas*, pp. 228-229.

⁴²⁶ McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism*.

⁴²⁷ S. McCarthy, 'Gods of Wealth, Temples of Prosperity: Party-State Participation in the Minority Cultural Revival', *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2004, pp. 28-52.

critique of unfulfilled and false promises; misguided policies and practices such as the selective appropriation and (over) commercialization of minority culture and heritage; unequal access to natural, cultural, political and social resources; unequal distribution of social and economic benefits; and exclusion from participation and decision-making processes in the development of their economies.⁴²⁸ Therefore, this minority ‘cultural fever’ (*shaoshu minzu wenhuare* 少数民族文化热) raises many questions and elicits many theories and hypotheses regarding the Chinese nation-state and national identity and the relationship between minorities and the party-state.

While the visually stunning imagery of 56 unified and harmonious ethnic groups performing at the 2008 Olympics may ‘fool’ an international audience, many critics inside China argue that the policies - the so-called ‘first-generation’ ethnic policies⁴²⁹ - are out-of-date or have failed (Ai Weiwei), and through misguided but well-intended policies, the party-state has created two Chinas, a Han China and a Minority China.⁴³⁰ Scholars, such as Ma Rong and Hu Angang, instead call for ‘second generation ethnic policies’ which attenuate ethnic identity and strengthen a single and shared national identity.⁴³¹ However, today, and under the 5th generation leadership of Xi Jinping, neither model alone seems adequate, and instead, a hybrid model which can maintain a dynamic balance between unity and diversity, seems to have been adopted, one which also calls for the promotion of five kinds of identification among ethnic minorities to realise the ‘Chinese Dream’.⁴³² The ‘ethnic minority question’, however, remains in many ways just that, a ‘question’, mainly due to its sensitivity and the ‘*minzu* establishments’ - the institutions and individuals with close ties to the vast ethnic bureaucracy - reluctance to change. Importantly, ethnic minorities are part of the new imaginings of the new nation and state and therefore their status within the nation is a politically significant index of modernity.⁴³³

⁴²⁸ See for example, Ilham Tohti interview with VoA, November 2013, *China Change* (web blog), 15 January 2016, <https://chinachange.org/2016/01/15/voa-interview-with-uyghur-professor-ilham-tohti-in-2013/>, accessed 10 June 2016. See also, e.g. Ilham Tohti, ‘Present-Day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region: Overview and Recommendations’, translation in eight instalments from April 22 – May 19, 2015, *China Change* (web blog),? . This incomplete first-draft document was written in response to a 2011 request from high-level officials in the Chinese government and has since been censored. Ilham Tohti was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2014 on charges of separatism.

⁴²⁹ Leibold, ‘Ethnic Policy in China ...’, p. 31.

⁴³⁰ W. Jia, ‘The Current Status of Ethnic Policy in China’, *China Policy Institute: Analysis*, n.d., www.cpianalysis.org, accessed 27 July 2016.

⁴³¹ Ibid., Leibold, ‘Ethnic Policy in China ...’, p. 31.

⁴³² Ibid., Jia, ‘The Current Status of Ethnic Policy in China’.

⁴³³ Litzinger, *Other Chinas*.

With this overview of ethnic minority policy and identity in hand, we now turn our attention to the Bai minority which in many ways, as we will see, exemplify a ‘model’ minority in the new Chinese socialist advanced economy.

Creating the Bai: A Story with a Twist

Yunnan province is the most culturally diverse province in China with twenty-five of the fifty-six minority groups residing there. The Bai, or *baizu* (白族), constitute the second largest minority group in Yunnan with a population of more than 1.8 million and mainly inhabit the northwest of Yunnan in the Dali Bai Autonomous Region (*Dali Bai zizhizhou* 大理白族自治州), but are also found in Sichuan and Guizhou. Before they were accorded the Bai *minzu* status in 1956, they were known by other names, such as Minjia, Baizi, Baiwazi, Baini and Baihuo, while there were also other terms such as Boren, Puzu, Poren and Bairen in ancient times. The term Minjia which means ‘commoner’ or ‘civilian household’ was used by the ethnic Han Chinese, while immigrant Han were known as Junjia, or service men, who mostly came from the military garrison of Nanking. The Bai have also been variously classified as Karen, Shan, or as Baiyi or ethnic Thai, however they have long identified themselves as Han. Indeed, rejecting one’s ethnicity but claiming Han (Chinese) ethnicity has been common among some of the more acculturated minorities and tribes.

The ethnogenesis and ethnohistory of the Bai has always been debated, except for the fact that the Bai have long been highly acculturated and assimilated to the Han, more than many other Chinese *minzu*, in particular their cultural practices (religion, customs, etiquette, values) were believed to be very similar.⁴³⁴ This assumption of a highly acculturated (Sinicised/ Hanised) people is partly founded in the history of the Bai, which goes back to the highly developed civilizations of the Nanzhao (7th – 9th century) and Dali Kingdoms (9th – 13th century) that were strongly influenced by the Chinese courts. While the region was remote and independent, it was never fully cut off from political, economic, and cultural influences from the rest of China. The spread of Confucianism to the Dali area, the adoption of the Chinese writing system by the ruling elite, and the influence in

⁴³⁴ The works of Francis Hsu and C.P. Fitzgerald are invaluable anthropological literature as their ethnographic accounts depict the life and society of the Chinese and ethnic peoples of the Dali region of the 1930s and 1940s. See, C.P. Fitzgerald, *The Tower of Five Glories: a Study of the Min Chia of Ta Li, Yunnan*, London, Cresset, 1941; and F.L.K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestor’s Shadow*, New York, Doubleday, 1967.

musical styles testify to this persistent cultural exchange which also entailed a more comprehensive expansion of classical Chinese cultural practice and institutions.⁴³⁵

However, many of the practices and characteristics believed to be ‘Chinese’ (by Hsu), including ancestor worship, Bai house style, and religious folk festivals, have recently been ‘re-assigned’ to the Bai as cultural markers for tourism consumption.⁴³⁶ Interestingly, some of the practices did not even exist before and Wu found the Bai in the villages he surveyed had never heard of what are today the most characteristic of these practices, the benzhu worship or the torch festival.⁴³⁷ But while the Bai people were highly syncretic and freely embraced a variety of ‘religious’ practices, it was the practice of benzhu worship that determined the classification of the minjia to become a separate Bai minzu. The issue of Bai identity is complex, and the ‘Bainess’ of the Bai has always been ambiguous and paradoxical as its (new) identity is rooted more in the recent past of civilizational and economic achievement and a fundamental ‘Chineseness’.⁴³⁸ Therefore, due to their historical position the minjia only showed weak ethnic or minority consciousness.⁴³⁹

The most distinguishable and characteristic feature between the Han and the Bai as identified by themselves is their language.⁴⁴⁰ It is also one of the main characteristics of Bai-ness they want to preserve.⁴⁴¹ Until recently, the Bai did not have their own script but used Chinese characters to write and pronounce in Bai.⁴⁴² The promotion of bilingual education by the government (as part of the Law on Nationality Autonomy in 1984⁴⁴³) resulted in some experimental language projects in the region, such as the establishment of Bai-Han bilingual primary schools in Jianchuan County and elsewhere in Yunnan and in other ethnic provinces, such as Guizhou.⁴⁴⁴ As with the Bai genealogy there are debates about the belonging of the Bai language, whether it is Bai, Sinitic, or part of the Yi Tibeto-Burman language family, while others relate it closer to Han origin as Bai has many

⁴³⁵ McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism*, pp. 62-63. In particular during the Qing dynasty, following the integration of Yunnan into the Chinese state, neo-Confucian norms, including kinship and marriage practices, life-cycle and rituals, and education, were expected to be embraced by the local ethnic population (S.D. White)

⁴³⁶ Wu, ‘Chinese Minority Policy...’.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., Wu, ‘Chinese Minority Policy...’.

⁴³⁸ McCarthy, *Communist multiculturalism*.

⁴³⁹ Wu, ‘Chinese Minority Policy...’; McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism...’*.

⁴⁴⁰ MySurvey, 2012; see also Wu, ‘Chinese Minority Policy...’;

⁴⁴¹ MySurvey, 2011/2012.

⁴⁴² Some scholars suggest that because the Bai people have always been in close contact with the Han people there was no need for a Bai script. In the late 1950s scholars at the Institute of Linguistics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing developed a phonetic writing system for the Bai language based on the Roman alphabet. In McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism...’*;

⁴⁴³ Herein in article 37 it says, schools in predominantly minority areas ‘should, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use these languages as the media of instruction’ (cited in S. McCarthy)

⁴⁴⁴ See e.g. SIL International, <http://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/directory/sil-international/> Here local children are being taught in their mother language (Bai) in the lower grades, with Mandarin being slowly introduced in higher grades.

loanwords from Chinese.⁴⁴⁵ In general the Bai are bi-lingual, speaking their local Bai dialect and lingua franca Mandarin which is pronounced in a local way, and both Bai and non-Bai recognize this as a strong characteristic of Bai identity.⁴⁴⁶ If the Bai language is the most distinguishing cultural trait of the Bai-Han relationship, it is also important to point out the close link of language and identity and look closely into government policies of mono/bi-lingual education in ethnic regions.⁴⁴⁷ In this regard, in an interview to Voice of America Ilham Tohti, an Uighur economics professor at the Minzu University in Beijing and foremost Uighur public intellectual, expressed his concern about many of the preferential policies, including the so-called bilingual education carried out in Xinjiang, saying ‘it is really an education aimed at assimilation into Han culture’, and ‘... bilingual education is in reality not what it sounds like. Many Uighur children can’t understand Uighur, and they can’t really understand Mandarin Chinese either’.⁴⁴⁸ In general, the national education system does not sufficiently cover ethnic culture and bilingual education, let alone the meaningful transmission of ethnic minority cultural heritage.⁴⁴⁹

Interestingly, while the Bai have become a distinct ethnic minority, living in China’s borderlands, and could therefore have been categorized as primitive and backward by proxy, their perceived status as an advanced (*fada*) culture with close ties to the more advanced Han Chinese (at least since the Dali Kingdom (937-1094)) does not impinge on domestic visitors’ expectation of experiencing the ‘other’ and partaking in performing the ‘other’. They are a minority people, that is, they are non-Han, and therefore they are the ‘Other’. It would seem then, that there are no ‘levels’ of being ethnic. Zhihong Bai, however, draws attention to local people’s memories and their internal classification and differentiations to contrast the officially promoted version of Bai identity, their narrations adding complexity to the Han-Bai division/distinction and shaping various degrees

⁴⁴⁵ See for example, J.A. Matisoff, ‘On the Genetic Position of Bai within Tibeto-Burman’, 34th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Kunming, China. Further, S.A. Starostin, ‘The Historical Position of Bai’, both papers downloaded from <http://www.ethnic-china.com/Bai/baiindex.htm> downloaded, 14 January 2014. Fitzgerald (cited in Wu), for example, suggests that in spite of the language difference, the Bai (*Minjia*) peoples’ claim to Chinese ethnicity was genuine as they believed their distinct language was just another Chinese dialect, that is, the Bai had not realised that their dialect was indeed a distinct language.

⁴⁴⁶ Z. Bai, ‘The Camera in ‘Native’ Hands: the Making of Ethnicity in a Temple Video’, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2008, pp. 309-319; it is common that in social interactions the speech begins with Bai and ends in lingua franca Mandarin or vice versa.

⁴⁴⁷ See, for example, the term paper by Pricilla Hsu, ‘Bai and Bilingual: Improving Academic Achievement through Bilingual and Multicultural Education’, SIT (Study Abroad) 2011, whose research was conducted in Shaxi, Shilong, and Jianchuan. The Bai language revival is not without its opponents both from the government/officials’ side as well as from ordinary people: government officials cite since the Bai have long been well integrated into Chinese society and culture, Bai education is pointless and a step back and also diverts necessary funds for other educational programs, such as compulsory education and the eradication of illiteracy (saomang) etc., while ordinary people feel that it holds back their children to get ahead and enhance their prospects of work and study;

⁴⁴⁸ Ilham Tohti, ‘Present-Day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region ...’;

⁴⁴⁹ C. Xi, Li Qin, and Zhang Yinzhu, ‘Ethnic Cultural Identity Crisis and Its Adaptation -Taking Blang Ethnic Group in Yunnan Province as an Example’, ICPM-2012. Crisis Management in the Time of Changing World, Atlantis Press.

of Bai-ness.⁴⁵⁰ Wu, makes an interesting observation about minority peoples (in the context of decolonization) who consciously attempt to create new ethnic identities that differ from that of the colonizers but are powerless to achieve this as they have long been acculturated. The creation of the Bai label provides a ‘twist’ to that story as the dominant group/colonizer (Han) ‘rediscovers’ the already assimilated minority and attempts to assign it a separate identity. Therefore, the minority group (Bai) is trying to re-establish its cultural identity while its cultural characteristics are little different from those of the dominant group (Han). The Bai are now accepting their reinvented indigenous identity by perpetuating and performing the cultural traditions that they accepted from the Han (colonizer) in the past.⁴⁵¹ That is, the trade-off to maintain *minzu* status and a subjective ethnic identity is a separate ‘cultural’ existence.⁴⁵² Cultural traditions have thus become the battlegrounds where conflicts between the state, market forces, and intellectuals in search of an authentic China play out.⁴⁵³

Becoming Bai, Performing minzu

As a newly created ‘*minzu*’, the Bai have had a ‘textbook’ modernization and development where both the government and the Bai people were active in re-inventing, ‘recycling’ and re-instituting cultural traditions and practices. In particular they revived religious festivals, re-worked song and dance performances, and they restored, built, and re-built temples and other vernacular buildings and spaces and successfully marketed them to a newly cashed-up mostly domestic urban audience in search of the traditional, exotic, and their cultural ‘Other’.⁴⁵⁴ In particular, the long history of the Bai as descendants of the independent Nanzhao kingdom has found popular resurgence in both a cultural and political sense. Both government and ethnic elites played on Bai people’s nostalgia and pride by emphasising their glorious historical roots and providing a romantic-historical narrative. Further, as the Dali-Erhai region has been a major thoroughfare for caravans on the Ancient Tea Horse Road heading north to Lijiang and beyond, it has also produced important merchants and businesses which is reflected in the grandness of the architecture in many of their villages. For

⁴⁵⁰ Z. Bai, *Making a Difference. Bai Identity Construction in Dali*. Social Sciences Academic Press, 2009, p. 98. The Bai themselves also distinguish between ‘authentic’ Bai and *jiaguobe* (‘Bai from the extended Bai bones’), with the latter to have become Bai by marrying into Bai families, or outrightly declaring them Han or Hanised locals and less Bai. In some Han-dominated villages, some descendants of Han immigrants do not want to identify with the Bai label, although their wives and children are Bai, and do not want to speak Bai, therefore the use of Bai spoken language can be a marker to resist indigenisation and to negotiate Han and Bai identities, p. 126.

⁴⁵¹ Wu, ‘Chinese Minority Policy ...’.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ka-Ming Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition. The Cultural Politics of Late Socialism*, University of Illinois Press, 2015 (Book review).

⁴⁵⁴ For more information on the Bai in the new era of revival in the Dali region, see Notar, *Displacing Desire*.

example, Xizhou had been an important merchant village and people there and neighbouring villages have long been engaged in commercial ethnic craft production (drapery, dying, weaving) which has become a major tourism attraction.⁴⁵⁵ Bai people's rich business experience, knowledge and wisdom from the past have come to be realized as an important traditional cultural heritage which has been used in the contemporary context of local and global socio-economic and cultural change.⁴⁵⁶ Bai business people are praised for their innovation and adaption to the new circumstances, in particular as 'they understood the conceptual difference between tourism products and practical daily products'. They also adapted well to the role change from farmers to village businessmen and were not afraid to take risks and track new business opportunities.⁴⁵⁷ Notar, in particular, has written about the skill of ethnic village women around the Dali area, who masterfully adapted to the changing circumstances of (national and transnational) tourism in Dali by 'authenticating' their products (souvenirs) as 'Bai' and 'local', but which are mostly (cheap) re-productions and increasingly produced elsewhere.⁴⁵⁸ In a similar way, ethnic business women and businessmen in Lijiang and Shangri-la are drawing on these historical resources for contemporary opportunities by proudly invoking the rich experiences (business sense, wisdom, and ethics) of their ancestors.⁴⁵⁹

The new ethnic markers, now vigorously promoted by the state and people have given rise to an 'imagined community' (or an 'artificial culture'⁴⁶⁰), the Bai, and along with it a new consciousness to participate in the economic and socialist modernization of the nation.⁴⁶¹ Increasing touristification of the last decades has resulted in the crafting of a highly constructed Bai identity and Bai ethnic consciousness through the re-invention and reification of Bai history and cultural heritage. As Bai observes, as ethnic people have learned to 'act ethnically upon their *minzu* label', this self-reflexive symbolic activity of cultural politics is reflected in how the Bai strategically use the state-granted label while still maintaining their subjectivity.⁴⁶² However, note must be taken that

⁴⁵⁵ The Bai people's dyeing technique (*zharan*) has over 1500 years of history. Already before 1949, seventy percent of local households were involved in weaving, dyeing, and selling clothes.

⁴⁵⁶ X. Yang and A. Smart, 'Changing Economy and Urbanization in a Chinese Ethnic Minority Village. The Case of the Bai People in Xizhou, Yunnan Province', in Zai Liang et al. (eds.) *The Emergence of a New Urban China: Insiders' Perspectives*, Chapter 6, Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, UK, 2012.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., Yang and Smart, 'Changing Economy and Urbanization...'

⁴⁵⁸ B. Notar, 'Authenticity Anxiety and Counterfeit Confidence: Outsourcing Souvenirs, Changing Money, and Narrating Value in Reform-Era China', *Modern China*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2006, pp. 64-98. See also, B. Notar, 'Producing Cosmopolitanism at the Borderlands: Lonely Planeteers and "Local" Cosmopolitans in Southwest China', *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 3, 2008, pp.615-650.

⁴⁵⁹ E.g., business women in Lijiang, or Arrah Khampa owner in Shangri-La, MyInterview, September 2014. See also P. Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom*, Yunnan Publishing Group Corporation, Yunnan People's Publishing House, 2007 (London, John Murray, 1955).

⁴⁶⁰ Wu, 'Chinese Minority Policy ...';

⁴⁶¹ McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism*.

⁴⁶² Bai, 'Ethnic Identities under the Tourist Gaze'.

a Bai ethnic consciousness, or even a Bai ‘touristic’ consciousness as is apparent in Dali, may be very different in different parts of Yunnan, in particular in those areas that are far away from tourism and where poverty and relative isolation persist. In real terms the relative underdevelopment or backwardness of the Bai economy (outside of Dali) contrasts sharply with the popular view of a relatively advanced ethnic group and questions the interrelationship of ‘cultural quality’ (*suzhi*) and economic development and modernization.⁴⁶³ That is, the Bai can only be considered ‘advanced’ in relation to the more backward minorities, but by any account still lag far behind the Han.

The popularity of the new Bai *minzu* label and its new and re-created ethnic cultural traditions and performances soon far outgrew the local and regional and has become a recognizable brand advertised in tourism brochures world-wide.⁴⁶⁴ While a few other minorities, such as the Dai, Nosuo or Miao underwent similar developments of ‘constructed’ popularity, the Bai were largely promoted on the grounds of their advanced economic and civilizational achievements, rather than ‘exoticism’.⁴⁶⁵ This follows a continuum of assimilation and difference in Chinese thinking about minorities (exotic/assimilated, docile/restive, civilized/barbarian) and the ideal of a ‘model minority’, one that is exotic, docile, and feminine, but which overlooks how minorities see themselves and how they are often perceived in popular discourse.⁴⁶⁶ The Dali Bai cultural and economic development was so successful that Dali earned the title of ‘culturally progressive city’ (*wenhua xianjin chengshi*) by the provincial government in 1997, and their major cultural fair (*san yue jie*)⁴⁶⁷ was praised as a model of ‘minority nationality economics’ (*minzu jingji*) and ‘nationalities unity’ (*minzu tuanjie*), therefore also showing state support for Bai history and culture.⁴⁶⁸

In contrast, Liu has noted with members of the Wa tribe in south-west Yunnan, some ethnic minority groups, or parts of their culture, have become too ‘unexotic’ and ‘undefinable’ as the

⁴⁶³ McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism*, p. 105.

⁴⁶⁴ These include their beautiful costumes, three-course tea (*sandaocha* 三道茶), their distinct singing, dancing and religious practices, and living in a beautiful and fertile landscape between mountains and lakes, which has been the source for their prosperity and advanced culture for millennia.

⁴⁶⁵ The Naxi of Lijiang carved out a place as ‘relatively advanced’ (compared to other minorities at least) in the socialist modernity, due to being a ‘literate’ nationality based on their Dongba script. See, S.D. White, ‘The Political Economy of Ethnicity in Yunnan’s Lijiang Basin’, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 142-158.

⁴⁶⁶ McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism*, p. 12.

⁴⁶⁷ The Third Month Fair (*san yue jie*, 三月街) is a cultural and commercial event dating back to the Tang dynasty, where thousands of people, among them many different ethnic peoples of the region, participate and buy and sell ethnic products (*minzu pin*), socialise and race horses.

⁴⁶⁸ McCarthy, ‘Gods of Wealth...; and Notar, *Displacing Desire ...*

particular *minzu* they belong to.⁴⁶⁹ As more and more ethnic peoples wear modern clothes and their cultural practices have become diluted through intermarriage or migration, they are now excluded as ‘objects’ both of cultural heritage creation and tourism commodification. Xi et al. note, as elsewhere in the world, increasing multi-cultural, non-native intrusion, as well as urbanization and globalization deeply affect the way of life of minority peoples, and the Bulang, a small minority by number, greatly lack ethnic subjective consciousness and already suffer from ‘culture shock’ and face a serious crisis of cultural identity.⁴⁷⁰ This ethnic-cultural distance, or lack of ethnic distinction, is likely to be perceived as ‘non-authentic’, and is often aggravated by spatial distance (close, but separate village) from the ‘authentic’ centre, and these minorities are therefore often excluded. This ‘fencing off’ is often overcome by crossing (village, regional) boundaries and staking out a space in the ‘authentic’ centre, including taking on the other identity to gain access to economic benefits.⁴⁷¹ Taking on another ethnic group’s identity can be observed in different ways, in particular in song and dance performances, photo opportunities with tourists, souvenir and food hawkers, and more, and the borrowed or ‘performed’ identity does not usually cause problems with the ‘authentic’ group. In the author’s research site, the local women dance group habitually changed in and out of the local Bai costume, using Yi, Lisu, or Naxi costumes, which is about offering a greater variety in appearance and music, and, when asked, more to their own enjoyment than for the tourists (as these wouldn’t be able to tell the difference). In any case, in a presumed post-modern world this does not constitute a problem as many tourists today are in search of inauthenticity.

Therefore, Bai successful ethnic assertion in tourism development and commodification, the selective exclusion of Wa ‘inauthenticity’, and the identity crisis of the Blang minority show that the tourismification of ethnicity is far from an even ‘deal’.

Asserting ethnic identity through performance

China is a multi-ethnic country, and each minority has its specific traditional festivals which are always accompanied by cultural activities, in particular song and dance performances. They are the most popular expressions of their ethnic identity and distinctive markers of their *minzu* category. The performances are organized and officially encouraged by the local branches of the cultural

⁴⁶⁹ Tzu-kai Liu, ‘Reconstructing Cultural Heritage and Imagining Wa Primitiveness in the China/Myanmar Borderlands’, in T. Blumenfield and H. Silverman (eds.) *Cultural Heritage Politics in China*, New York, Springer, 2013, pp. 161-184.

⁴⁷⁰ Xi, Li, and Zhang, ‘Ethnic Cultural Identity Crisis ...’.

⁴⁷¹ J. Chio, ‘Good Fences Make Good Neighbours: Claiming Heritage in the Longji Terraced Fields Scenic Area’, in T. Blumenfield and H. Silverman (eds.) *Cultural Heritage Politics in China*, Springer: New York, 2013, pp. 143-159.

departments through participating in festivals, tourist and official performances, competitions and awards, while selected professional, government-sponsored dance troupes and individual artists are also widely promoted in the national and international media. The government cultural departments are deeply involved in the production of these ‘mass cultural activities’ and organize meetings beforehand to discuss the plans and activities, hold training workshops for amateur ‘mass culture activists’, and supply singing and performing material, and more.⁴⁷²



FIGURE 7: BAI DANCERS IN SHAXI MARKET PLACE

Often, the music and dance sequences have been reworked and modernized both for the performers own enjoyment and for tourist consumption, responding to the false assumption that some traditional ethnic themes, songs, and dance (sequences) are too backward and too unattractive for modern-day China. Similarly, when presenting traditional rituals as cultural heritage they have been ‘cleared of the stubborn and sticky stigma of ‘backwardness’, which render them unfit for secular, urbanized and capitalist societies’.⁴⁷³ This ‘cleansing’ applied in particular to religious rituals, but (socialist) policies about marriage and pre-marriage have also affected folk music. In the 1980s, for example, information about ‘Erotic Music Activity’ (EMA) became available, re-iterated by Chinese scholar Yang Mu in his 1998 article in *Ethnomusicology* ‘Erotic Music Activity in Multi-

⁴⁷² Bai Liu, *Cultural Policy in the People’s Republic of China. Letting a Hundred Flowers Blossom*, UNESCO, Paris, France, 1983. This document is one of a series published by UNESCO that gives information on cultural policy planning and implementation in various Member States. These policies were framed in the early ‘reform and opening up period’ at the time of socialist modernization under guiding principles that were aiming for high material and cultural development. However, many of the (socialist) cultural principles and guiding rules still apply today and are visible in the organization of the political structure and hierarchy, such as today’s cultural bureau and departments.

⁴⁷³ C. Brosius and K.M.Polit (eds.), *Ritual, Heritage and Identity. The Politics of Culture and Performance in a Globalised World*, New Delhi, Routledge, 2011, Introduction.

Ethnic China', which he defined as 'vocal or instrumental music whose purposes and goals are lovemaking or marriage'.⁴⁷⁴ Traditional music anywhere in the world, to a great part, is based on these themes, and in China, as in many other countries governments often take control of the organization of festivals to regulate what they consider immoral or unwanted behaviour. The Third Month Festival (*san yue jie* 三月街), the biggest annual fair of the Bai minority in Dali, as well as the afore-mentioned Shibaoshan Bai Singing Festival (石宝山歌会) are examples of this.⁴⁷⁵ Paradoxically, at the same time, a gendered view of and approach in tourism development in China's minority areas meant that minority women (performers) from, for example, the Dai or Mosuo minority, were increasingly sexualised, orientalised and exploited on account of their 'exotic' traditions (walking marriage, Dai bathing ritual, sexing up of traditional costumes) by both cultural producers (government, tourism enterprise) and cultural consumers (tourists).⁴⁷⁶ Or as Hillman put it, 'the sensuality, sexuality and assumed 'looseness' of minority women is splashed across travel promotion literature and television programs about areas such as Yunnan and Guizhou Provinces'.⁴⁷⁷ While this 'exoticization', or 'internal orientalizing' was also subjected to 'content review' (as it was initiated by government agencies in the first place), it was also dependent on its commercial value.⁴⁷⁸

World-wide, cultural shows as 'sites of creative cultural production' exist in a 'touristic border zone' and offer 'opportunities for the intervention of culture on a massive scale'.⁴⁷⁹ In many instances, ritual songs or dances of marginal tribes are either incorporated into state performances (national parades) or are manifested in song and dance performances where they sit strongly between exoticization and empowering recognition (unity in diversity).⁴⁸⁰ In particular grass-roots performances (in contrast to the spectacular cultural show) 'tread the fine line between co-option and subversion'.⁴⁸¹ As Ravenscroft and Mateucci argue, the fiesta (San Fermin in Pamplona) 'becomes a liminal space in which deviance is tolerated' and where 'the deviant practices of locals

⁴⁷⁴ Cited in L.E. Andrews, 'Just Sing What You Want To Say: The Importance Of Linguistic Tone In Bai Songs', Master Thesis, Master of Arts in Ethnomusicology, Liberty University, 2012, p. 27

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., Andrews, 'Just Sing What You Want To Say ...'; for a very interesting read see also, Y. Liang, 'Turning Gwer Sa La Festival into Intangible Cultural Heritage. State Superscription of Popular Religion in Southwest China', *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2, August 2013, pp. 58-75.

⁴⁷⁶ See more on this in Tourism chapter; see also, S. Blum, 'The Fetishized Ethnic Other: The Dai', in S. Blum, *Portraits of Primitives. Ordering Human Kinds in the Chinese Nation*, Lanham, Maryland, Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2001.

⁴⁷⁷ B. Hillman, 'Paradise Under Construction: Minorities, Myths and Modernity in Northwest Yunnan', *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2003, pp. 175-188.

⁴⁷⁸ See for example, Blum, 'The Fetishized Ethnic Other ...'.

⁴⁷⁹ Cited in M. Sarkissian, 'Tradition, Tourism, and the Cultural Show: Malaysia's Diversity on Display', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 1998, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 87-112.

⁴⁸⁰ Brosius and Polit, *Ritual, Heritage and Identity*.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., Sarkissian, 'Tradition, Tourism, and the Cultural Show...'

are also legitimated ... by the presence of tourists, who provide a convenient 'cover' for such activity'.⁴⁸²

These cultural interventions, or edited and sanitized versions of minority culture, are then also often scrutinized and their appropriation (for heritage festivals, museums) can be regarded as 'cultural theft'. More importantly, it can change and weaken locals own understanding of their heritage.⁴⁸³ However, as cultural performances acquire new meanings (through tourism commodification), they can also become an important part of a people's identity. As Xie notes when exploring the relationship of authenticity and commodification of Hainan's aboriginal bamboo-beating dance, '[T]ourism development has created 'cultural involution' that turned the commodified dance performance into an 'authentic' aboriginal cultural expression'.⁴⁸⁴ Therefore, the author also argues that authenticity is relative rather than absolute⁴⁸⁵, also echoing others arguing that 'staged' performances are not necessarily less authentic, or inferior.

While Mackerras already noted in the 1980s a trend of standardization and professionalization in the performing arts among the Bai, Li's findings of ethnic dance performances in contemporary Yunnan reveal that nothing has changed in this regard. Li also notes the shift from the folkloric to the spectacular and professional, which he argues is the 'collaboration among capitalist tourism enterprises, regional governments, and art professionals who are engaged in the state promoted institutionalization of ethnic minority dances'.⁴⁸⁶ Chinese minority cultural shows - a new product of the tourism and cultural industry - have become hugely popular on the national and international stage, foremost the mega show *Dynamic Yunnan*, which is a 'masterpiece of artistic work that spotlights the unique character of Yunnan', '... is regarded as a milestone creation in Chinese stage and dance history' and 'one of the best examples of the development of Chinese minority art as well as Chinese theatre show culture'.⁴⁸⁷ Most of these performances are based on and have a great

⁴⁸² Cited in G. Richards, 'The Festivalization of Society or the Socialization of Festivals? The Case of Catalunya', in G. Richards (ed.), *Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives*. Binghampton, Haworth Press, Chapter 13, 2007, pp.257-280.

⁴⁸³ See e.g., C. Ingram, 'The Multiple Meanings of Tradition. Kam Singing in Southwestern China', *IIAS Newsletter*, No. 60, 2012. Here Ingram shows how Kam staged performances have gradually formed a new 'tradition' of Kam singing that is simultaneously promoting, challenging and transforming Kam village singing in a variety of unanticipated and complex ways.

⁴⁸⁴ P.F. Xie, 'The Bamboo-beating Dance in Hainan, China: Authenticity and Commodification', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 11, Issue 1, 2003, pp. 5-16

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ J. Li, 'The Folkloric, the Spectacular, and the Institutionalized: Touristifying Ethnic Minority Dances on China's Southwest Frontiers', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2012, pp. 65-83. (We are currently seeing a similar transformation and reconfiguration of ethnic culture and landscape of the ATHR under the auspices of these collaborators, or 'cultural brokers')

⁴⁸⁷ See, for example, Yang Liping's *Dynamic Yunnan* at

http://www.gokunming.com/en/calendar/event/9772/yang_lipings_dynamic_yunnan ; or <http://www.yangliping.com/>

impact on the tourism industry, while only few have failed.⁴⁸⁸ Mahon argues, that the success of a cultural product (such as a heritage ritual) depends on the cultural producer's ability to create images of the nation and articulate which aspects are representative of the nation and that manage the tension between tradition and modernity.⁴⁸⁹ This is particularly evident in the upsurge of overly professionalized, theatrical, and über-spectacular mega dance productions, such as *Dynamic Yunnan* (Kunming), *Impression Lijiang*, or *Mengbalanaxi* (Xishuangbanna), which are thus transformed into 'regional-cultural brands under state and local government discourses of cultural industry and regional development'.⁴⁹⁰

Therefore, the image crafting – or aestheticisation of Yunnan as a place and economic-cultural brand - of such mega productions, which is often aimed at an international audience, can also be seen as the global extension of the Yunnan provincial government's project of crafting new cultural and regional identities at home, which Li describes as 'the artifying of politics'.⁴⁹¹ To go a step further, we can agree with Bennett (2004) who reminds us that displays of culture (such as 19th century museum buildings and their displays) should not be read as mere reflections of power, but as complicit agents in its production and circulation.⁴⁹² In our context this means that contemporary ethnic spectacles are not only representing certain power structures or discourses, such as multiethnic tolerance and national harmony, but they are inherently part of its construction. In contrast, in a Foucauldian sense, the government's effort of elevating the cultural and creative industries to be a new source of (soft) power confirms its pervasiveness, that it is neither agent or structure, but a kind of 'meta-power' that pervades society.⁴⁹³ But always implicit, in China, cultural display forms 'part of a wider manifesto of education and enlightenment', as for example, the Shanghai Expo was as much about the world to learn about China, as it was for China to learn about the world (reminiscent of the educational value of the early theme parks, such as Shenzhen's 'Window to the World').⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁸ For example, the performance of *The Impression of Liusanjie* increased the gross domestic product (GDP) of Yangshuo County in Guilin by more than 10%, cited in: H. Song & C. Cheung, 'What Makes Theatrical Performances Successful in China's Tourism Industry?', *Journal of China Tourism Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2012, pp. 159-173. The authors here also point out that for example on Broadway the audience is not constituted primarily of tourists, while in China the success of these performances is mainly based on tourism development in destinations with high tourist visitation.

⁴⁸⁹ Cited in Brosius and Polit, *Ritual, Heritage and Identity*.

⁴⁹⁰ Li, 'The Folkloric, the Spectacular, and the Institutionalized...'.⁴⁹¹

Li, 'The Making of Ethnic Yunnan on the National Mall ...'.⁴⁹²

Cited in T. Winter, 'Auto-Exoticism: Cultural Display at the Shanghai Expo', *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2013, pp. 69-90.

⁴⁹³ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, London, Penguin, 1998, p. 63.

⁴⁹⁴ While Winter refers here to the 1851 Great Fair in Paris, which in form and scale was an 'important template for what would become a distinct genre of display, classification and symbolic codification', and was 'deeply infused with

In the last section of this chapter I draw upon the main elements of the above to discuss some of the practices and assertions of Bai-ness as encountered at my field work site in Shaxi, Yunnan province, and which will be the object of the case study chapters that follow.

Dancing and singing in the square: asserting Bai-ness in a local context

On my last visit to Shaxi, I was able to join a week-long training workshop in Jianchuan county town (Xinhua) for the local Bai traditional singing and instrument playing, organized by the Jianchuan Cultural Bureau and County government.⁴⁹⁵ Here, I could observe the ‘ground work’ for training and performance at village level as local villagers - some already widely known - went through various training, performance, and competition sessions. This particular genre of singing (*duige* 对歌), accompanied by the traditional three-stringed instrument (*san xian* 三线) has a long history and is celebrated at the annual Shibaoshan Singing Festival (*shibaoshan gehui* 石宝山歌会) as the ‘Bai people’s Valentine’s day’ (*baizude qingrenjie* 白族的情人节) which is also listed as a national Intangible Cultural Heritage. The long days of training/singing were ‘spiced up’ - also intended as a learning experience - with casual performances in the class room by local artists who are regionally and nationally recognized performers.⁴⁹⁶ As well, there were lectures by experts, speeches by cultural bureau officials, and poetry recitals, some by elderly retired government workers. The students’ written and oral performances were mostly in Bai, using Bai script to read and compose music. There was an atmosphere of intellectual and cultural life not only at the Cultural Centre, but in the town. During lunch time my Bai friend and I would visit her teachers in their traditional courtyard homes, writers or experts in different disciplines associated with the regional history and culture, such as Buddhism, the Ancient Tea Horse Road, Bai language and music and more, who were mostly older and/or retired men but were still actively engaged in cultural transmission working with/for the Jianchuan cultural bureau.

the encyclopaedic paradigm of the mid-19th century’, learning and enlightenment is still a major part of today’s cultural displays.

⁴⁹⁵ 《剑川县 2014 年传统白曲对唱及创作，龙头三线演。培训班合影》(Traditional Bai Singing and Traditional Three-string Longneck Fiddle Performance Workshop), held from 18-24 September 2014.

⁴⁹⁶ This includes Li Bao Mei 李宝梅, and Mei Zong De 美宗德, local artists that perform together and that have become well-known provincial-level artists (*geshou* 歌手) and inheritors (*chuanchengren* 传承人) that also regularly perform on the national stage. Other local artists include Xiao Ah Peng 小阿鹏, a popular young man, who won awards and performs on stage on provincial and national level, is also ‘revolutionising’ the traditional Bai ethnic music by writing and performing his own modernized ethno-pop music. See e.g <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/waqJ2I0dhRtcrGtxFIU9cw> .

This week-long training workshop proved to me just how serious some local governments take the nurturing of village folk art and artists, which was also expressed in their speeches. In particular, it showed how proud both teachers and students were of their craft and how enthusiastic they were to keep these traditions alive as well as disseminate traditional knowledge and skill to the wider community through such training sessions, public performances, or the (print) media.⁴⁹⁷ At all the major holidays and festivals, villages and towns in the region - famous or not - usually put on more or less spectacular performances ('mass cultural activities'), mostly of song and dance. These have become standard(ized), almost obligatory, but are still very local and colourful affairs, more enjoyed by the participants themselves than the spectators or the government officials who organize and push these official performances. Even in small and remote villages, TV crews filming ethnic festivals and ways of traditional life are a common sight, and many villages have long been targets of ethnological and anthropological research. Almost every village has a dance troupe who performs locally at special events. The local performance troupes - although often very non-professional - show big confidence and wear their costumes and *minzu* label with pride. Increasingly important are digital platforms, such as Weixin (微信) or Weibo (微博) which serve to construct and maintain a culture network amongst artists and the wider community.⁴⁹⁸ Most of these folk customs are in this way not only kept alive, but are actively constructed, practiced, and promoted.⁴⁹⁹ Yunnan province is more culturally 'exhibitionist' than any other province in China, partly because it *is* the most culturally diverse region in China, and culture-based resources have become the main economic/tourism assets, encouraged both by government and adopted by the minority peoples. But it would be wrong to reduce these cultural activities to pure material/commercial assets, instead we have to recognize them within the broader picture of the continuous formation of new ethnic identities in the context of individual social development, rural modernization, the globalization of local culture, leisure and recreation, and ethnic pride.

⁴⁹⁷ There is a large number of printed publications regarding the history and traditions of this region, many of them written by these retired government officials, but all in Chinese, and not readily available in book stores, which are still rare in some places.

⁴⁹⁸ The author has joined a number of these forums and official websites on WeChat, China's premier social media platform, comparable to Facebook in the West (which is banned in China)

⁴⁹⁹ The official promotional literature of intangible cultural heritage in Jianchuan county (as collected by author) includes: (1) Bai tone and music (白族调, 白曲 or 本子曲) where the *duige* (对歌) genre is a part of and which comes in many variations, such as labor songs (劳动歌), political songs (施政歌), ceremonial songs (仪式歌), life songs (生活歌), love songs (爱情歌), or long songs (长歌); (2) the most widely performed dance in the area, the 'stick tapping dance', or bawang bian (霸王鞭) as part of *dongshan getiao* (东山歌跳); Shilongcun village in Shibao mountain is considered the place of origin of this Bai music and dance, which finds its climax in performances at the biggest Bai festival in the country, the annual Shibaoshan singing festival; (3) it also includes the ancient Bai orchestra music (啊吒力古老音乐); (4 and 5) further, wood and stone carving (木雕, 石雕 民间工艺文化) are highly promoted regionally and nationally as main folk arts in Jianchuan county with a long history in the area.

Parallel to the workshop the Jianchuan ancient Bai orchestra was meeting on the same premises for their regular bi-weekly practice. As also mentioned above, these ancient orchestras trace the origins and influence of their music back to the ancient music of the independent Nanzhao kingdom that ruled the region during the 7th- 10th century. The Nanzhao court had developed strong and lasting cultural links with the Chinese Tang dynasty, in particular through the exchange of music (musicians, songs, dancers, instruments) which led to extensive influences of Nanzhao music on the music of the Tang, but also vice versa. Bai scholars and musicians then claim that Tang music is Nanzhao music, is Bai music, and by extension, through this cultural link with the glorious Tang dynasty the Bai also provide proof of their perceived advanced state.⁵⁰⁰ This Bai-Tang connection, McCarthy notes, is not inconsequential as it thus provides the (Bai) people with a new historical narrative they didn't previously possess, and by expressing their identity through the practice of ancient Nanzhao music, they thus 'read themselves into the narrative of Chinese civilization and the Chinese nation'.⁵⁰¹ Instrumental in the creation of thus politicised cultural identities are 'cultural entrepreneurs'- such as the Bai musicians, scholars and officials - who create institutionalized, ethno-cultural symbolic capital and transform often 'unreflective, unselfconscious cultural practices and traditions into "manifest nationalism"'.⁵⁰²



FIGURE 8: SHAXI OLD MUSIC ORCHESTRA (DONGJING)

Prior to the workshop, I had the opportunity to visit a friend, a Shilongcun local at her village's Cultural Centre to witness the singing and dancing rehearsal of the villagers.⁵⁰³ Till late at night,

⁵⁰⁰ McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism*, Chapter four. See also, X. Su, 'Commodification and the Selling of Ethnic Music to Tourists', *Geoforum*, 2011; See also, XK interview, 12/11/2011;

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ For example, since the early 1980s the establishment of cultural centres (*wenhua zhongxin*) and cultural stations (*wenhua zhan*), have become an effective way of encouraging a new socialist countryside to transform rural towns into political, economic and cultural centres of their area. In particular they are popular-culture organizations that organize activities including culture (mass cultural activities, training amateur artists) and arts (cinemas, theatre, opera, libraries), sport, education, popular science (training classes on agricultural science and technology), and public health, and are in keeping with the aspirations and cultural needs of the peasants. In this way people can spend their after-work hours in a

they would sing and dance accompanied by the *sanxian*, laugh and joke around. I thought I was lucky that they practiced on this particular day when I visited, but was later told that many of the villagers practice every day, they enjoy it, it relaxes them after work, and no, they're not too tired because they are all very healthy in this village. Very obviously, most villagers are very proud of their culture, and in this mountainous region this includes the culture of healthy food, that is, its ecological quality (*yuanshengtai* 原生态) and cultural use. Many villagers still know and use the different herbs, herbal teas, and medicinal herbs, as well as fruits, nuts and mushrooms that grow in these mountains. My friend is a passionate forager for anything that grows wild in these mountains and stresses that her father was a 'doctor' who knew all the wild herbs and fruits.



FIGURE 9: SHILONGCUN EVENING ENTERTAINMENT

That evening was a reassuring experience as it was culture in its contemporary context, and for the first time since arriving in Shaxi, I could actually feel the 'ambiance' of living culture. When I asked my friend, 'what about Shaxi? Where is the culture in Shaxi?', she would reply: 'Shaxi doesn't have culture, Shaxi has history, Shilongcun has culture.' And then she would recite again and again all the cultural achievements, especially the traditional Bai singing and dancing (*baiqu*, *bawangbian*), which have their origin in Shilongcun, but that other Bai areas have borrowed and adopted. Even Dali doesn't have real culture, she would say. Ironically, she had recently been studying the art of the 3-course tea (*sandaocha* 三道茶) to perform at the Shaxi Cultural Centre in her new work as cultural broker, but she did not know that this was a newly invented and constructed cultural practice promoted for tourism by the Dali Bai government.⁵⁰⁴ It occurred to me

'healthy' manner. It has been proven that if cultural centres are well-run they play a positive role in raising people's scientific and cultural level and achieving a high level of socialist morality and ethics. See, e.g. Bai Liu, *Cultural Policy in the People's Republic of China*, pp. 71- where the government can guide 'a healthy' consumption of leisure-time, as well as to use for training purposes.

⁵⁰⁴ Notar, *Displacing Desire*.

then, that there was a ‘cultural place-ness’, a ‘geography of cultural power’ present: while the Jianchuan government mostly refers to Shaxi as the main tourist hub and centre of history and culture, Shaxi also considers itself the ‘centre’ and readily ‘appropriates’ Shilongcun’s (and other ethnic villages) culture as its own, while Shilongcun emphasises its culture and traditions as theirs, not Shaxi’s.

Shilongcun is a small and still rather undeveloped and backward village deep in the Shibao Mountains amidst beautiful natural scenery, but with difficult public transport access. It is one of Shaxi’s natural villages. However, Shilongcun had already been ‘discovered’ many years ago and a research branch of Yunnan University was established to research its people and culture (and no doubt its future potential as a tourist destination). A pilot program was run comprising a Bai Adult Literacy course and a bilingual Bai-Chinese teaching experiment to teach in Bai language in lower primary grades, and then gradually introduce Mandarin to become bilingual in upper grades, while putting emphasis on the study and practice of the local culture, in particular singing and dancing.⁵⁰⁵ Accordingly, Shilongcun has become culturally more active, and a number of locals have left the village and pursued a career in singing or dancing on provincial or national level, others regularly perform locally and in the region. However, the balance of ‘geography of cultural power’ is bound to shift in the near future, as both Jianchuan, the County seat, and Shilongcun, a subordinate village of Shaxi, presently undergo extensive tourism and infrastructure development. Shaxi will likely continue to be promoted as one of the most beautiful ancient villages of Yunnan and associated with the history of the Ancient Tea Horse Road, while Shilongcun will become more significant in terms of ‘original’ traditional culture, and Jianchuan the new tourism centre. This may play out well, as Shaxi is already at the danger point of sustainable development and carrying capacity, but it might result in high commercialization of Shilongcun’s intangible culture and endanger its ecological and natural pristine state.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have highlighted the ‘making’ of China’s minority peoples. By classifying its great number of highly diverse ethnic peoples, the newly established Chinese government post-1949 sought to administratively and politically include them in the new nation state and unify all of its people. This has been a complex process with more than 400 ethnic groups seeking recognition as a

⁵⁰⁵ See e.g., ‘China’s Bai Bilingual Education Project evaluation’, *SIL*, July 2011, <http://www.sil.org/about/news/china%E2%80%99s-bai-bilingual-education-project-evaluation>

separate minority group, while ultimately the project resulted in recognizing only fifty-five ethnic groups, plus the Han as a majority group. The new minority policies granted special rights (representation, autonomous region) and privileges (education, family planning), but also assumed loyalty to the state.

In the last three decades - within the context of a new state-sanctioned revival of the countryside and a transitional economy from plan to market - government (bodies), private entities, tourism companies and local people have taken advantage of the plentiful cultural and natural resources in minority areas to be packaged and sold to an ever growing tourism market. In the process, ethnic people's cultural heritage and ethnic identity have become increasingly threatened. Today, minority peoples do not struggle with their *minzu* label of being Bai, Hui, Yi, Naxi, or Dai, but they may struggle with finding a new ethnic identity that is not a 'touristic' identity but one that still has roots in their heritage. The cultural revival has helped them - in particular young minority people - to re-discover parts of their 'authentic' heritage and understand the newly 'recreated' heritage. 'Ethnicity' in China's minority regions has taken on new meanings, has been turned around, 'inverted', as ethnic people are shedding preconceived labels of being 'backward', 'uncivilized', 'uneducated' and 'static' and become renowned artists and entrepreneurs by tapping into the large reservoir of traditional ethnic music and performance, but also ethno-pop, ethno-fashion, ethno-food and more, and are thus creating new opportunities for themselves that not only comprise the local/national, but also the global.



FIGURE 9A: BAI MUSICIAN ON NATIONAL STAGE (WEIXIN)

Participating in the above-mentioned (one of many regular) cultural workshop, in religious rituals and temple fairs, observing daily household rituals, religious rituals and casual and organized song and dance performances, and learning (through media outlets) of the many cultural activities and festivities minority peoples put on all year round in most ethnic provinces, even in the lesser

tourism hot spots, proved to me that minority culture is well alive and activities are joined in with great enthusiasm, pride and joy.

CHAPTER five Cultural Heritage Protection Today: The Paradox of the New Ancient Town

Introduction

In the post-Mao, post-socialist era, political and economic decentralization have left regional and local governments both empowered and vulnerable. The local entrepreneurial state has become more independent, but due to shortage of investment and funding formerly provided by the central government, it now has to take advantage of all available local resources and develop new strategies to encourage economic growth. While industrial production has remained the most influential factor for capital accumulation and economic transition of China's small towns, tourism and tourism-driven urbanization as an alternative path of rural development have become a key strategy of development and also underscore a state-promoted approach for livelihood diversification of ethnic communities in rural China.⁵⁰⁶ However, in the process of finding local resources for development, regeneration, or revitalization, many localities were faced with the stark reality that natural and ancient villages, traditional cultures, and distinct local lifestyles have disappeared in great numbers. By the end of the last millennium, spurred on by a nationally growing heritage 'fever' as well as tourism 'fever', the Chinese government increasingly recognized the importance of saving and protecting ancient villages and towns. While some nationally significant ancient towns have been recognized and recorded earlier, it was only in 2003 that the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) established a more comprehensive nation-wide survey of famous rural habitats of historical and cultural importance.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ Qian, Feng and Zhu, 'Tourism-driven Urbanization ...'; livelihood diversification is necessary due to national policies, off-farm opportunities, environmental degradation, land shortage, and socio-cultural change.

⁵⁰⁷ Since 2003 the Chinese government has designated 273 villages as 'Chinese Historic and Cultural Villages', and a further 2000 villages as 'Traditional Chinese Villages'. See, *Traditional Chinese Villages Bulletin*, Tsinghua University, <http://www.chuantongcunluo.com/eng/>.

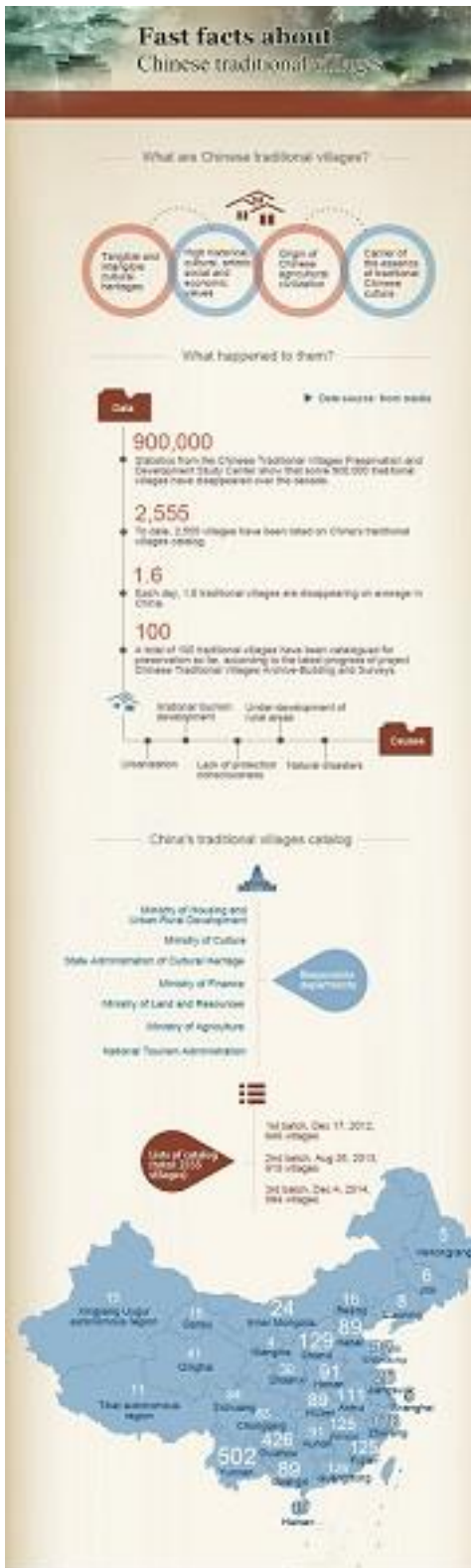


FIGURE 10: ANCIENT VILLAGES,
SOURCE: CHUANTONGCUNLUO.COM

Most of these have undergone substantial restoration, renovation, or rebuilding in order to be included on the national list, others have made it into the World Heritage list (Pingyao, Hongcun and Xidi, Lijiang), or, as in Shaxi's case, on the World Monument Fund's endangered list. Still others are struggling to copy the successful models and achieve recognition, inscription, or simply attract busloads of tourists.

Overview of Ancient Town and Village Protection

As we have seen further above, the physical destruction of architecture and other tangible and intangible heritage brought about by urbanization, industrialization and economic development in China and other developing countries has in recent decades inspired a growing awareness among policy makers, industry, academics, and ordinary people for the protection of their nation's cultural heritage. At the same time, they realized the enormous challenges of the task of balancing the contesting aims of preservation and economic development, including, and above all, cultural preservation and tourism development. More specifically, in recent times, the preservation of historical districts (enclaves, quarters, historic streets) and ancient towns and villages has become a priority in urban planning in China and in other parts of the world. In response to these challenges, the World Heritage Committee adopted the *2005 Vienna Memorandum on Historic Urban Landscapes (HUL)*, which proposed an integrated conservation approach 'linking contemporary architecture, sustainable urban development and landscape integrity based on existing historic patterns, building stock and context' (Article 5, ICOMOS 2005). It is clearly

articulated that this conservation approach 'should avoid all forms of pseudo-historical design, as they constitute a denial of both the historical and the contemporary alike' (Article 21, ICOMOS 2005). But it was not until 2011, that the World Heritage Committee adopted the *Recommendations*

on the *Historic Urban Landscape*, which provided an associated framework and measures for the conservation and management of historic urban landscapes. In 2012, the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP) in Shanghai developed the *Application of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) Approach in China* which presented the key issues of urban conservation and urban renewal in China and proposed a special 5-year (2012-2017) program to implement HUL in China. Together with other international Charters, these are used to better understand international standards and principles related to the conservation of historic towns and districts.⁵⁰⁸

Concurrent to these international approaches, China has developed a national register and list of famous ancient towns and villages to better protect and preserve their historic, architectural and socio-cultural fabric. While there has been scholarly interest in preservation and development of Chinese traditional villages in earlier decades, it is only in recent times that there has been a more concerted effort to revitalize villages by working together with both government (policy and funding) and villagers, in particular by encouraging active participation of villagers in the rehabilitation and planning processes.⁵⁰⁹ Since the 1990s, a number of research projects were initiated, research and study centres established, and NGO's created to save China's ancient villages.⁵¹⁰ In April 2012 a joint inventory of traditional villages was undertaken by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MoHURD), the Ministry of Culture (MoC), the Ministry of Finance (MoC) and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH), followed by Guidelines on Enhancing the Conservation of Traditional Chinese Villages (MOHURD 2014 No.61) in 2014. The government's concern with raising rural living standards has led it to pronounce that the character of villages should be preserved and traditional culture should be allowed to flourish to create a better rural environment.⁵¹¹ A traditional village was defined as 'a village with a long history and a rich tradition that is significant in terms of its history, culture, science, art, society and the economy and that is worthy of conservation'. While this definition clearly suggests a careful selection of 'worthwhile' villages, it leaves out a great number of

⁵⁰⁸ These include, *The Washington Charter*, *The Nairobi Recommendation*, *The Hoi An Declaration*, *The Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia*, *The Suzhou Declaration*, *The Burra Charter* and *The China Principles*. In 1998, the UNESCO International Conference for the Preservation and Development of Historic Cities was held in Suzhou, China; for other charters, etc. see also www.unesco.com

⁵⁰⁹ *Traditional Chinese Village Bulletin*, January 2015

⁵¹⁰ See for example, <http://www.chuantongcunluo.com/eng/Aboutus2.asp>, accessed, February 2015. The *Chinese Traditional Villages Preservation and Development Study Centre* is approved by the Chinese Folk Literature and Art Society and Tianjin University. It is a national traditional village preservation and study institution that is supported by the Feng Jicai Research Institute of Arts and Literature of Tianjin University. The *Traditional Chinese Villages Bulletin*, is published by Tsinghua University under the Patronage of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Tsinghua Tongheng Urban Planning and Design Institute, and Tsinghua Heritage Conservation Institute.

⁵¹¹ Premier Li Keqiang, *Traditional Chinese Village Bulletin*.

traditional villages that need urgent protection. Fortunately, there are emerging private initiatives to help overcome this deficiency. These include back-to-the-land/down-to-the-countryside movements, where entrepreneurs, artists, intellectuals, and other enthusiasts are trying to find alternative ways for rural development, improving village life, and making Chinese society more resistant to crisis as a whole.⁵¹² It also includes the many private initiatives of foreign business entrepreneurs, as well as joint Sino-foreign projects, such as those by the Global Heritage Fund. However, commercialization and uncontrolled tourism development, as well as the continued drive of (rural) urbanization of the new Xi/Li leadership still poses a great threat to the survival of traditional villages.

As we have seen in the chapters above, conservation theory and practice face some very unique challenges in China. In this chapter we will focus on the myths and reality of protection and conservation of ancient towns and villages in China - including the field site, Shaxi - considering notions of authenticity, development models, cultural and architectural integrity, historical narratives, conservation policy and management, and more. In highlighting certain development patterns, or 'models', applied in village and town restoration and preservation, and by contrasting conservation theory with local practice, I argue, we can discern an entrenched problematic attitude the Chinese people have to localism vs globalism (exceptionalism vs internationalism/Westernism) on the one hand, and 'the ancient and the new', or traditionalism vs modernism on the other. In particular, this chapter then forms the basis for the further inquiry into the paradoxes of village transformation in China on the basis of tourism development and cultural heritage preservation. With this in mind we may better understand what I will call the 'new ancient town and villages paradigm'.

The Traditional Village in China

For millennia the village was the medium through which Chinese civilization and culture was perpetuated. Up until only the end of the last millennium, China had been predominantly an agrarian society, with most of its population living in rural areas. Over thousands of years, a village and landscape pattern developed that was defined by the diversity of its people, their religions, their

⁵¹² See for example, a documentary by filmmakers Sun Yunfan and Leah Thompson, called 'Down to the Countryside', which received support from the Pulitzer Centre on Crisis Reporting. See also, Ou Ning's Blog, 'The Crisis and Experiment of the Commons' at www.alternativearchive.com/ouning/article.asp?id=939, a presentation at YNKB, Copenhagen, September 16, 2014. The *New Rural Reconstruction Movement* (NRRM) refers to the Rural Reconstruction Movement (RRM) of the Republican era (1911-1949) but faces more challenging problems against the background of globalization and issues of social and environmental justice.

local cultures and traditions. Long ago, in addition to traditional village settlements, there emerged large numbers of rural markets that linked villagers to a hierarchically dense network of central places and which were both a consequence and a cause of an increasingly specialized and commercialized rural economy.⁵¹³ Villages varied in form and composition from one area to another in the country and were largely shaped by its ecology and patterns of commercialization. The vernacular village architecture was highly influenced by traditional institutions (notably, Confucian and clan culture) and customs, but villagers also constructed relatively small temples and shrines dedicated to their tutelary deity (*tudigong* or ‘earth god’). The distinction of family/clan and village was fluid, it was almost synonymous as people’s lives were shaped by mainly communal needs. A Chinese village (e.g. *cun*, *zhuang*, *zhai*) often incorporated the surname of the dominant lineage of the village, or took their names from local conditions (topographical or cultural characteristics). However, during the social and political upheavals of the twentieth century, the village and village life became increasingly atomised, individualized, and politicised and its centuries-old structure based on communal life was ruptured. During the socialist period (1949-1979), the village became a political tool and was ideologically elevated to a higher position when the nation needed to support its urban population (with food), but villagers were otherwise disadvantaged through their forced rural residential status (*hukou*). Collectivization, the Great Leap Forward, and the ravages of the Cultural Revolution destroyed their spiritual and cultural fabric and dramatically reshaped social relationships, while the last few decades of modernization and development destroyed much of their material lives. A dichotomous classification based on administrative criteria was also adopted to divide villages into rural and urban: cities (*chengshi*) and officially designated towns (*jianzhi zhen*) designate the urban sector, while villages (*nongcun*), undesignated towns (*jizhen*), and county towns (*xiangcheng*) make up the rural sector. It was only with the ‘reform and opening up’ that the village as a place of local and national identity-making was ‘rediscovered’ and celebrated, but was increasingly subjected to the new norms of a modernizing society and a capitalist (global) economy. In recent times, rural small towns have become important again to curb out-migration of farmers by providing opportunities for non-agricultural employment at home. In particular, as tourism has become the growth engine in the new economy, historical cities, towns and villages are eager to create a locational advantage and reinvent themselves as places of consumption in the form of ‘new ancient towns’.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ R. Knapp (ed.), *Chinese Landscapes. The Village as Place*, Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 1992.

⁵¹⁴ For extensive accounts on Chinese rural villages during the communist and socialist period, see for example, X. Fei, G. G. Hamilton, and Z. Wang. *From the Soil, the Foundations of Chinese Society: a Translation of Fei Xiaotong's Xiangtu Zhongguo, With an Introduction and Epilogue*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992 (original title X. Fei, *Xiangtu Zhongguo*, 1947); see also, A. Chan, R. Madsen, and J. Unger, *Chen Village under Mao and Deng*,

The 'New Ancient Town Paradigm'

Reality 1

Recently, I came across a Chinese blog entry, called 'Tourism with Chinese characteristics: my trip to Taierzhuang, a newly constructed 'ancient town'⁵¹⁵. Here the blogger describes a new tourist place on the eastern banks of the Grand Canal⁵¹⁶, halfway between Beijing and Hangzhou, a place that she had first seen on a billboard at the railway station in his hometown of Nanjing, and which strongly resembled some of the famous water towns such as Zhouzhuang in Jiangsu province (near Shanghai). While Taierzhuang's history goes back to the Ming and Qing dynasties, the ancient town had been completely destroyed during a historic battle during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). In an attempt to improve the local economy that had greatly suffered from the decline of the coal industry, the old part of the town was re-built in 2008 to original lay-out, with all the trimmings of the old and the new. The 'old' was mainly classic architecture, arched stone bridges, narrow alleys, and grand mansions, but more importantly, its re-invention as an 'ancient town' included the creation of a 'man-made fantasy land', brimming with entertainment for Chinese tourists 'who always want spectacle and action', and where 'things are happening all day long: drumming, lion dance, magic shows, puppet shows, and imperial processions performed by people dressed up in mandarin uniforms', 'and if you were still bored, there were Latin dance competitions with scantily clad girls, swirling sensually on stage, against the backdrop of a pavilion under construction (yes, more are being built)'. The author enjoyed her trip and approved of the existence of such a place, where a lot of things are done 'tastefully', and where 'tourists, many of them children, can learn a bit about their own history and cultural traditions', and where, remarkably, 'visitors seemed to believe the ancient tale'. Taierzhuang claims to be 'a good place to chase a dream', and the author did get momentarily lost in a dream, sitting on the balcony of his lodge, sipping tea, overlooking the canal, with slender girls ferrying tourists up and down entertaining them with sweet, gentle songs, until the karaoke singing pierced the air.

Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992; and J.C. Oi., *State and Peasant in Contemporary China: the Political Economy of Village Government*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989.

⁵¹⁵ L. Zhang 'Tourism with Chinese Characteristics, My Trip to Taierzhuang, A Newly Constructed Ancient Town', Web Blog, 27 August 2012,

<https://lijiazhang.wordpress.com/2012/08/27/tourism-with-chinese-characteristics-my-trip-to-taierzhuang-a-newly-constructed-ancient-town/>

⁵¹⁶ The Grand Canal is the longest artificial waterway in the world, linking Beijing with Hangzhou, and is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list under the new category of 'cultural routes' (2014), <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1443>

Reality 2

In 2011, in search of a suitable fieldwork site for my PhD project defined in terms of cultural heritage protection in China and the Ancient Tea Horse Road, I arrived in the little town of Shaxi, in the north-west of Yunnan province. Shaxi lies in a fertile and picturesque valley deep in the Hengduan Mountains which form part of the foothills of the Himalayas. To the north-west of Shaxi lies the world heritage site of the 'Three Parallel Rivers', to the east, each about a three hours bumpy ride away, lie Lijiang and Dali, both major tourist destinations since the early 1990s, and a little further north lies the mystical Shangri-La (Zhongdian).

Shaxi has a long history going back to prehistoric times as a place for bronze smelter, then as a significant trading place for salt, and later as an important stage-post along the Yunnan-Tibet Tea Horse Road. Shaxi was still an important place of trade and exchange right up to the middle of the 20th century, when political turmoil and the construction of new roads put an end to caravan trading and propelled Shaxi back into isolation and a mainly agricultural life. Due to its decades-long isolation, Shaxi could preserve its rich cultural and natural heritage. While still rather remote and inaccessible, Shaxi (*sidengjie*) has recently had a complete make-over and is now undergoing big changes as a tourist destination. In 2001, Shaxi was inscribed by the World Monument Fund (WMF) on the list of '100 most endangered world heritage sites' and was consequently restored to its old glory.⁵¹⁷ Shaxi was not newly built, but painstakingly restored, with a long-term comprehensive and integrated plan to develop the valley and region in a sustainable way, where tourism would not be the most important way of development.⁵¹⁸ In many ways, Shaxi reflects UNESCO's holistic approach of managing historic urban landscapes where urban heritage conservation and social and economic development are firmly integrated and where the focus is on the entire human environment with all of its tangible and intangible qualities.⁵¹⁹ Shaxi is now being promoted as 'one of the last intact staging posts on the Ancient Tea Horse Road', with a rich local minority culture and heritage, beautiful mountain scenery and extraordinary biosphere, all in all a quiet and unpolluted hide-away. There is no mass tourism, no guides with flags and loudspeakers, no entertainment, no staged performance, no karaoke ... yet. Shaxi also has re-invented itself.

The Rationale of New Ancient Towns: Tourism, Culture, Modernity, and the State

⁵¹⁷ See *World Monument Fund*, <http://www.wmf.org/project/shaxi-market-area>

⁵¹⁸ J. Feiner, S. Mi, and W. A. Schmidt, 'Sustainable Rural Development Based on Cultural Heritage', ETH Zurich, Switzerland *DISP 151*, 2002

⁵¹⁹ 'New Life for Historic Cities. The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained', UNESCO publication, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/176/>.

As China tears down and rebuilds at a dizzying speed, the questions arise: What will replace the cultural heritage lost? What is real and what is not? Can the new replace the old, the replica the real, without losing its substance and meaning? As, in Baudrillard's words, we live in a world that is dominated by 'simulacra'⁵²⁰, without original, what does this mean for the ever-hungry tourist in search of 'authenticity'? What does it mean for a nation in search of its ancient past? Both *realities* above, while on opposite ends, reflect the contested discourse of cultural heritage protection in contemporary China (as outlined in detail in Chapter 1).

The blog article (*Reality 1*), as summarized above, presents one of the most to-the-point descriptions of the current trend in cultural heritage protection and tourism in China. The article leads us straight to the major themes and discussions that are embedded in contemporary discourse of cultural heritage protection, such as cultural heritage tourism (cultural and historical significant place), representation (of the local culture), authenticity (architecture, performance), historical truth and narrative (how is it interwoven?), creation of theme parks or theme park-like atmosphere (entertainment, fenced off from the soulless 'new' town); consumption, commoditization, and production (shops, souvenirs, hotels, culture), awareness and education (of heritage and history), aesthetics (things done 'tastefully'), accessibility (high speed train close to heritage site), tradition (sipping tea), modernity (bars, karaoke, western entertainment (Latin dancing), city people in search of 'quiet' and traditional place)), economic development (increase tourism by re-inventing of Taierzhuang as 'ancient city'), tourism and heritage protection nexus (carrying capacity, representation, outside influence) and Chinese tourist characteristics (who always want 'spectacle and action'). The blogger is aware of the 'artificiality' of the environment when she calls it a 'man-made fantasy land', but is not judgemental or cynical. She also finds issues with the tourist groups 'infesting the place with their flags and loudspeakers', but this does not pose a problem with her overall desire to enjoy herself. All in all, she finds, the reality of the place is close to that promised in the advertisement. Taierzhuang's reinventing itself has been a success story, she believes, and visitor numbers, the vast majority of them tour groups, increased sharply.

Taierzhuang and Shaxi, at first sight, could not be more different: they are two distinct and contrasting examples in their methods of development and 're-invention' as ancient towns, but both are indicative of a more recent and unique trend in cultural heritage and tourism development where many Chinese localities zealously vie for recognition as being hometowns or resting places of

⁵²⁰ J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995. Baudrillard uses the concepts of the simulacra - the copy without an original - and simulation, which are crucial to an understanding of the postmodern, to the extent that they address the concept of mass reproduction and reproduceability that characterizes our electronic media culture. (bookdepository.com)

famous historical or mythological figures, sets of famous movies or novels, or part of a transnational 'cultural route' that reveals a different narrative of historical regional development, all in the hope of attracting tourists and investment. Place branding has thus become one of the most valuable tools for marketing and development, for one to define the uniqueness of the place, and to give it legitimacy, identity, and authenticity. For example, as we will see below, film-induced tourism can be a very effective marketing tool, in particular for destinations that lack capital for advertising campaigns, or in times of economic downturn.⁵²¹ Destination branding, creating a differentiated destination image, and creating the right brand associations are thus widely used to gain competitive advantage and have become a basis for survival within the globally competitive marketplace. This is particularly relevant in the above context, as Chinese ancient towns and villages re-invent themselves, are built, re-built, or recreated, but most often are guided by a generic development blueprint of a successful model, thus adding to the homogeneity of the rural and urban, natural and cultural landscape, where it is hard to find a unique experience. In a global context, the contradiction between 'creative localization' and 'global homogenization' was made clear by Richard Wilk who argued that globalization has created 'structures of common difference' where local differences may proliferate, but these differences are shaped in a way that they become increasingly familiar within a global framework.⁵²² In a local context this means, the Chinese countryside is full of places of local difference, but they are shaped (reconstructed, branded, modelled, and standardized) in a way that they have become highly predictable and surprisingly uniform on a national and increasingly global scale.

Branding and Modelling the Chinese Countryside

'Model', as in 'model worker', is a term the Chinese understand well and are very familiar with as the government has long used it as a socio-political and ideological tool to 'keep the masses going'. By honouring 'selfless citizens who contribute to the making of modern China', these 'model worker' campaigns served a number of purposes, such as mobilizing and motivating citizens, identifying qualities and characteristics that would be valued in the new China, and they signal political priorities and concerns.⁵²³ In a similar way, exemplary models for display - such as 'model'

⁵²¹ S. Hudson, et.al, 'The Influence of a Film on Destination Image and the Desire to Travel: a Cross-Cultural Comparison', *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 13, 2011, pp.177-190.

⁵²² Cited in B. Notar, *Displacing Desire*, p. 46.

⁵²³ See for example, A. Segal, 'China's 'Model Workers' Head to Cyberspace. How an Old Strategy with A 21st Century Spin is Being Used "To Mobilize And Motivate Citizens."', *The Diplomat*, 21 August 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/08/chinas-model-workers-head-to-cyberspace/>, accessed 31 January 2014.

(ancient) towns or villages - have long served the state's civilizational agenda, and as Oakes notes, cultural heritage display 'inherits an ideology of Chinese statecraft that has long regarded the village as both an ideal unit of society and a problem needing continuous cultivation and care'.⁵²⁴ The use and promotion of 'models' are also an essential part of reform-era Chinese politics to 'test the waters' before establishing trial programs nationally and is expressed in proverbs such as 'crossing the river by touching the stones' (*mo shitou guohe* 摸石头过河). And, as mentioned above, it is used to denote desirable characteristics in ethnic people to be regarded as a 'model' *minzu*. All this is proof that despite the emphasis on greater liberalization (de-politization) of the economy and society in the reform era (but which increasingly fosters an unruly society) China remains very much an 'exemplary society' where social control (moral evaluation, conformity, exemplary behaviour) is still maintained in different and complex forms.⁵²⁵ 'Models' of any form are therefore still important in managing China's complex social, political, and administrative structure.

Branding: 'building a stage for the economy to sing'

Examples of genuine and legitimate, as well as false and preposterous branding abound, with mixed results of success. Creating the right brand association is therefore especially important where the product offered is of aspirational or self-gratifying nature, that is, without substance, or - to reiterate a term from the history of tourism development above - without a 'set of views'. For example, Loufan county in Shaanxi province, built a scenic spot in the mountain believed to be the home of the Monkey King, the mythical hero of China's most famous story, *Journey to the West*, which also included a four-story tourist centre, but the project was abandoned because it could not be financed and was deemed unworthy for development by county officials.⁵²⁶ In a similar fashion, Runan County, branded the home of the 'butterfly lovers' (China's Romeo and Juliet), had to compete with six other Chinese cities who claimed the couple belonged to them, and was finally abandoned on the grounds that there was nothing else to see than two shabby tombs.⁵²⁷ Failure of successful development can be explained in many ways, in these cases there was no real attraction,

The 'Learn from Comrade Lei Feng' campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s have lasted well into present times, where they expand to other professions, including astronauts, sports people, and find extended use in cases of diverting corruption and support the government with cyberspace policing.

⁵²⁴ T. Oakes, 'Heritage as Improvement: Cultural Display and Contested Governance in Rural China', *Modern China*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 380-407.

⁵²⁵ See, B. Bakken, *The Exemplary Society: Human Improvement, Social Control, And The Dangers Of Modernity In China*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

⁵²⁶ Y. Yuan and J. Liu, 'Tragedies of failed Chinese tourist towns', *Xinhua News*, 24 August 2012.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-08/24/c_131805906.htm ; there were also at least seven other villages who claimed to be the home of the Monkey King.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, Yuan and Liu, 'Tragedies of failed Chinese tourist towns'.

no 'real' heritage, and a lack of other viable tourist resources, as well as poor planning, in particular in regards to (enforcement of) legislation of heritage protection, availability of financing, or political power. As the Chinese saying goes, 'using culture to build a stage for the economy to sing', does not always work, in particular if that celebrity-hometown status is - as is so often the case - driven by local government profit-seeking.⁵²⁸ This clearly shows that the co-operation of the tourism and cultural heritage management industry is crucial.

However, there are a number of small towns and villages that have managed to preserve their 'original' cultural heritage and have succeeded in achieving a brand name by turning their heritage assets into tourism magnets, also often helped by the association of new referents (as above, Chapter III). For example, Hongcun Village (Yixian County), made famous by Ang Lee's popular movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, is an exceptional model for preservation of ancient towns and has been inscribed, together with nearby Xidi, on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2000.⁵²⁹ The region (Anhui) is now strongly promoting its ancient Huizhou architecture, especially present in Hongcun and Xidi and other 'water towns' in the region⁵³⁰, which also points to a new form of asserting local identity through revival of local historical and cultural traditions.⁵³¹

In Yunnan Province, Shangri-La's success is in great part owed to a popular novel that describes a fictional, mythical and mystical place, deep in the Himalayan Mountains (see introduction). Since then, tourists from far away, readily accepting a constructed truth (of a fiction novel), are swarming to Shangri-La (*Xianggelila* 香格里拉) in search of this utopian place. In a similar fashion, the little town of Simao in southern Yunnan changed its name from Simao to Pu'er (普洱), to tap into the highly profitable business of the world-famous Pu'er tea, and by extension, into the narrative and revival of the Ancient Tea Horse Road. Dali old town was a foreign backpacker haven long before domestic tourists arrived, but became a major tourist destination once it was developed, branded,

⁵²⁸ Yuan and Liu, 'Tragedies of failed Chinese tourist towns'.

⁵²⁹ H. Wang, 'Preserving Rural Heritage', *Beijing Review*, 24 August 2012, http://www.bjreview.com.cn/nation/txt/2012-08/24/content_478230_2.htm

⁵³⁰ In a recent bid, there was a group of 13 ancient 'water towns' in south-east China's Yangtze River region preparing to jointly apply for World Heritage listing. See, 'More Chinese water towns apply for heritage listing', www.ecns.cn/m/2015/04-02/160388shtml, accessed 8 April 2015.

⁵³¹ While Hongcun initially suffered similar problems to many ancient villages, it went about its development by contracting out the major preservation work to a Beijing private real estate company, encouraging locals to participate, and working with the government. Nearby Xidi, similar in terms of tourist attractions, socio-economic and cultural conditions, as well as natural conditions, went down an entirely different development path, using a communal approach, based on the unified right of tourism development and operation of villages, which is also conducive to greater participation of the local community in a sustainable rural cultural tourism development (Ying and Zhou). Interestingly, Xidi's grass-roots, communal development, was initially more successful than Hongcun, but it is Hongcun, the village that employed the mainstream development path of 'government-steered, (real estate) company operated, and villager participated' heritage model, that has become more famous (ibid).

and associated with a movie, a novel, and a guidebook.⁵³²

In summary - and referring to the earlier chapter on tourism in China – the (re-)production of tangible and intangible heritage (including new narratives) fits neatly into the tradition of ‘touring *mingsheng*’ which has continued to this day. Although the tourism landscape in China has greatly changed in size and variety since the late 1990s, it has remained standardized and largely in line with the traditional concept of ‘scenic spot’ or literati travel.⁵³³ This obstacle has in part been remedied by ‘updating’ referents to suit the new conditions, that is, inventing, re-formulating, adding, or ‘conjuring up’ new cultural references specific to a site, thus expanding the canon and the geographical boundaries of traditional *mingsheng*.⁵³⁴ It could now also include places that had ‘no set of views’ - a large part of the re-invented ancient towns - but were re-furbished with new referents, names and meanings. The new references became part of the ‘branding’ and ‘theming’ of these potential tourist meccas to create a tourist product with a clear narrative and meaning, supported by a multitude of performative and interactive features, such as displays, shows, and visitor activities.⁵³⁵ To that extent, an ‘economy of uniqueness’⁵³⁶ underlies these aspirations, however, the transformation of sites into destinations, and cultural expressions into performance, is rarely straightforward, and heritage preservation and management are major challenges for the cultural heritage tourism sector. Jensen’s work on a ‘dream society’, based on a shift from need-driven information to story-driven imagination, is also interesting here where he suggests that story-telling will become one of the major drivers of the dream economy (tourism) in the future. Story-telling and the creation of clear narratives engage people and add value to the tourism experience, therefore it enables destinations to stand out in the market place and make tourists’ dreams a reality.⁵³⁷ As we follow the history and development of (the concept of) the ‘new’ Ancient Tea Horse Road - in many ways the perfect example - in the next chapter, we will see how this concept

⁵³² Exploring the relationship of socio-economic change and transformation of place in Dali, Notar in *Displacing Desire*, narrates the struggle over space, place and identity through three representations of Dali: the movie musical *Five Golden Flowers*, made in 1959, which presented Dali as model socialist utopia, experienced a resurgence of popularity by nostalgic national tourists to Dali. In a similar fashion, the famous Hong Kong martial arts novel *Heavenly Dragon* found its rebirth with the creation of ‘Daliwood’, a martial arts ‘film city’ on the foothills of Dali’s Cangshan mountain. Further, Dali’s inclusion in *The Lonely Planet*, the planet’s most famous tourist guide book at the time, opened it up to global tourism.

⁵³³ Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*;

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*; *mingsheng* are the traditional ‘scenic spots’ as visited by the ancient literati and who left their mark by inscribing text and describing the site in travel diaries, see earlier chapter on Tourism development.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, p. 50

⁵³⁶ G. Licciardi and R. Amirtahmasebi (eds.), ‘The Economics of Uniqueness. Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Heritage Assets for Sustainable Development’, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2012.

⁵³⁷ G. Richards, ‘Tourism trends: The convergence of culture and tourism’, Academy for Leisure, NHTV University of Applied Sciences.

of storytelling and creating new narratives is being played out on the ground.

What Model?

There is one model in particular that has long captivated both the national and international heritage community, which is the ‘Lijiang model’. What exactly exemplifies the ‘Lijiang model’? What makes it so successful? There is an abundance of literature and research on Lijiang and its development as one of the most successful tourism destinations in Yunnan and China. In actual fact, Lijiang old town, Dayan, is one of the most studied World Heritage sites in China, and one of the most contradicting World Heritage sites in the world.⁵³⁸

In 1996, Lijiang was hit by a devastating earthquake which destroyed much of the old town.⁵³⁹ The old town was then restored and rebuilt by the Central and local governments with the help of UNESCO and associated organizations and inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997. Tourism to Lijiang had begun in the mid-1980s and over the next two decades a number of preservation and tourism development projects were initiated. Urban planning in Lijiang increasingly favoured tourism development over heritage preservation, including infrastructure improvement, the destruction of modern (concrete) buildings and housing, the closure or relocation of local markets and public spaces, the building of new houses in traditional style, and also resulted in the resettlement of a large number of local Naxi people. Importantly, tourism development and restoration/preservation work were carried out at the same time which from the start greatly compromised the protection of local Naxi intangible heritage. The spatial transformation of Lijiang deeply affected its cultural and social integrity: as the tourist area continually extended outward and outside business migrants increasingly occupied the old town, more and more Naxi people lost their shops and means to make a living and voluntarily left the town. The old town became inaccessible for local Naxi residents, while their culture and place were increasingly exploited and commercialised. In particular the lack of institutional coordination (institutional fragmentation) in governance greatly affected heritage preservation, protection, and management, and increasingly, critique about Lijiang’s unsustainable development came from many quarters, foremost from UNESCO.⁵⁴⁰ However, in spite of its many problems, including overcrowding, lack of a

⁵³⁸ L. Zan and T. Wang, ‘Conservation & Exploitation. Governance and Sustainability Issues in Lijiang Cases’, 12 January 2011, Report, available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1745342>.

⁵³⁹ This ‘site’ is in reality composed of three different locations, three old towns: Dayan (the biggest and most important, the one which is normally referred to when talking generally about “Lijiang”), Shuhe, and Baisha. The earthquake damaged about 2,300 houses (40%) in the core area of Dayan Old Town, about 1,600 houses (20%) in the second core area, and about 850 houses (10%) elsewhere (Guo and Huang, 1996);

⁵⁴⁰ X. Su, ‘Urban Conservation in Lijiang, China: Power Structure and Funding Systems’, *Cities*, Vol. 27, 2010, pp. 164–171; X. Huibin et al., ‘Protective Development Of Cultural Heritage Tourism: The Case Of Lijiang, China’, Mission Report, 2008, UNESCO.

conservation master plan, development pressure through uncontrolled tourism related business, and no clearly defined core and buffer zones - since the early 2000s tourism developed very quickly, and tourist numbers rose from 3.7 million in 2006 to 15 million in 2012.⁵⁴¹ Lijiang had become one of the most successful models of tourism development at a World Heritage Site, and one of the most popular ethnic tourist destinations in China.

Dali, as we have seen above, had become a tourist ‘hot spot’ in its own right, even before Lijiang. It is home to the Bai minority people, as well as a large number of other ethnic groups, and has thus become a city of remarkable diversity and architectural beauty, earning the honorary title of ‘China’s leading historical and cultural city’. In the 1980s, both Dali and Lijiang were sleepy old towns, but Dali was the most popular among the Yunnanese towns on the foreign backpacker trail, and like in Lijiang, a number of cafes and guesthouses were established by locals, offering Western food and other Western comforts and amenities. Over the following decades, as both national and international tourism has made its inroads into the area, both Dali and Lijiang have become major tourist destinations and have undergone transformation as ‘new ancient towns’ on the Ancient Tea Horse road. They both have become theme-park like towns, places of heightened commercialization and commoditization of ethnic resources, and where pseudo-ancient architecture now dominates. Curiously, then, while Lijiang and Dali have undergone similar developments, the fact that Lijiang received World Heritage status (and Dali did not) strongly suggests that such a designation has had little impact on preservation practices and management.

While ‘branding’ is one of the most important strategies of standing out in the homogenous Chinese rural landscape of ancient villages, copying an already successful model often promises similar results. Copying the tourism development model (government-led, community-led, profit-driven, sustainability), the town layout (canals, old streets, entertainment and shop precinct, old/new town separation), or landscape features (parks and gardens) of an already successful tourist destination is very common, as discussed above. Some places profit from a famous town’s vicinity, in particular as some tourist sites are often organized into village clusters or scenic areas, such as Lijiang/ Shuhe/ Baisha (WH), Hongcun and Xidi (WH), or the Longji Rice Terraces.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ CY Yang, ‘Cultural Resilience in Asia: A Comparative Study of Heritage Conservation in Lijiang and Bagan’, PhD Thesis, University of Washington, 2014. A 2016 (Jan-July) statistic shows a total of 6.3611 million tourists visiting Lijiang, ‘Statistics of Lijiang Tourism’, <http://en.ynta.gov.cn/Item/2587.aspx>, accessed 3 October 2016. The contribution of tourism to the development and prosperity of Lijiang was 37.8 billion RMB in 2014, the equivalent of roughly 70% of its total GDP. See, N. Backner, Tourism Pressure on the Old Town of Lijiang, *ecoclub.com*, 22 August 2015, <https://ecoclub.com/headlines/reports/975-150822-lijiang-china>, accessed 3 October 2016.

⁵⁴² For the World Heritage Landscape of the Longji Rice Terraces, see Chio, *A Landscape of Travel...*; for the World Heritage cluster of Lijiang, Shuhe and Baisha, see Su and Teo, *Tourism Politics in Lijiang*; for Hongcun and Xidi, see

The 'Lijiang model' has become a proto-type, a universal blue-print to copy in Yunnan and other parts of the country. But it has also become somewhat of an anti-model as Lijiang's tourism industry has grown too fast, too big, and too commercial. Today, some potential tourist spots look at other, more sustainable models, such as Shaxi, which I will further detail in the case study below. However, by comparing with other case studies in the region, this study shows that often these models tend to converge and the major features of tourism development in rural China - high commercialization of the built and cultural heritage, renovation, building and re-building in a generic pseudo native architectural style - will, sooner or later, crystallize out: today, every ancient town has one or more old streets (gujie 古街), lined with commercial shops filled with restaurants, bars, and inauthentic souvenirs, and is mostly run by outside business migrants; most towns develop a generic town infrastructure, e.g. cobblestone alleys, street lighting, red lanterns, car parks, better access roads for tourist buses, and also have an entry gate and ticket booth; moreover, leasing of traditional houses to outsiders and (encouraged) voluntary re-location of residents is common practice. It is ironic then that the very features of the 'anti-model(s)' are part of almost every new ancient town, indeed, they are often amongst the very first features of the generic development plans implemented. For example, Fenghuang Old Town in Hunan province is considered one of the most picturesque ancient villages in China, one that should be on the bucket list of must-see-ancient-towns in China with a 5-star national tourism rating, however it shows exactly the same symptoms of overcrowding, uber-commercialization and commodification, as Lijiang. As one blogger noted, 'change the architecture and you're in Lijiang'.⁵⁴³ A comparative research of time and region of tourism development of Chinese ancient towns would likely give us similar results.

Interestingly, already in the early 2000s, in the tourism development plan of Shuhe, one of the old towns of the Lijiang World Heritage site, it was put forward that Shuhe should avoid the experiences of Dayan Old Town where tourism was built inside the core area, so the city built an identical copy right next to it.⁵⁴⁴ Today, tourism to Shuhe has shifted to a large extent to this adjacent new part of the ancient town, while the original old town could preserve some of its 'authenticity' and living heritage. Again adjacent to this new part is a large block of identical, traditional-style flats for newly resettled residents. While in many ways this model seemed to be better than the Dayan model, and was propagated as a 'win-win strategy', it still failed to avoid the

T. Ying and Y. Zhou, 'Community, Governments and External Capitals in China's Rural Cultural Tourism: A Comparative Study of Two Adjacent Villages', *Tourism Management*, Vol. 28, 2007, pp. 96–107.

⁵⁴³ Travel Cathay, Web blog, <https://travelcathay.com/?s=fenghuang>

⁵⁴⁴ Yang, 'Cultural Resilience in Asia ...'.

gentrification of the core of the old town.⁵⁴⁵

There are of course not only the good and the bad manifestations of contemporary old town development, but the outright preposterous. In general this includes places that have no viable development plan to manage their heritage and old town revival. Shuanglang (双廊), an up-and-coming tourist town on Lake Erhai near Dali (Yunnan) is a good example of development gone wrong. It is designated as an ‘ancient town (*guzhen* 古镇), but it is hard to find evidence thereof as most of the old buildings that are still standing are in a dreadful state of disrepair, and new modern and modernist buildings have pushed them out of sight. I have never wondered more about the designation of the label *guzhen*. Building development and regulation is uncontrolled and the town is being increasingly colonised by outsiders who construct bold new hostels/hotels whose style is alien to the historic-cultural and the immediate and greater natural environment. The lake is polluted around the newly constructed buildings and traffic on the one narrow main street is always congested. Shuanglang is a ‘hotch-potch tourism-old town development that is aligned with the major features of other successful ancient towns in the region. However, maybe not in spite but because of its chaotic development, Shuanglang has become a popular tourist spot and there are fears that this new (anti-) model could be replicated.⁵⁴⁶



FIGURE 11: XIZHOU VILLAGESCAPE

In contrast to the ‘Shuanglang model’, nearby Xizhou (greater Dali area), a once important merchant town on the Ancient Tea Horse Road, has still preserved its rich heritage and history, and tourism is only slowly developing. Walking through Xizhou is - to use a cliché - like stepping back in time as the most part of the village consists of still intact heritage buildings and local people still

⁵⁴⁵ Yang, ‘Cultural Resilience in Asia ...’.

⁵⁴⁶ BL, interview, September 2014.

live there and go about their daily lives.⁵⁴⁷ Xizhou is what Shaxi used to be only a few years ago, a culturally and architecturally sound community steeped in tradition in a beautiful natural environment. Xizhou is now on the verge of development and has a number of development models to choose from, and leading the way in cultural heritage protection and tourism development is the *Linden Centre* right on Xizhou's doorstep. The *Linden Centre* boutique hotel is the outcome of a restoration project of a nationally ranked cultural heritage by a foreigner, a first in Chinese history.⁵⁴⁸ The Linden Centre's focus is on a meaningful interaction with the local community and provides his guests with a rich immersion into local culture, as well as other educational and cultural activities, and thus also promotes Dali's cultural heritage nationally and to the world. Importantly, it has become a nationally and internationally acclaimed model of heritage restoration, and the Linden 'brand' is now highly favoured with Chinese authorities to emulate elsewhere. In this case, the owner Brian Linden hopes that the 'Linden brand' can positively influence Xizhou's development, and that the local authorities will shun a 'Shuanglang model'. What comes to light here - and will be more detailed in the case study below - is the association of foreign private business entities and/or the collaboration of foreign NGO's and government development agencies as models for cultural heritage preservation and restoration in some of the major tourist destinations in the province and nationally.⁵⁴⁹

There are a number of important developments to note here: Taierzhuang and Shaxi are only two amongst hundreds of villages and small towns in China that are re-inventing themselves and thus take part in a unique phenomenon in Chinese cultural heritage preservation and tourism development, as well as rural modernization and development. Together with Lijiang as the forerunner and penultimate model Taierzhuang and Shaxi serve as a prototype, a new 'China cultural heritage-tourism paradigm', a Chinese-style development blueprint that is being replicated over and over in China, but with varying degrees of success. Other up-and-coming ancient towns in the area, such as Baisha, Shangrila, Heqing, Shigu, or Jianchuan, look at these as their possible model. Even far-away places in other provinces follow these models closely.

Urban Heritage Models

⁵⁴⁷ It is believed there are no less than 111 historical Bai multi-courtyard homes in Xizhou, many of them in good condition, many marked with a plaque as cultural relics.

⁵⁴⁸ The Linden Centre, <http://www.linden-centre.com/ourvision/>

⁵⁴⁹ See for example, Y. Zhao, 'China's Leading Historical and Cultrual City': Branding Dali City through Public-Private Partnerships in Bai Architecture Revitalization', *Cities*, No. 49 (2015), pp. 106-112.

Rapid urbanization has been a hallmark of reform era China and has greatly changed the face of China's cities. A 'Manhattan Transfer' type urban development of generic and placeless, steel, glass and concrete towers had become a feature of Chinese and many Asian cities since the 1970/80s, but which has in more recent times led to an increasing nostalgia for indigenous culture and an emergence to look for a more 'authentic' and 'unchanging' past.⁵⁵⁰ This global model resulted in a 'Chinese-style city-making' - which also has its roots in the emulation of 'model' cities (mainly China's coastal cities) - where the recognizable physical patterns of the city fabric also 'hint to the prevalence of a *tabula rasa* development approach'.⁵⁵¹ However, a new trend of urban regeneration emerged in China in the late 1990s with the strategic adoption of cultural heritage themes in urban development with the intention to establish a sense of place and express local uniqueness and cultural character. At the same time, the negative effects of modernization, such as environmental pollution, were increasingly felt and the need to improve the sustainability of its especially larger cities was recognized - which was also the theme of the 2010 Shanghai Expo ("Better City, Better Life"). In the last 5-Year Plan in 2012, the new Xi/Li government proclaimed a 'New Urbanisation' model of comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development, which also acknowledges the goals of 'ecological society' and 'harmonious society'.⁵⁵²

In the same way that rural ancient towns and villages follow other successful models (as above), bigger cities also use models in their reconstruction and gentrification of ancient neighbourhoods. Shanghai's *Xintiandi* precinct was one of the first urban 'preservation-oriented developments' (*baohuxing fazhan*), rebuilt in the ubiquitous faux imperial style, housing shops, cafes, and restaurants. Surrounding Xintiandi are several neighbourhoods dating back to the turn of the century with European style buildings, inhabited by law offices and generations of working-class Chinese. Here, paradoxically, the 'colonial' (Western architecture) provides the culture, while the 'imperial' (Xintiandi) provides the profit. This model has been so economically successful that it has been applied by almost every city in China with a comparable 'old street'.⁵⁵³ As with 'Lijiangization' we can think of it as the 'Xintiandi-isation' of old urban neighbourhoods.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰ Moser, 'Constructing Cultural Heritage'; a prime example here is the urban redevelopment of Singapore in the 1970/80s. See S. Dobbs, 'Urban Redevelopment and the Forced Eviction of Lighters from the Singapore River', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2002, pp. 288-310.

⁵⁵¹ B. Starnoran, 'The State of Cities in China', *IIS Newsletter*, No. 55, Autumn/Winter 2010.

⁵⁵² The new style of urbanization is aimed at using urbanization to boost domestic demand and using domestic demand to spur adjustments to the economic structure. See, Shouyi Hao, 'China's Path to the Construction of Low-Carbon Cities in the Context of New-Style Urbanization', *China Finance and Economic Review*, Vol. 2, No.3, 2014.

⁵⁵³ S. Matuszak, 'Modernizing China Seeks Historic Preservation Model', *Next City*, 22 January 2015, <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/china-historic-preservation-culture-urbanization>, accessed

⁵⁵⁴ P. Demgenski, 'Urban Renewal in Qingdao Creating Scenic Neighbourhoods, but For Whom?', *China Policy Institute*, 10 August 2016, <https://cpianalysis.org/2016/08/10/urban-renewal-in-qingdao-creating-scenic-neighbourhoods-but-for-whom/>, accessed 10 August 2016.

In this context, a different, but related phenomenon to the paradigm of creating ‘new ancient towns’ are the ‘imitation towns’ which are the object of inquiry by Bianca Bosker in her recent book, *Original Copies: Architectural Mimicry in Contemporary China*.⁵⁵⁵ Here, the author introduces the reader to the concept of (mainly Western, European) architectural copies, or ‘duplitecture’ in China, in all its fantastic, weird and wonderful forms, from copies of single structures, such as the Eiffel Tower or the White House, to the construction of whole community and villages such as British Thames Town, or the Austrian ancient village and world heritage site of Hallstadt⁵⁵⁶. Contrary to more common and simplistic interpretations, these ‘simulationscapes’ are neither theme-parks nor purely tourist attractions, but they are often lived-in, thriving communities, where families can ‘simulate the experiences of a pseudo-Orange County or Oxford’.⁵⁵⁷ Reproduction (of ancient architecture) and copying (of Western architecture), that is original and authentic, play a lesser role in Chinese philosophy, indeed, good copies/reconstructions are considered an artistic skill.⁵⁵⁸ This then also corresponds to Chinese people’s attitude to the past, where the physical object is not admired for its beauty, but what it represents, that is, it is not Western architecture per se that they are in awe of, but what it stands for, its association with modernity, sophistication, power, scientific achievement, and intellectuality. In many ways, this architectural mimicry, like the ‘new ancient towns’, is a testimony to the emergence of new Chinese lifestyles, new notions of self and identity, and has to be seen in the cultural context of the ‘new China’, including China’s larger project of (rural) ‘new urbanization’.

Consuming the Countryside: Splendid China.2?

The phenomenon of creating 'new ancient towns' is reminiscent of the theme park fever with the opening of *Splendid China* in 1989 in Shenzhen, and the creation of folk cultural villages, notably

⁵⁵⁵ B. Bosker, *Original Copies: Architectural Mimicry in Contemporary China*, Hong Kong University Press, 2013.

⁵⁵⁶ For example, on the official website of the Austrian town of Hallstatt the first thing one sees is a friendly greeting and right after that the following slogan: “*Hallstatt: Das Original. Millionenfach fotografiert - einmal kopiert - nie erreicht.*” Translated this means: “*Hallstatt: The Original. Photographed a million times - copied once- never Reached.*”, cited in M. Wittek, ‘Hallstatt Made In China –An Austrian Village Cloned’, MA Thesis, University of Leiden, July 2015.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Bosker, *Original Copies*; such ‘deja-vu designs’ result from real estate speculation and resulting land sales which account for anything up to 80% of local governments revenues, see

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/aug/20/why-havent-chinas-cities-learned-from-americas-mistakes>

⁵⁵⁸ Here we are also reminded of China’s ‘shanzhai’ culture. Shanzhai, which literally means "mountain fortress" and implies banditry and lack of state control, refers to China's vast array of name-brand knockoffs, but has recently expanded in meaning. Shanzhai culture "is from the grass roots and for the grass roots," says Han Haoyue, a media critic in Beijing, who sees it as a means of self-expression. "It gives people another choice and the possibility of resisting dominant cultural values." See e.g., S. Canaves and J. Ye, ‘Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Rebellion in China Copycat Culture Hits High Point with Lunar New Year Show. Elvis in a Pink Wig’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 January 2009, <http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB123257138952903561> , accessed 30 July 2016.

China Folk Cultural Village and *Window on the World* that opened soon after in 1991 adjacent to *Splendid China*. However, if *Splendid China* - a miniaturized landscape of 'timeless China' - served as 'calming certainty' amidst China's race into modernity, as Anagnost suggests, can this still be said of the 'ancient town fever' of the late 1990s and 2000s? No doubt, the successful integration of tourism into the national project of modernization, underscored by growing market consumption, commercialization and commodification, has continued to the present day. But do Chinese tourists still need the 'calming certainty' of a nostalgic past (now expressed in the mushrooming of replica Ming/Qing dynasty ancient towns and villages) amidst the dramatic upheavals of modernity's maelstrom? Or are we now, more than twenty years after *Splendid China*, dealing with a different, post-modern, experience of anxiety, ambivalence, or disorientation of modernity that warrants certainties and securities enshrined in different re-creations and representations of the past? If so, what are the new markers, and how is this new tourist landscape played out by the state, tourism industry, and the people?

If *Splendid China*, along with the new consumption of culture and the nation is the past, the revitalization and/or recreation of new ancient towns are not unlike the post-modern, post-tourist version of a Tourist Shopping Village⁵⁵⁹, where the tourist, in futile search of authenticity, enjoys manifestly inauthentic and 'contrived' attractions, an artificially induced 'placeness', such as make-believe fantasies, large-scale shows and performances, theme-parks, and Disney-fication of other places.⁵⁶⁰ Or as Amita Gosh notes of Shangri-la, a place that is a 'post-modern creation, not quite a product, not quite a place'.⁵⁶¹ Tourism has always been in a dialectic relationship with modernity (modern vs traditional), so the quest for authenticity was of great importance. However, it seems now, the discourse of authenticity has changed from an 'objective' authenticity of the attraction, to a 'subjective' authenticity experience.⁵⁶² In this very sense, the creation of 'new ancient towns' all over the Chinese countryside plays a big part in providing the travel industry with a new product and infrastructure which also fills the needs of millions of leisure- and consumption-hungry middle-class Chinese tourists. And again, if we reconsider Chinese philosophy of material things of the past, we are reminded that it is not the object, but its inherent historical or cultural meaning that is valued, therefore, fake or not fake, these 'new ancient towns' - and as Anagnost observed about the early theme parks and folk villages - give the nation a visual sense of continuity, echoing Chinese national media's five-thousand-years-of-uninterrupted-history-and-superior-culture

⁵⁵⁹ L. Murphy et al., *Tourist Shopping Villages. Forms and Functions*, London, Routledge, 2011.

⁵⁶⁰ E. Cohen, 'The Changing Face of Tourism', Soc (2008), 45, pp. 330-333, Symposium: Touring the World. Published online.

⁵⁶¹ A. Gosh, 'Road to Shangri-la', Linden Centre Review, available at www.linden-centre.com

⁵⁶² Ibid., Cohen, 'The Changing Face of Tourism'.

'indoctrainment'.⁵⁶³

Conclusion

The 'new ancient towns', as discussed in this chapter, can be seen as the successors of the 1980/90s theme-park and folk village era with a new purpose. *Splendid China* marked the beginning of tourism's collaboration with the state project of modernity (via transnational capital) and at the same time embodied competing narratives of Chinese modernity. The revival, restoration, or rebuilding of the 'new ancient towns' continues this collaboration, but at a different level. It is still appropriated by the state for economic development and modernization, but through cultural and world heritage tourism, it is also linked to a new project of modernisation, of 'going out to the world', of a new internationalism and cosmopolitanism.

The above study with relevant examples provides yet another answer. It is valuable as it represents the attitudes, desires, fantasies, and expectations of a cross-section of a modern consumer population, in particular the Chinese tourist. 'New ancient town' tourism has become a highly popular segment within Chinese rural and heritage tourism and is therefore well placed, as it develops and matures, in defining its future, in particular one where a more sustainable and inclusive approach will benefit both locals and tourists. It then has two major functions: it satisfies urban (mainly Han) tourists' nostalgia for an 'imagined' past, as well as their need for entertainment and leisure - provided by both the traditional and modern; and it helps develop and modernize local people's lives and economies. While for most of the 'new ancient towns' and traditional villages tourism development and its potential flow-on effects of economic benefits is the catalyst for cultural heritage preservation (cultural heritage development), it is also able to contribute to the overall national effort of modernization. However, what is largely overlooked and (intentionally) downplayed by all stakeholders involved in this seemingly all-beneficial project is that tourism to 'new ancient towns', urban heritage quarters and historic neighbourhoods, has – amongst other problems - engendered a mass production of the fake and inauthentic, reconstructed and reproduced, both of tangible (architecture) and intangible heritage (tradition), therefore we may question the Chinese government's and its people's quest of saving its 'authentic' history and past.

The following two chapters provide an empirical case study of this 'new ancient town paradigm' in rural southwest China, also with the impending and hypothetical questions in mind: if *Splendid China* was to prepare the Chinese tourist to consume the 'real' sites later, what kind of 'reality' was

⁵⁶³ Cited in Nyiri, *Scenic Spots*, p. 83.

this to be? And has the state delivered? Can we find the truth in the facts, that is, in present discourses of modernization and development, of ethnicity, ethnic harmony and national unity? Are the ‘new ancient towns’ the logical and inevitable successor, a *Splendid China*.²?



Introduction

Chinese tea has played so long and so vital a role in world history that it is not surprising its central place amongst world trading commodities should last into the modern era. From its earliest consumption many thousands of years ago in ancient China to the modern day global tea drinking fetish, tea of the *camellia sinensis* variety has always been appreciated for its health and medicinal properties and benefits, but above all, for its refreshing taste. Tea also became associated with poetry and art and became a symbol of wealth and sophistication in China, Japan, and in the West (Chinoiserie). Indeed, tea had become so precious and valued in the West, that the British sent spies to the tea-growing regions in China to bring back knowledge of tea growing and specimens of tea to plant in their new colony in India (Assam) in order to become independent of China's tea.⁵⁶⁴

Tea was transported/exported to all corners of the Chinese empire, but it was Yunnan Pu-er tea that was carried on mules on the many interconnecting tea horse trails to Tibet where it was exchanged for horses. The tea routes connected with other major trading routes in the region and beyond, including the Southern Silk Road, the Northern (Mongolia-Russia) Tea Road, and the Maritime Road that connected China with Central and South-East Asia, Africa and Europe, testifying to an already greatly networked world. The tea and horse trade was crucially important to various Chinese dynasties and lasted for more than a thousand years. At the end of the 19th century, however, Chinese tea production declined in the global market as other countries started plantations and distribution of tea. As a result, as tea became more widely available and at a cheaper price, it grew in popularity and facilitated a global tea production as well as a global tea culture.⁵⁶⁵ Importantly, both tea-producing and tea-consuming countries have adopted tea as an inherent element of their national identity.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ One of these spies was Robert Fortune, employed by the British East India Company (BEIC), who made many trips into China and succeeded in bringing back knowledge of tea growing and production which was then applied in the new colonies, see e.g., 'Robert Fortune the Tea Thief, produced by D. and W. Perelsztejn, Ronin Films, Australia, 2002, <http://www.roninfilms.com.au/feature/466/robert-fortune-tea-thief.html>

⁵⁶⁵ M.J. Gilbert, 'Asia in World History: 1750-1914', *Education about Asia*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Fall 2008.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid. For example, China developed the 'art of tea', Japan the 'way of tea', Russians drink tea from Samovar, the British have afternoon tea, see, L. Joliffe (ed.), *Tea and Tourism: Tourists, Traditions and Transformations*, Toronto, Channel View Publications, 2007.

Today, the cyber-world is full of tea blogs, on-line tea shops and tea merchants, and the tourism industry is offering tea appreciation and awareness tours, that is, tea has seriously become fashionable again, globally, and its continuing power in the world economy is manifested in the presence of global tea corporations such as Unilever (Lipton Tea), or Tata Industries (Tetley).⁵⁶⁷ By following the ‘social life’⁵⁶⁸ of (Chinese) tea, its growth of production, consumption and distribution, we can see how intricately it became linked with global trade and politics and influenced the fate of ancient and modern world history. Most importantly, over the last two decades, tea in China has gone through a new revival and is being used to shape new identities and narratives through linking it with ancient heritage and local memories around tea. Here the revival and ‘tourismification’ of the Ancient Tea Horse Road (ATHR) plays a pivotal role in the modern narrative of Yunnan as an ascending regional power and ‘bridgehead’ between China and Asia.

In this chapter, I will first introduce the concept of cultural and trade routes in a general and in a World Heritage context. Cultural Routes as a relative newcomer to the World Heritage canon greatly challenge orthodox understandings and practices of heritage protection as they are mostly trans-local, trans-regional and trans-national, and are inhabited by often extremely diverse peoples, cultures and religions. The rediscovery of the Ancient Tea Horse Road of Yunnan Province in China is one such route which is presently undergoing changes as it is being nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage Tentative List, the precursor of the nomination as a World Heritage site. Here we can witness the ‘heritage making’ of this culturally most diverse and once most lively and perilous trading route for tea in the world, which is slowly regaining its fame and reputation through newly grafted national, regional, and local narratives. As these narratives are largely based on the re-discovery, re-invention, and adaptation of local tangible and intangible heritages along this route they serve at once local, national, regional and global needs.

Transnational trade routes in China and the world

For the last few years, China has been promoting a proposal of a cultural and economic revitalization of the ancient Silk Road which will give it new meaning within the broader aspirations of the Chinese Dream (‘New Silk Road, New Dreams’) and a new type of world order. The ‘One Belt One Road Initiative’ (*yidai yilu* 一帶一路, or OBOR), also described as a key

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, Gilbert, ‘Asia in World History ...’; today, tea from other countries, in particular India and Ceylon, have almost completely superseded Chinese tea in the world market.

⁵⁶⁸ A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, London, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

element of a "new round of opening to the world" (新一轮对外开放, *xin yi lun duiwai kaifang*)⁵⁶⁹, was first introduced in 2013 by Xi Jinping on a visit to Kazakhstan and is China's vision for an interdependent economic and political community stretching from East Asia to Western Europe via the New Silk Road and the New Maritime Silk Road.⁵⁷⁰ While more concrete plans - principles, framework, and cooperation priorities and mechanisms - were only recently unveiled by the Chinese leadership, the ambitious project has long commenced in the form of Chinese-sponsored extensive and expansive infrastructure building in many of the concerned countries in between, e.g. by creating the Asia Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), but it is also building on the long on-going research and development of the UNWTO Silk Road Programme as a series of world heritage sites and new tourism destinations.⁵⁷¹



MAP 2: THE NEW ANCIENT SILK ROADS (GOOGLE)

Already for many centuries, historically and culturally significant sites and sights along the ancient Silk Road have been of great interest to adventurers, missionaries, scholars, and lately the global heritage community. This ancient route, acclaimed the 'greatest route in the history of mankind', once connected eastern and western civilizations through trade and cultural exchange and left lasting cultural legacies along the way.⁵⁷² Countless books, magazines, documentaries and

⁵⁶⁹ "'One Belt, One Road": China's Great Leap Outward', *European Council on Foreign Affairs: China Analysis*, June 2015.

⁵⁷⁰ 'China's Initiative on Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st -century Maritime Silk Road', Special Feature Series, *Xinhua News*, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/silkroad/>. The 'One belt one road' (OBOR) comprises two projects: the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' (SREB) initiative, aimed at facilitating land-based trade across the Eurasian land-mass (Central Asia), and the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road' project oriented towards the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

⁵⁷¹ 'Chronology of China's Belt and Road Initiative', *Xinhua News*, 24 June 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-06/24/c_135464233.htm, accessed 26 June 2016.

⁵⁷² The name Silk Road (*Seidenstrasse*) was coined by the German explorer Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen for a section of the route that passed through the Tarim Basin into Transoxiana. World Tourism Organization (WTO), 'Safeguarding Silk Road Heritage for Tourism', Conclusion from UNWTO Silk Road Minister's Meeting 2013, ITB Berlin. See, http://dtxqt4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/itb_ministers_meeting_conclusions_final_english_0.pdf

academic work have been dedicated to this route, reaching virtual mania proportions. Tourism around the Silk Road has become increasingly popular, in particular since the official opening and inclusion in the World Heritage list of one of the most significant Buddhist art heritage sites, the Dunhuang Mogao Caves in China's far-west Gansu province in 1987.⁵⁷³ While many of the heritages of the ancient Silk Road have been known, acknowledged, and made popular for many years now, it is the new idea of World Heritage serial (trans-border) nomination that has attracted the attention of State Parties and which promises fairer and more successful nomination for member states.⁵⁷⁴ Expert teams at UNESCO and UNWTO have been researching Silk Road sites and routes ('Silk Road Heritage Corridors Project') for many years as part of the transnational Silk Road World Heritage Serial Nomination project, which also includes the collaboration of more than 15 State Parties along the route. The Silk Road project has even moved into Eastern Europe, including Russia, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania.⁵⁷⁵ With the anticipation of increased tourism after World Heritage nomination, the UNWTO Silk Road Programme, a collaborative program to support sustainable tourism along the Silk Road (Silk Road Action Plan), holds regular workshops, conferences and annual meetings on 'Safeguarding Silk Road Heritage for Tourism'. The Chang'an-Tian-shan Silk Road Corridor, one of the major arteries of the Silk Roads, has become the first stretch of the Silk Road to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014.⁵⁷⁶



FIGURE 12: GLOBAL REPORT ON CULTURAL ROUTES AND ITINERARIES, AFFILIATE MEMBERS REPORT PUBLISHED BY UNWTO AND AGENCIA DE TOURISMO DE LAS ISLAS BALEARES (ATB) VOLUME 12, 2015.

⁵⁷³ For more information on World Heritage site of Dunhuang-Mogao caves, see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/440> . In 1991 the 'Silk Road Tourism Year' was launched in Xi'an.

⁵⁷⁴ Also, serial site modality has the advantage that a number of sites could be nominated as a single serial inscription. This is important, as recently UNESCO has limited the inscription to one property per country to the List. UNESCO already started a ten-year Silk Roads Project in 1988, organizing expeditions retracing land and sea routes of the Silk Road. See http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=26462&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁵⁷⁵ C. Moulin and P. Boniface, 'Routeing Heritage for Tourism: making heritage and cultural tourism networks for socio-economic development', *International Journal for Heritage Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2001, pp. 237-248.

⁵⁷⁶ 'The Chang'an-Tian-shan Silk Road Corridor has been Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List', n.d., <http://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/changan-tian-shan-silk-road-corridor-has-been-inscribed-unesco-world-heritage-list> , accessed 5 August 2016.

But in recent times lesser known routes that rival the significance of the ancient Silk Road have also received international attention. The Ancient Tea Horse Road (*chama guda* 茶马古道), also sometimes erroneously referred to as the ‘Southern Silk Road’ (*nanfang sichou zhi lu* 南方丝绸之路)⁵⁷⁷, is one of these routes, connecting the historic tea growing region of China’s south-west Yunnan Province (Xishuangbanna) with its neighbours to the south (Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Burma), west (Tibet, Sichuan), north (Mongolia), and China’s central plains, before continuing through South-East Asia and the Middle East to Europe. In 2010, following an important national/regional meeting in Pu’erh on the preservation of the Ancient Tea Horse Road, first steps were taken for its potential listing as a World Heritage site under the category of ‘Cultural Routes’ or ‘cultural route heritage’.⁵⁷⁸ Further, testifying to extensive trade relations with China’s northern and western neighbours, the northern Tea Road, a parallel route to the north of the ancient Silk Road, passing through Mongolia and connecting China and Russia, has been rediscovered.⁵⁷⁹ In September 2013 China, Mongolia and Russia jointly applied for the northern Tea Road to be added to the Intangible Cultural Heritage list.⁵⁸⁰ Further, the Maritime Silk Road, connecting China, South-Asia, Africa, and the West, has become the object of extensive study and interest, recently more so in the light of the developments of the New Maritime Silk Road programme.⁵⁸¹

In other parts of the world, equally important ancient trade routes have existed, and which have in recent times also sought revival and recognition. These include, the *Qhapaq Ñan*, known as the Main Andean Road, which was the backbone of the Inca Empire’s political and economic power;⁵⁸² the (*Maritime*) *Spice Routes*, where highly-valued and highly-valuable oriental spices such as

⁵⁷⁷ The Southern Silk Road, connected Southwest China, via Burma to India and beyond. For more information see, B. Yang, ‘Horses, Silver, and Cowries: Yunnan in Global Perspective’, *Journal of World History*, Academic Research Library, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2004, pp. 281-322.

⁵⁷⁸ See, G. Sigley, ‘Cultural Heritage Tourism and the Ancient Tea Horse Road of Southwest China’, *International Journal of China Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, October 2010, pp. 531-544.

⁵⁷⁹ What used to be part of the USSR and is now Central Asia, such as Kazakhstan, Tujikistan, passing the Gobi desert. For an excellent account of the Northern Tea Road, see also, M. Avery, *The Tea Road: China and Russia meet across the Steppe*, Beijing, China Intercontinental Press, 2003; and, L. Manlajav and Sh. Egshig, ‘The Mongolia Tea Road’, Research Project, *The Tea Culture Society*, NGO.

⁵⁸⁰ This route is also known as the ‘great Siberian tea road’, see M. Nordbye, ‘The Great Siberian Tea Road’, *Russian Life*, May/June 2013; it was also known as the ‘ten-thousand-mile path of tea’ and was formed in the late 18th century and was in use two-and-a-half centuries, crossing China, Mongolia’s Gobi desert and Russia’s Siberia, leading on to the Middle East and Europe. See, ‘Nations Apply to List Ancient Tea Path as Cultural Heritage’, *CRI* (China Radio International), 11 September 2013, <http://english.cri.cn/6909/2013/09/11/2982s787172.htm>

⁵⁸¹ In the 19th century, the Maritime Road was used by the famous China Tea-Clippers that made their long and rapid journey from Foochow (Fukien), then the main port for export of Chinese tea, to London. For more information on Tea Clipper ships, see <http://www.tea.co.uk/tea-clippers>

⁵⁸² Main Andean Road Qhapaq Nan, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/qhapaqnan>; Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador and Peru share a common cultural heritage: the Main Andean Road, or Qhapaq Nan. UNESCO has been assisting these nations to apply for a single nomination of Qhapaq Nan on the World Heritage List.

cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves were transported between the Dutch East-Indies and Europe (via Africa)⁵⁸³; the *Pilgrimage Route of Santiago de Compostela* which played a key role in religious and cultural exchange and bears witness to the exceptional power and influence of the Christian faith among people of all classes during the Middle Ages;⁵⁸⁴ and the *Slave Routes* which functioned to trade human beings of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean Region.⁵⁸⁵

The Politics of Cultural Routes in the World Heritage Canon

What all these routes have in common, is the influence that their extensive and expansive trade activities and cultural exchanges had on world history, but more so the impact they had on the ‘making’ of local, national and regional identities. While national routes, such as China’s UNESCO Heritage listed Grand Canal or the Great Wall, Australia’s Heritage Trails, Penang’s Heritage Route, the Mandela Route in Africa, or, controversially, Vietnam’s Highway No. 1, portray important narratives of national and local histories⁵⁸⁶, transnational routes reaffirm that the world has historically been a globally connected place.

In recent years, many of these routes have been inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage list under the category of ‘Cultural Routes’, one of the four World Heritage categories, approved in 2005 by ICOMOS.⁵⁸⁷ While routes and networks as heritage ‘sites’ have their origin in a distinct European context (supported by the *Council of Europe*) to further a pan-European dialogue, UNESCO has employed this category for its wider educational, social and cultural aims.⁵⁸⁸ According to ICOMOS, this category, also referred to as ‘Cultural Itineraries’, is proving to be a very fertile concept as ‘it provides an exceptional framework for the dynamics of mutual understanding, a pluralistic interpretation of history, and a culture of peace. It is based on population movements,

⁵⁸³ The ‘geopolitics’ of the maritime spice routes throughout the millennia rivals the importance of the Silk and Tea Roads. See, for example, P.K. Mannasala, *The Spice Routes, Asia Pacific Universe* (APU), <http://asiapacificuniverse.com/pkm/spiceroutes.htm>

⁵⁸⁴ After Jerusalem was captured by the Caliph Omar in 638, Christians were hesitant about going to the Holy City as pilgrims. Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, where the tomb of the apostle St James the Great, who brought Christianity to the Iberian peninsula, had been founded around 800, benefited from the decline of Jerusalem as a pilgrimage centre. For more information, see description of World Heritage nomination at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/868>

⁵⁸⁵ See, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/712/> and <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialogue/the-slave-route/>

⁵⁸⁶ See, for example, proceedings of the ‘Making Tracks. From Point to Pathway: the Heritage of Routes and Journeys’ national ICOMOS conference in Alice Spring, Australia, in 2001. <http://www.aicomos.com/2001-making-tracks/>

⁵⁸⁷ Following increasing interest in cultural routes, an ‘International Scientific Committee’ (ISC) on Cultural Routes - responsible for promoting *the identification, study and enhancement of cultural routes and their significance* - was added by ICOMOS to its other networks in a meeting in Madrid in 1994.

⁵⁸⁸ Moulin and Boniface, ‘Routeing Heritage for Tourism ...’.

encounters and dialogue, and the exchange among and cross-fertilization of cultures in time and space (2.a)'.⁵⁸⁹ This is particularly true for transnational routes, such as the Silk Road, which through its serial nomination project requires the cooperation of 15 State Parties whose cultures, traditions, religions and political systems as well as their state of material development, are hugely diverse but have to be brought together for this purpose. Importantly, the guidelines state that for the 'cultural routes' category to have meaning, or heritage significance, it 'must possess a set of values whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts' and it limits its application by indicating that it is the series of points - like beads on a string - that need to be considered to meet the 'outstanding universal value' criteria, not the component points individually.⁵⁹⁰

While today physical evidence of many of these routes/paths is difficult to find, their existence and value are often more evident in their intangible manifestation, such as in the context of the ATHR as heritages associated with the cultural traditions of tea production, consumption, and distribution. It seems then, that 'Cultural Routes', more than even 'Cultural Landscapes', can be considered a 'halfway station between tangible and intangible cultural heritage', where its immaterial aspects are more important than the material, and where the dynamism of transmission and impact, including all human activity connected to the road such as politics, commerce, science, religion and culture are taken into account.⁵⁹¹ As one ICOMOS document states, 'cultural routes are one of the most important contributions of culture and history that can improve understanding between peoples' as they are 'a testimony of the encounters and confrontations between peoples and of the transfer of knowledge and cross-fertilization of cultures in space and time' and therefore cultural routes 'imply a profound modification in the way cultural heritage is evaluated and recognized'.⁵⁹²

Serial nomination, such as the Silk Road heritage, and its management as a tourism 'Cultural Itinerary' are therefore not only prohibitively complex, but - like all heritage nominations - also highly political, in particular in its promotion and selection of sites. Indeed, China's list of sites it wants to have included under the Silk Road World Heritage is 'pointedly - even heartbreakingly - selective'.⁵⁹³ Likewise, pertaining to the Mongolia - Russia Tea Road, though officials from tourist organizations in Russia and China discuss in detail tea road tours and new tourist routes, Mongolia, a big part of territory through which the tea road was passing through, is not included in these discussions.⁵⁹⁴ There is also concern that with the view of tourism development the Chinese

⁵⁸⁹ Report on the Meeting of Experts: 'Itineraries as Cultural Heritage,' Madrid, 1994, (Documents) http://www.icomos-ciic.org/INDEX_ingl.htm

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., Report on the Meeting of Experts.

⁵⁹¹ Moulin and Boniface, 'Routeing Heritage for Tourism ...';

⁵⁹² International CIIC/ICCR Seminar. Conclusions. Guanajuato, Mexico. October, 1999, http://www.icomos-ciic.org/INDEX_ingl.htm

⁵⁹³ R. Perlin, 'The Silk Road Unravels'. openDemocracy, 29 July 2009, <http://www.opendemocracy.net>

⁵⁹⁴ Manlajav and Egshig, 'The Mongolia Tea Road'.

government will more likely invest in ATHR heritage assets that are of international and national importance, as has been the case with Lijiang old town.⁵⁹⁵

The application for the Ancient Tea Horse Road of China's south-west provinces of Yunnan (and Sichuan) on the tentative list for World Heritage presents a microcosm of these problems and complexities as a large number of minority peoples with extremely diverse languages, customs, and traditions form part of this extensive network of routes and their livelihoods and cultural and ethnic identities will be further affected by increasing infrastructure and tourism development, also associated with a general 'heritagization' of the province, but also by specific measures and policies (ICOMOS) relating to the potential inscription of the Ancient Tea Horse Road as a 'cultural itinerary' on the World Heritage list.

The Ancient Tea Horse Road of Yunnan, China

Jeff Fuchs, a modern day adventurer/explorer and himself an Ancient Tea Horse Road 'wanderer' describes it as 'one of the globe's oldest journeys', that many called the 'Eternal Road' due to its 'multi-faceted host of migrants, brigands, traders, and wandering monks. A highway through the sky that transported commodities, news, DNA, and 'that eternal currency: a stimulant green leaf, tea'.⁵⁹⁶



MAPS 3 AND 4: ANCIENT TEA HORSE ROAD MAP (GOOGLE)

The Ancient Tea Horse Road, or *chama gudao* (茶马古道), refers to an extensive network of paths, routes and roads that crisscross Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Sichuan, Qinghai, and Tibet, originating in the tea growing region in the subtropical south of Yunnan province. Inhabited by a

⁵⁹⁵ H. du Cros, 'China's Tea and Horse Trade Route and its Potential for Tourism, in L. Joliffe (ed.), *Tea and Tourism: Tourists, Traditions and Transformations*, Clevedon, Channel View Publications, 2007, pp. 167-179.

⁵⁹⁶ J. Fuchs, 'Faces of the Tea Horse Road: A Last Look at One of the World's Oldest Trading Routes', in *Huffington Post* online, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kensington-explorersinresidence/faces-of-the-tea-horse-ro_1_b_3690452.html, accessed 4 November 2013.

number of different minority nationalities such as the Dai, Lahu, Hani, Jinuo, Bulang, Akha and Wa, many of these ethnic peoples grew tea trees on small land holdings on the ‘tea mountains’ of Sipsongpanna (Xishuangbanna).⁵⁹⁷ Tea of the *Camilla sinensis* variety was picked by hand, dried on large bamboo trays and packaged into hollow bamboo sticks or bricks and then transported by mule teams and/or porters to neighbouring countries in Burma, Laos, and Vietnam, to China’s central plains, but the variety grown in Yunnan - today known as Pu’er tea - mostly found its way north and north-west to Tibet, Nepal, India and beyond, some trails also passing through Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai or Xinjiang. Many of the paths that were used to transport tea converged at different stages along the way where major markets were established, such as Simao (Pu’er), Tengchong, Dali (Xiaguan), Shaxi, Lijiang, or Shangri-La, and where often mule teams and muleteers were changed for the next leg of the journey. Many of these market towns became important merchant, cultural and religious centres, as large numbers of people from far-away places and diverse cultural backgrounds became part of the ever growing and often highly lucrative tea trade, a diversity which was also reflected in the social and economic life, and in architecture. The region is extreme in topography, geography, biodiversity, ethnic diversity and climate, and most of the way the caravans (*mabang* 马帮) crossed treacherous and dangerous terrain, making it one of the ‘greatest odysseys made by man’.⁵⁹⁸ Mules were the preferred mode of transport for the long-distance trade, however, a special breed of horses and yaks were also used in the higher mountain regions in Tibet.⁵⁹⁹ Muleteers (*lados* in Tibetan) were mostly minority peoples, including Muslim Hui, Yi, Bai and Naxi, but also local Han people. Some of the caravans were shorter distance, but the long distance treks, stretching over more than three thousand miles, could take up to a year before they reached their destination in Lhasa, Tibet. From there teams and goods would change to carry on through Nepal, India and beyond, while the Yunnanese muleteers returned with goods from Tibet and Eurasia. Besides tea, caravans also carried jade, salt, sugar and other necessities, while they brought back mountain products, medicinal herbs, furs and horses from Tibet. But the routes were also significant corridors for migration and communication among the many ethnic groups of the western borderlands, and often monks would accompany caravans on their way to or from Lhasa, the holiest place of learning for Buddhist monks, and the holiest place of pilgrimage for Tibetan people.⁶⁰⁰ As we can see in literary accounts and in the following case study, the variety and quantity of goods and a lively cultural exchange both ways deeply influenced and shaped

⁵⁹⁷ See, J. Zhang, ‘Multiple Visions of Authenticity. Pu’er Tea Consumption in Yunnan and in Other Places’, *Journal of Chinese Dietary Culture*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2011, pp. 63-106; PY Hung, ‘Tea Forest in the Making: Tea Production and the Ambiguity of Modernity on China’s Southwest Frontier’, *Geoforum*, Vol. 47, 2013, pp. 178-188.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Fuchs, ‘Faces of the Tea Horse Road ...’;

⁵⁹⁹ It was mainly along the Sichuan-Tibet route that porters were used to transport tea.

⁶⁰⁰ See for example, J.E. Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange Within and Beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia*, Dynamics in the History of Religion, Leiden, Brill, 2011.

people along the way, which is reflected in their hybrid languages, rich culture, and syncretic religious practices.

In reality, there existed a number of main routes which made up the Tea Horse Road: the *Qinghai-Tibet*, *Yunnan-Tibet*, and *Sichuan-Tibet* routes, and they rival each other in importance.⁶⁰¹ In fact, the *Sichuan-Tibet* route was of great importance as most of the Tibetan tea came from Yan'an in Sichuan which was the start of that route.⁶⁰² Different routes were prominent at different periods of time, depending on the political conditions in China and many other countries along the road, as well, there was competition with alternative routes, on land or sea, which could absorb the increasing volume of trade from the East to the West. For example, the trade on the Ancient Silk Road rapidly declined during the late Ming dynasty, but trade along the ATHR flourished during the Yuan and Ming dynasty, while at times, the Sichuan section of the tea road featured more prominently.⁶⁰³ With the increasing research into the history of these major trading routes, scholars, government officials, tourism officials and locals alike are keen to reserve the brand name and its association to 'their' respective route.

Archaeological finds testify to the existence of trails and trading routes in this region for thousands of years, but it wasn't until the Tang dynasty that more formal trade occurred.⁶⁰⁴ The Tibetan people had been in contact with peoples in Yunnan and Sichuan for a long time, and the Tibetan Tubo Empire had conquered tribes in the northern parts of Yunnan and Sichuan where they established a military presence in the early 7th century. They had contact with the Chinese Tang court (618-907), but also had good relations with the local Nanzhao Kingdom which covered the areas where tea trees were native. It is believed that during these times tea was introduced to Tibet. As the name suggests, the main reason for the existence of the Tea Horse Road (*chamadao*) was trade, in particular the trade of tea and horses with Tibet: throughout the millennia, the Chinese military

⁶⁰¹ The *Sichuan-Tibet* route begins in Ya'an and goes to Chamdo in Tibet via Luding, Kangding, Litang and Bantang before merging with the *Yunnan-Tibet* route. The *Yunnan-Tibet* route also consisted of (three) lines, the major route passing through Pu'erh (Simao), Dali, Jianchuan, Lijiang and Shangrila (Zhongdian), then merging with the Sichuan route and continuing on to Lhasa, Burma, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and beyond.

⁶⁰² P. Booz, 'Tea, Trade and Transport in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands', PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2011.

⁶⁰³ Ming dynasty China adopted a policy of appeasement towards the Mongol and other nomads of the northern frontier and stressed maritime trade in the early fifteenth century, before turning its back, at least officially, on foreign trade altogether after the middle of that century. By the sixteenth century, long-distance trade between western and eastern Eurasia began to shift decisively to maritime routes, and into the hands of entirely new players in the game. European nations were pioneering new maritime trade routes, and taking that trade into their own hands. See e.g., <http://sites.asiasociety.org/arts/monksandmerchants/silk2.htm>; on Sichuan-Tibet route see, Booz, 'Tea, Trade and Transport in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands'.

⁶⁰⁴ The unearthing of cist tombs scattered in the valleys and gorges of the upper reaches of the main rivers in the area in the western parts of Yunnan and Sichuan, and some in Tibet, have been dated back as early as to the *Shang* dynasty (ca 1600 – 1100 BCE) and have been found to belong to the same cultural system. So it seems that the route could have been in use for many millennia before the Tea Horse Road developed during the Tang dynasty.

lacked strong horses, and Tibetan tribes and tribes of the north-western highlands (Mongols, Turks) bred superior horses that the Chinese desired.⁶⁰⁵ In the Book of Tang (Tang Shu), for example, we read, ‘Horses are the military preparedness of the state. If Heaven takes away this preparedness, the state will tatter and fall.’⁶⁰⁶ The various dynasties were well aware of their need for a continuous supply of horses to survive and had long bought horses or traded them for gifts, however that exchange was too sporadic and the numbers of horses too small. Since the Tang dynasty, however, when tea was first introduced to the Tibetan nobility, and later when it was made more available to Tibetan people, Tibetans became increasingly dependent on tea as a local staple. However, as tea cannot be grown at high altitudes, it became the currency of choice for both Tibetans and Chinese to trade for horses.⁶⁰⁷

A tea and horse trade began to develop during the late Tang and continued to grow during the Song (960-1127) dynasty. It flourished during the Yuan (1279-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties, when the empires were most vulnerable to nomadic intruders from the north (Mongols), and the exchange of tea and horses was incorporated into the tributary system. Seizing on the enormous profits that tea traders could make, tea production and distribution were increasingly formalized, monopolized, taxed, standardized, and institutionalized over the following centuries. Tea and horse trade offices (*chamasi*), tea tax offices (*chakosi*), tea control stations (*pichasi*), and later a tea censorate, were established as Government control of tea production and trade was vital in its creation of a ‘rational and effective horse policy’.⁶⁰⁸ It also meant, that the tea and horse trade was conducted on Chinese terms.⁶⁰⁹ Selling tea illegally to the barbarians was severely punished, and smuggling tea outside the borders was a capital offense.⁶¹⁰ However, at other times, when the empire was at its weakest, tea trade was ‘liberalised’ and relaxed as the empire needed the cooperation of both the merchants who traded and the barbarian tribes who consumed the tea.

⁶⁰⁵ It was the ‘heavenly horses’, also known as the ‘blood-sweating horses’, from the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan, that the Chinese desired.

⁶⁰⁶ Cited in A. Forbes and D. Henley, *China’s Ancient Tea Horse Road*, Cognoscenti Books, 2011.

⁶⁰⁷ Beyond the taste, it provided significant nutrition to their meat and milk heavy diet. They often mixed the fermented leaves with yak butter creating a salty, rich tea that is still common today. The tea from Yunnan’s Pu’er region – made up of the coarse and larger tea leaves, twigs, and other impurities and add-ins, and fermented for many months on the long route on the backs of mules and yaks – was particularly favoured by Tibetans.

⁶⁰⁸ For more information on Ming dynasty tea-and-horse trade, see R. Rossabi, ‘The Tea and Horse Trade with Inner Asia during the Ming’, *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1970, pp. 136-168. Tea along the north-eastern (Mongolian-Siberian) trade route was paid for in Silver, while in the north-west, tea became the currency to pay for goods, in particular horses. Horse trade offices (*chamasi*) were established to encourage the exchange of tea for horses, and the monopoly was not only used to control the trade, but also to ‘pacify the unruly barbarians’ who coveted the tea for its dietary and medicinal benefits.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Rossabi, ‘The Tea and Horse Trade with Inner Asia ...’; this also seemed to be the case on the Northern Tea Road.

⁶¹⁰ Rossabi, ‘The Tea and Horse Trade with Inner Asia ...’; an interesting addition to the topic of smuggling tea is Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, ‘Smuggling and the British Tea Trade before 1784’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 1, 1968, pp. 44-73.

During the Qing dynasty the trade of horses came to an end, but the trade of tea continued on the Tea Horse Road and was further developed as restrictions on the tea trade were eased. There was still some traffic along the road until the mid-20th century, in particular, the ancient road became significant again during the early years of World War II, when China was cut off from mainland south-east Asia by the Japanese who occupied Burma, and had to rely on the Tea Horse Road for international communication and transportation of goods.⁶¹¹ Today, because of the inaccessible terrain, mule teams are still used for short distances, indeed, short-distance trade has always been of major importance, and caravans were greatly welcomed as they were the only link to the outside world for many of the remote and isolated mountain communities. However, the time of the long-distance trade by mule and horse caravan is now but a fading memory as the construction of the major highway in the early 1950s, connecting Yunnan and Tibet - and which basically follows the old route - has made transport and communication faster, easier and safer. However, while these communities, villages, and towns are potentially profiting economically from becoming more connected, it exposes them to new threats as fundamental changes brought by modernization gradually disconnect them from their roots and traditions.

The Ancient Tea Horse Road: Identity Politics and Narratives

The Yunnan-Tibet section of the ATHR lies on the periphery of China and forms part of the borderland region with central and south-east Asia - a geographical region often referred to as 'Zomia'⁶¹² - bordering immediately on Vietnam, Laos, and Burma, with Thailand as a close neighbour, while within China it borders on Tibet, Sichuan and Guizhou. This border region was 'a zone rather than a line, one in which all possible boundaries of geography, race and culture cross and overlap to form a broad north-south transitional area of great complexity'.⁶¹³ This 'liminal' space amidst a multitude of cultures and political systems has always been important in Yunnan's borderland geography and history and important to (regional) policy and development. Yunnan alone has 26 (out of 55) official ethnic minorities, many of whom have close cultural ties or common ancestry with the ethnic peoples across the border. Migration, settlement, and the

⁶¹¹ See, for example, P. Scully, 'Remembering the Hump after 70 years', *GoKunming*, 29 March 2012, http://www.gokunming.com/en/blog/item/2651/remembering_the_hump_after_70_years

⁶¹² See e.g., P.C. Perdue, 'Is Pu-er in Zomia?: Tea Cultivation and the State in China', *Agrarian Studies Colloquium*, October 24, 2008; see also, J. C. Scott (2009) *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009. Print.

⁶¹³ Cited in Booz, 'Tea, Trade and Transport...'; here Patrick Booz who researched the Sino-Tibetan trade relations of the Sichuan-Tibet tea route cites Michael Aris, a pioneer in Sino-Tibetan border studies, who wrote about the Khampas of Eastern Tibet.

exchange of goods and culture between these ancient tribes go back millennia and have left a remarkable heritage in this region, arguably testifying to a closer relationship of Yunnan with South-East Asia and Tibet than with China proper. This has long been a contentious view as it is opposed to a prevailing Sino-centric historical account, but Giersch, for example, has explored many theories as to the provenance and development of Yunnan, such as whether Yunnan was a separate world-system, or part of the Chinese world-system, or part of the Indian Ocean-South Asia world-system. Critical in these investigations has always been the project of the (various) Chinese empires (Mongol, Manchu) to push west and settle Chinese troops and farmers in these renegade regions, which resulted in a Chinese (and later Yunnanese) identity.⁶¹⁴ As we have seen in the previous chapter, many of Yunnan's minority peoples had long adopted Han culture and claimed Han (Chinese) ancestry, while others have much closer ties to their ethnic cousins across the border, realities which all came to light and complicated matters during the ethnic classification projects of the 20th century. On the other hand, the persistence of the use of cowrie shells as a widely used monetary system in Yunnan until late into the Yuan-Ming dynasty (13th – 17th century) shows a close connection with the South-Indian (Maldives) region where Yunnan's cowrie shell supply originated.⁶¹⁵

In the modern state narrative, the ATHR and its associated imagery and signifiers play the part of ethnic and national unifier, of reconfiguring deep-rooted binaries of centre/periphery, backward/advanced, global/local, of (re-) positioning identities, and of reshaping local histories and memories. The extensive and expansive interaction and exchange of goods and ideas along this route over centuries has necessitated and promoted a harmonious relationship between ethnic and non-ethnic groups. This perceived bond, kinship, and unity amongst Yunnan's minority people has also been readily taken up and re-narrated by the party state since the founding of the Republic when it became time to establish a multi-ethnic and multi-national nation-state, as well as in recent years to popularize the ATHR. Today, the province, with the capital Kunming in the forefront, has been able to reposition itself as a pan-Asian centre, or 'bridgehead'⁶¹⁶, between South-East Asia and China, by re-claiming its geographical importance, its ancient local histories of vibrant centres of

⁶¹⁴ C.P. Giersch, *Asian Borderlands. The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006; see also, P.C. Perdue, *China Marches West. The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*, Cambridge: Massachusetts, the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

⁶¹⁵ Yang, 'Horses, Silver, and Cowries ...'.

⁶¹⁶ See e.g., Summers, *Yunnan – a Chinese Bridgehead to Asia...*; see also, 'Yunnan Tourism Work Conference Was Held in Kunming', 8 February 2012, <http://en.ynta.gov.cn/Item/3264.aspx>, accessed, 28 January 2014; see also, G. Sigley, 'From 'Backwater' to 'Bridgehead': Culture, Modernity and the Reimagining of Yunnan, in M.E. Clarke and D. Smith, *China's Frontier Regions. Ethnicity, Economic Integration and Foreign Relations*, London, IB Tauris, 2016, pp. 171 - 203.

transnational and global trade and exchange, and grafting it onto the ATHR by creating not only a label tourism destination, but a label cultural heritage tourism destination.

Heritage stories

As we have seen above, comprehensive road and infrastructure construction in China's western regions - initiated by the *Great Western Development* project in the early 2000s - has had differing impacts on people and places, but has often been carried out with great cost to local people's lives by destroying natural and cultural landscapes, ancient cultural practices, and traditional ways of life that they depended on. This was also happening at a rapid pace with the peoples and heritages along the ATHR, but increasing awareness among scholars, heritage officials and the government of the route's traditional value and its potential for tourism development made them come together to try and preserve what was left of the material and immaterial heritage of the ATHR.

Today we can still find a significant number of tangible and intangible heritages associated with the ATHR, including: remnant paths and roads (stone paths, plank roads), bridges of various types (rain and wind bridges, arched and rope bridges), tea plantations, market towns, inns, and trading post stations, temples, caves and shrines; festivals, dance, song and music; folk customs and cultural traditions. The ATHR is still home to many diverse ethnic groups 'who have cared for and worshipped the "green" for millennia', such as the Bulang and Wa people, who even have oaths and codes about their tea plants and land.⁶¹⁷ In contrast to the Silk Road, the Ancient Tea Horse Road has been in use until the mid-twentieth century and as some of the minority people, such as the Bulang, still practice traditional ways of growing and harvesting tea, there remain many living cultural practices associated with the use of horse and mule caravans, and of course, with tea cultivation, production and consumption.⁶¹⁸ Indian and Tibetan (esoteric) Buddhism entered China via this route in the mid-first century and was widely adapted and syncretised into local belief systems by the 5th century when it became the dominant religion of successive dynasties, displacing China's native 'religion' of Confucianism.⁶¹⁹ As monks often travelled along this route with the caravans, they spread the teachings of Gautama Buddha, and many ancient steles, cave murals,

⁶¹⁷ J. Fuchs, 'Ancient Green Wisdom: How the Indigenous Peoples of Southwestern Yunnan and their Ancient Tea Trees Continue the Way in Sustainability', *Eubios Ethics Institute*, Repository of Ethical World Views of Nature, http://www.eubios.info/repository_of_ethical_world_views_of_nature

⁶¹⁸ Sigley, 'Cultural Heritage Tourism and the Ancient Tea Horse Road ...'.

⁶¹⁹ Buddhism retained its dominant position until the 9th century, when government patronage began to shift decisively to what became known (retrospectively) as Neo-Confucianism, a synthesis of social, ethical and metaphysical doctrines based on the thought of Confucius and his disciples. Thereafter Buddhism remained important in China, but more as a private than an officially-sponsored religion. Buddhism was also challenged by Chinese Daoism, Islam, Christianity and other faiths, in particular travelling along the ancient Silk Road; <http://sites.asiasociety.org/arts/monksandmerchants/silk3.htm>

tombs, and rock carvings of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, drawn and carved by some reverent and commissioned artists, testify to the vivid transnational exchange and give it a kind of sacred dignity.⁶²⁰ Many of these cultural relics, as we will see below, lie within the national-level AAAA cultural heritage site of Shibaoshan near Shaxi. In many ways, however, the ATHR is as much a concept as a physical route, but its modern narrative compensates for, even enriches, its physical shortcomings, in particular if we take to heart the nowadays more popular view in the heritage discourse that all cultural heritage is intangible and as Laura Smith suggests, the focus should be on the ‘act of heritage’ rather than the object.⁶²¹

Given the urgency of preserving ATHR cultural heritage, in June 2010, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (*guojia wenwuju* 国家文物局) and the People’s Government of Yunnan (*Yunnan renmin zhengfu* 云南人民政府) in Pu’er, Yunnan, convened an important meeting, titled “China Cultural Heritage Protection: The Puer Forum on the Ancient Tea Horse Road Heritage Protection” (中国文化遗产保护: 普洱茶马古道遗产保护论坛).⁶²² This was the first meeting ever to specifically discuss the cultural heritage protection and preservation of the ATHR, and the first formal step towards an application for World Heritage status, which is believed can take many more years.

Fast-forward a few years and the ATHR has become a ‘hot’ tourism itinerary, extensively marketed nationally and overseas, and while still in the early stages of development, it is receiving increasing numbers of tourists. Accelerating its popularity is the creation and development of small ancient towns like Shaxi - the sparkling beads on the chain - that have sprung up along the many paths and trails of the ATHR and that carry its significant heritage. Importantly, the re-discovery and preservation of the heritages of the ATHR both feed and are fed by the continuing development of its tourism attractions, whether it is the Naxi people’s Dongba rituals and script, horse rides on remnant paths of the ATHR, tea ceremonies, the renovation of historical towns and cultural villages, or ATHR museums and theme-parks. The ATHR is listed as an important asset on the official Yunnan Tourism website and a large number of small tourism operators incorporate it into their cultural tours programs, with some adventure and eco-tour operators offering specific ATHR adventure tours with horse caravans.⁶²³ In recent times a number of ATHR-themed historical

⁶²⁰ See, DH Li, ‘The Influence of Indian Buddhism on Bai Identification and Understanding of their Origins as a People: A Research Note’, *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol.10, No. 1, 2009, pp. 19-23.

⁶²¹ L.J. Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*, New York, Routledge, 2006.

⁶²² Sigley, ‘Cultural Heritage Tourism and the Ancient Tea Horse Road ...’.

⁶²³ See e.g., *Redrock Trek*, <http://www.redrocktrek.com/>; see also, *Zouba Tours*, <http://www.zoubatours.com/>

movies and CCTV travel documentaries have been filmed to popularize the long history, pristine nature, and many diverse cultures along the ancient road.⁶²⁴

Many local ethnic people today evoke their ancient heritage of traders on the ATHR to justify their cunning and proficiency as business men and women and to counter post-modern, urban, over-nostalgic and over-romantic sentiments of statism and traditionalism. The Naxi people, for example, defend the (over-) commercialization and commodification of their World Heritage listed Old Town of Lijiang by reminding people that, in fact, they are only carrying forward an age-old tradition as merchants and traders in the old spirit of the town. Lijiang was an extremely vibrant and ever-changing centre of economic activities, an important staging post for tea caravans, a melting-pot of different cultures and ethnic peoples, a place of many religions, and a centre of entertainment and social life. And in Dali, Jim, one of the first 'local' entrepreneurs, used his Tibetan ethnic background and ancient cultural/traditional ways of doing business to conquer the international backpacker-scene in the late 1980s by performing 'Exotic Otherness'.⁶²⁵ Tibetan minority national Dakpa Kelden, owner of the boutique hotel Arra Khampa in Shangri-La also proudly traces his entrepreneurial spirit and success back to his father and grandfather who were caravan leaders (*ladu*) on the ATHR.⁶²⁶ According to him, his modern way of life and doing business is deeply rooted in family tradition and that of ATHR culture and history. Attached to it is a Buddhist philosophy with a moral sense of obligation to do good deeds, such as building a temple.⁶²⁷ In Dakpa's case, he established the *Tibetan Thanka Academy* in Shangri-La under the local Association of Cultural Preservation, a volunteer cultural heritage NGO - recognized and encouraged by the local government - to protect Tibetan cultural traditions, including art, music, storytelling, poetry, and handicrafts.⁶²⁸ Importantly, the primary objective of the association is to 're-invigorate the old traditions to a new generation'.⁶²⁹

This is particularly relevant, as the rampant commercialization and 'museumization' of Lijiang's heritage as a major centre along the ATHR is potentially damaging to Naxi identity and heritage as the younger generation of Naxi has no memory of the 'authentic' heritage of the ATHR.⁶³⁰ This revelation, I believe, is not limited to Lijiang, and also not limited to only commercialised tourist

⁶²⁴ For example, the movie *Delamu*, directed by Tian Zhuangzhuang, 2004; synopsis:

<http://www.timeout.com/london/film/delamu>

⁶²⁵ I. Ateljevic & S. Doorne, 'Dialectics of Authentication: Performing 'Exotic Otherness' in a Backpacker Enclave of Dali, China', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2005, pp. 1-17.

⁶²⁶ MyInterview, September 2014 and October 2011.

⁶²⁷ MyInterview, September 2014 and October 2011.

⁶²⁸ See e.g., Shangri-La Association of Cultural Preservation, www.shangrilaassociation.org.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., Shangri-La Association of Cultural Preservation at www.shangrilaassociation.org, Mission Statement.

⁶³⁰ X. Su and P. Teo. *The Politics of Heritage Tourism in China: A View from Lijiang*, London, Routledge, 2009, p. 130.

towns and villages, but can be observed more generally, and has to some extent to do with China's historical attitude to culture and the past. The recent past was nearly obliterated and with it collective memories and traditional practices. Therefore, the younger generation has to increasingly rely on other, newly constructed official and popular narrative(s) and consequently they 'will begin to see the Tea and Horse Caravan Route through rose-tinted glasses similar to the tourists'.⁶³¹ In fact, this is the case with their own culture, their specific Naxi identity. This identity is largely based on the Dongba religion and Dongba script which is now highly commercialised, so much that many local Naxi people take this 'exoticised' version of their culture as the real one.

Tea stories

Chinese tea has a unique place in world history and has been influencing national, regional and world politics for many hundreds of years. Sigley goes so far as to suggest that 'tea is perhaps China's greatest contribution to humanity'.⁶³² It was, at first, a luxury good, along with silk and porcelain, and was highly sought after both inside China and increasingly across the Eurasian continent. As well these goods were used as gifts in diplomatic exchange, as sources of revenue, and as expression of cultural superiority in their relations with other powers.⁶³³ As tea was consumed more widely more benefits were associated with it, such as its stimulating properties believed to help with (Buddhist) meditation, its nourishing qualities as a vegetal 'food stuff', its energizing qualities believed to derive by adding milk and/or sugar as became practice in Europe and Asia, or its digestive qualities derived from adding butter and spices, as was practice in Tibet and Southeast Asia.⁶³⁴ As tea was considered so precious it needed its own drinking vessel which then stimulated the development of the Chinese porcelain industry which became of global importance. Chinese tea drinking habits also influenced the Japanese tea ceremony that so much defines traditional Japanese culture to this day.⁶³⁵

⁶³¹ Ibid., p. 139.

⁶³² G. Sigley, 'Tea and China's Rise: Tea, Nationalism and Culture in the 21st Century', *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, Vol. 2 No. 3, 2015, pp. 319-341.

⁶³³ Perdue, 'Is Pu-er in Zomia? ...'.

⁶³⁴ Theories on health benefits of tea abound, and one scholar, Alan MacFarlane believes there is a link between the health-saving benefits of tea and its increasing popular and affordable consumption in general (as water had to be boiled) and the sweetening with sugar which made it a more energizing drink and furthered the productivity of the European working class, and finally helped drive the industrial revolution. At the same time it furthered the Atlantic Slave trade to supply labour to an increasing number of sugar plantation. See, A. MacFarlane, *The Savage Wars of Peace: England, Japan and the Malthusian Trap*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

⁶³⁵ See also, K. Surak, *Making Tea, Making Japan: Cultural Nationalism in Practice*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013.

The conventional or official history of tea in China regarding its origin and earliest cultivation goes back a very long time and many scientific reports show evidence of it. However, while the origin of tea is not certain, the Chinese have long claimed tea as being distinctly Chinese, a ‘quintessentially’ Chinese beverage, which can be seen as an important act of national assertion and a salient example of ‘tea nationalism’.⁶³⁶ China also contains by far the richest historical documents on tea planting and processing, and tea culture. It held the monopoly of tea until the late 18th century when an increasingly unsustainable trade imbalance between Britain and China caused by tea led to the first Opium War (1839-1842) and finally to China’s forceful opening up to the outside world. Tea has thus played an important role in ‘bringing’ China, albeit violently, into the modern world.⁶³⁷ Therefore, the story of tea is not just the story of one tropical commodity under one empire, but a multi-stranded one of collaboration and competition between many merchants and empires.⁶³⁸ However, the Chinese tea trade on the world market declined when tea planting was successfully developed in India and Ceylon and large companies could offer tea at considerably lower prices than Chinese tea, as well, the new teas were found to be of better quality.⁶³⁹

While ‘border tea’ is the over-arching term for the many types of tea grown in the Yunnan region since ancient times, Pu’er tea has a special place amongst them, importantly, it was a highly-prized imperial tribute tea. Pu’er tea was harvested from mostly wild tea trees that grew on the mountainside of the ‘six great tea mountains’ in Yunnan’s southwest, comprising the areas of Xishuangbanna, Lincang, and Simao (Pu’er) in Pu’er county, and that developed many different varieties and flavours.⁶⁴⁰ The Pu’er tea industry had developed over many hundreds of years and became a centre of tea trade from where tea caravans departed on the many different old and newly plied routes.⁶⁴¹ Indeed, in the 18th and 19th century, the tea trade greatly flourished with thousands of merchants involved, and tea caravans choked the routes from the Tea Hills into Simao and on the tea road north into Tibet.⁶⁴² For easier transportation, Pu’er tea was compressed into shapes (bricks) and strapped onto mules where it slowly fermented, enhancing its unique taste and properties along the long journey. Tibetan people in particular favoured the coarse-leaved Pu’er tea as it helped in

⁶³⁶ Sigley, ‘Tea and China’s Rise ...’.

⁶³⁷ Sigley, ‘Tea and China’s Rise: ...’;

⁶³⁸ Perdue, ‘Is Pu-er in Zomia? ...’;

⁶³⁹ ‘China Tea’, *The China Story*, n.d., <https://www.thechinastory.org/ritp/china-tea/>

⁶⁴⁰ See, for example, Zhang ‘Multiple Visions of Authenticity...’; ethnic minorities began to domesticate tea trees at least a thousand years ago.

⁶⁴¹ In the Qing period, Pu’er became a centre of violence as indigenous producers and Chinese migrant merchants sought to control the production and sale of tea, see Giersch, *Asian Borderlands ...*, p. 52.

⁶⁴² Giersch, *Asian Borderlands ...*, p. 179.

the digestion of their mainly meat-based diet.⁶⁴³ Tea continued to be grown and manufactured throughout the centuries by the local aboriginal people, such as the Dai, Akha, Jinuo, or Bulang people, some of whom still use traditional methods of harvesting tea from age-old wild tea trees.⁶⁴⁴



FIGURE 13 AND 14: TEA TERRACE LANDSCAPE, JINGHONG; OLD TEA TRESS, NANNUOSHAN, XISHUANGBANNA

The growing of Pu'er tea in the Xishuangbanna region had been largely abandoned through the first half of the 20th century and there was government pressure to replace it with cash crops. In the process, old tea plants and tea trees were destroyed and other crops grown, in the last few decades many tea plantations were replaced by rubber plantations.⁶⁴⁵ Sturgeon makes an interesting connection that by '[a]nalyzing tea and rubber as both "commodities" and "cash crops" opens up the ambiguous arena in which farmers are at once "backward" minorities in need of state help and also progressive entrepreneurs taking advantage of their role as "commodity" producers.⁶⁴⁶ When tea growing was slowly being re-introduced as drinking tea became fashionable again, it was mainly terrace tea that was grown, which is higher yielding (and cheaper). Today, few ancient tea trees (*gushucha* 古树茶)⁶⁴⁷ have survived and 'the new cultural landscape of tea mainly shows a sea of beautifully manicured, lush green tea terraces, interspersed by tea pickers with conical-shaped hats of some ethnic persuasion'.⁶⁴⁸ While attempts are being made to re-introduce tea trees, re-harmonize tea culture and re-balance the tea eco-system, Fuchs notes that 'few are those tea forests that are not simply a mass of trees or a bundle of commodity, but rather a sum of parts, an ancient

⁶⁴³ Patrick Booz notes that 'brick tea for the Chinese was a commodity of destination, an object intended by its producers solely for exchange; they never boiled and drank it. For the Tibetans, brick tea – highly desired – was entirely an inward-directed trade'; Booz, 'Tea, Trade and Transport ...'.

⁶⁴⁴ Some of these tea trees are between 500 and 1700 years old, e.g. the "king of tea trees" on Nannuo Mountain is 800 years old (author's visit in 2011/12)

⁶⁴⁵ J. Sturgeon, 'The Cultural Politics of Ethnic Identity in Xishuangbanna, China: Tea and Rubber as "Cash Crops" and "Commodities"', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* Vol. 41, No. 4, 2012, pp. 109-131. PY Hung, 'Tea Forest in the Making: Tea Production and the Ambiguity of Modernity on China's Southwest Frontier', *Geoforum*, Vol. 47, 2013, pp. 178–188.

⁶⁴⁶ Sturgeon, 'The Cultural Politics of Ethnic Identity ...'.

⁶⁴⁷ In recent years, counterfeit 'old tree' Pu'erh tea has become wide-spread as tea merchants are trying to cash in on an artificially created tea bubble.

⁶⁴⁸ See e.g. Sturgeon, 'The Cultural Politics of Ethnic Identity in Xishuangbanna, China ...'; Zhang, 'Multiple Visions of Authenticity ...'; Hung, 'Tea Forest in the Making: ...'.

body that is sacred because it provides without fail'.⁶⁴⁹ Po-Yi Hung draws up an interesting argument about the relationship of the transformation of the tea landscape in Yunnan and the 'ambiguities of modernity' in (rural) China. He argues that this transformation of the tea landscape has turned a 'global' form of modernity into situated assemblages of 'ambiguities of modernity, such as the juxtaposition of tradition, modernity, science and nature, and as such the state has also constructed a 'tradition in modernity'.⁶⁵⁰ Sigley is also concerned with those dichotomies when he draws the picture of a modern-day tea caravan that started out from China's southwest periphery, winding its way on ancient roads through the country to Beijing - in a way replaying history when tribute tea from across the empire was sent to the imperial courts - that this symbolic journey signified the new importance and new place in regional identity of the ATHR and Pu'er tea.⁶⁵¹ This means, 'tea and tea culture is being 'rediscovered' and 'redeployed' within China as a means of reinforcing a sense of unique Chinese identity and national character'.⁶⁵² In particular, it shows us the confluence of cultural heritage, economic development and regional identity around the discourse and multifarious representations that are associated with the ATHR of Yunnan province.⁶⁵³ As in ancient times, tea has regained its status and cultural and economic worth.

New Narratives, Cultural Entrepreneurs, and the State

The fascination with tea and its associated rituals and symbols goes far beyond the real and historical now that the world of tourism has latched onto it: the first few tea theme parks have already been built and ancient towns that once were post stations along the ATHR have sprouted up throughout the province, many of them ostentatiously (generically) marked with statues of muleteers leading their mules loaded with tea bricks and trotting along an ancient path; horse rides are being offered, presumably on sections of the ATHR; tea tourism (tea-related tourism)⁶⁵⁴ comprises tea awareness and appreciation tours, including the touring of tea plantations, tea gardens and tea factories, and tea tastings in local ethnic people's homes; a visit to a tea house, tea shop, or even a visit to a tea museum, such as the Ancient Tea Horse Road museum in Lijiang; luxury hotels⁶⁵⁵ carry one or the other symbols of tea in order to be identified as an ATHR hotel, some

⁶⁴⁹ Fuchs, 'Ancient Green Wisdom ...'.

⁶⁵⁰ Hung, 'Tea Forest in the Making ...'.

⁶⁵¹ Sigley, 'Cultural Heritage Tourism and the Ancient Tea Horse Road ...'; A similar journey had been done where large quantities of tea were loaded on a replica of the once famous tea Clipper ships to sail on the Maritime Road to Britain;

⁶⁵² Sigley, 'Tea and China's Rise ...'.

⁶⁵³ Sigley, 'Tea and China's Rise ...'.

⁶⁵⁴ For more information on tea tourism, see for example, Joliffe, *Tea and Tourism...*

⁶⁵⁵ See e.g., Lux Hotel chain (Tibet, Benzilan, Deqin), promoted as ATHR hotels, e.g. 'LUX launches Tea Horse Road Benzilan, China', Travel Daily, <http://www.traveldailymedia.com/231784/lux-launches-tea-horse-road-benzilan-china/>; also, Songtsam Lodges boutique hotels (Songtsam Circuit), S. Kapoor, 'New Luxury Lodges in China's Yunnan Province', <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2011/nov/18/boutique-lodges-hotels-yunnan-shangri-la-china>

beautifully and authentically restored and identified as ATHR heritage.⁶⁵⁶ And, as we shall see later, many of the already famous tourist places along the ATHR, such as Dali, Lijiang, or Shangri-La are at the forefront of marketing and tourism development and often serve as successful ‘models’ for other, still obscure, small towns, including Pu’er itself and other towns within its prefecture, such as Ning’er, which is marketed as the ‘birthplace of tea’ and the ‘starting point of the Ancient Tea Horse Road’ and which is also home to the first ATHR theme park in the nearby village of Nakeli. But as Sigley points out, and which we have touched upon earlier, the feeling is distinctly ‘themeparkish’ and there is no ‘real’ tangible cultural heritage in Nakeli other than a small section of cobblestone tea road.⁶⁵⁷ He concludes, and joins a lot of scholars who have written on cultural heritage protection in China, that Nakeli here is only an example of ‘how the imperative for tourism development can override authenticity when it comes to cultural heritage protection’.⁶⁵⁸ Linear routes, such as the ATHR, however, are a great opportunity for attractions to work together, in particular ‘story telling’ and creating ‘narratives’ (as new trends in tourism) can be fully employed to serve at once tourism, the state and local people. For example, by forging linkages between narrative and place/space, connecting with other places that are part of the route, and finding creative spaces for the development of different narratives, such as events, festivals, or food, have great value in (heritage) tourism.⁶⁵⁹

Scholars, government, and entrepreneurs alike are now increasingly preoccupied with the (re-) creation of tangible and intangible symbols around tea and the ATHR and incorporate it into the national and/or international tourism and cultural heritage canon. In this way the ATHR can also be seen as a ‘cultural artefact’, one that can be ‘constructed’ and used in many ways, one that ‘represents continuity as an eternal monument in the history of China’.⁶⁶⁰ But while a largely state-sponsored heritage community lags far behind in giving the ATHR the conceptual and actual recognition it deserves, the discourse of heritage value of the ATHR has meanwhile been well established and its ‘cultural value’ has become much more significant to other government bodies (tourism), the market, and entrepreneurs.⁶⁶¹ This ‘cultural lag’ is both surprising and ironic, given that the ‘discovery’ of the ATHR goes back more than two decades now. In the late 1980s a group of Chinese scholars (also referred to as the six gentlemen, or *junzi*) from Yunnan University in

⁶⁵⁶ See, for prime examples, the *Laomadian* in Shaxi; the *Linden Centre* in Xizhou (Dali); or the *Old Theatre Inn* in Shaxi at <http://www.shaxichina.com/>

⁶⁵⁷ Sigley, ‘Cultural Heritage Tourism and the Ancient Tea Horse Road ...’.

⁶⁵⁸ Sigley, ‘Cultural Heritage Tourism and the Ancient Tea Horse Road...’.

⁶⁵⁹ G., Richards, ‘Tourism trends: The Convergence of Culture and Tourism’, *The Netherlands: Academy for Leisure NHTV University of Applied Sciences*, 2014.

⁶⁶⁰ ‘Tea Horse Ancient Road’, *China Culture*, 19 October 2005, http://www.chinaculture.org/gb/en_curiosity/2005-10/19/content_74658_3.htm, accessed, 18 Nov 2013.

⁶⁶¹ Sigley, ‘The Ancient Tea Horse Road and the Politics of Cultural Heritage ...’.

Kunming started to further explore an ancient pathway they accidentally stumbled upon. They soon realised this discovery was part of an all but forgotten ancient trading route that had been in use for many centuries or even millennia that was primarily based on the role of tea as an exchange commodity between the peoples of Yunnan, Tibet and Sichuan. They gave it a new name, the Ancient Tea Horse Road, or *chama gudao* (茶马古道).⁶⁶²

Ironically, this great find coincided with the greater opening up and reform period, marked by economic decentralization and a ‘revivalism’ of folk traditions and folk religions. This allowed local governments to use all available cultural resources and embed them in local, regional, and national development. The potential of the ATHR as a ‘convenient label’ in local/regional development also fitted neatly into this new development framework and was readily taken up by governments, tourism developers, and private entrepreneurs. However, this ‘free-for-all race’ could not happen without the ‘surveillance’ of the state whose participation in the market, while disguised through clever corporatism, has thus become legitimate and endemic.⁶⁶³ As Sigley argues, the constructed nature of the ATHR allows new actors to fully take advantage of its potential as major tourism destination by actively branding, marketing, commodifying and consuming it within the parameters of a post-socialist new ‘common sense’, to the extent that the ‘fashioning’ of the ATHR as an artefact has become perhaps ‘the example par excellence of the intersection of the agenda of the state, the market, and cultural purveyors’.⁶⁶⁴

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the concept and politics of ‘Cultural Routes’ in the context of World Heritage nomination. In particular, I have illuminated the historical and contemporary, popular and state narrative around the making of the ATHR in Yunnan province as a potential world heritage site, a viable tourism product, as an agent of regional identity, and as a place of a re-emerging (tea) culture. By juxtaposing a historical account of the ATHR - which is imbedded in both a world systems theory and in local micro histories - with this newly constructed narrative, I have shown why and how the ATHR has become a ‘desired’ cultural object. The heritage of the ATHR is rich and very unique, in particular its intangible qualities, such as the still existing ‘lived

⁶⁶² J. Mu, et al., ‘An Exploration of the Great Cultural Triangle of Yunnan, Tibet, and Sichuan’, Kunming, Yunnan University Press, 1992 (original title: dian zang chuan da sanjiao wenhua tanmi 滇, 藏, 川大三角文化探秘, 昆明云南出版社, 1992).

⁶⁶³ Sigley, ‘The Ancient Tea Horse Road and the Politics of Cultural Heritage ...’.

⁶⁶⁴ Sigley, ‘The Ancient Tea Horse Road and the Politics of Cultural Heritage ...’.

culture' around tea, opens up opportunities for many active (heritage) tourism experiences to create a distinct tourism product. A frenzied 'heritageization' around the ATHR label over the last ten years has partly answered that call, but as for now, the ATHR as a 'cultural route' and travel destination is still a rather 'hollow' trademark with little depth and variety. Tea, in fact, only plays a minor role, mostly concentrated in the tea-growing regions in Xishuangbanna, but elsewhere the ATHR label relies heavily on the recreation of historical towns, and the creation of 'attractions' (theme parks), which are stamped with the ATHR label, but are that in name only.

The revival of the ATHR as a regional brand and 'cultural artefact' has created a meta-narrative for heritage production and consumption based on ethnic diversity and local histories, 'old' and 'new' economies, and the reconfiguration of central-local relationships and biases. The following chapters take the little town of Shaxi, one of the 'sparkling beads on the chain', and touted as 'the last remaining and intact post station on the Ancient Tea Horse' as a case study to demonstrate how such a narrative could emerge by considering Shaxi's specific and unique historical and socio-economic conditions and its recent path of ethnic (tourism) development and modernization.

In conclusion of the above theoretical section (chapters 1-6), I will briefly synthesise the main arguments and thoughts that will then be applied to the specific case study in the last two chapters. Since the middle of last century, cultural heritage protection and conservation and the uses of the past have become increasingly important in popular views and public/state discourses, both in a national and global context. They first appeared as a Western/Euro-centric hegemonic discourse and were integrated as charters, laws and regulations into the UNESCO world heritage regime to secure the protection of the 'heritage for humanity'. Over time, many new laws were drafted that reflected the change and reality of a more equitable and inclusive world. World-wide new nations joined the World Heritage Committee to promote their national treasures to the world and attract funding for their protection. China, with its rich ancient history and past, has become one of the most enthusiastic and prolific members of the World Heritage Committee. After decades of destruction of its past due to political turmoil and national modernization, the commitment to cultural heritage protection and the revival of ancient customs and traditions signified a 'cultural turn' in the Chinese psyche and polity. However, as in many developing countries that joined the global heritage regime, heritage protection in China was soon woven into state development agendas and became part of government economic planning and financing. With the advent of international tourism and domestic (mass) travel in China, cultural heritage preservation and tourism have become intricately linked - yet often divided - and subjected to the national project of modernization, more concrete here, rural urbanization and poverty alleviation. China's national minorities and their ancient traditions, as the

'objects' of cultural heritage protection, were at the same time commodified, but also found new validation. These developments have paved the way for the current practices of 'cultural heritage development' in China's cities, but in particular in the villages and towns in China's countryside. In sum, the phenomenon of the 'new ancient towns' in China are the reflection and outcome of the historical, social and political developments as shown in the above chapters. The case study below will reveal how these processes unfold on a local level in China's remote countryside.

CHAPTER Seven Cultural Heritage Protection in China: Shaxi Ancient Town at the Cross-Roads of Development. A Case Study.

Introduction

From the mid-1980s onwards, encouraged by favourable policies of the early reform and opening up period and amidst a new wave of cultural revitalization of the countryside, the government of Yunnan Province has sought to take advantage of its abundant natural and cultural resources in order to develop the economy which lagged far behind China's coastal regions.⁶⁶⁵ Indeed, Yunnan province was one of the poorest provinces in China until only a decade ago.⁶⁶⁶ One of the government's aims was to reposition old paradigms of centre/ periphery, advanced/backward, and poor/rich, which have long been associated with the western borderlands, by employing ethnic tourism as a catalyst for development and change. Spurred on by the Kunming World Horticultural Expo in 1999, the province invested heavily in transportation and tourism infrastructure.⁶⁶⁷ Within a decade, the provincial government opened up some new and further developed already existing strategic tourist destinations, spear-headed by Kunming's premier attraction, *Shilin Stone Forest*⁶⁶⁸, the already popular city of Jinghong in Xishuangbanna dominated by the perceived as 'exotic' Dai minority, the old town of Dali, which foreign back-packers had already started to explore, and the ancient town of Lijiang, which, after being rebuilt following a devastating earthquake in 1996 was nominated a World Heritage site the following year. For many years, the focus was solely on these

⁶⁶⁵ See for example, Z. Lu and S. Song, 'China's Regional Disparities in 1978-2000', in D. Lu and W.A.W. Neilson (eds.), *China's West Region Development. Domestic Strategies and Global Implications*, Singapore, World Scientific Publishing, 2004.

⁶⁶⁶ Summers, *Yunnan – A Chinese Bridgehead to Asia*; J. A. Donaldson *Small Works. Poverty and Economic Development in Southwestern China*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2011.

⁶⁶⁷ See for example, 'A Brief Introduction to 1999 Kunming International Horticultural Exposition, China'. The Organizing Committee of 1999 Kunming International Horticultural Exposition, China, n.d., <http://www.china.org.cn/e-fabuhui/download/news/English/PressConferences/990422-1e.htm>, accessed 11 October 2015.

⁶⁶⁸ Shilin Stone Forest is part of the *South China Karst World Heritage* cluster (2007). The Stone Forest is also the world's only karst landscape in the subtropical plateau area, and enjoys the fame of 'the First Wonder of the World'. The other sites are Libo Karst in Guizhou province, and Wulong Karst in Chongqing Municipality. See, for example, 'South China Karst', *Travel China Guide* (web page), n.d., <http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/worldheritages/southkarst.htm>, accessed 7 February 2014.

few tourist destinations and most of the provincial government's public funding was poured into their development, resulting in highly developed, visited and commercialised tourist centres.⁶⁶⁹

The timely 'discovery' of the Ancient Tea Horse Road and its subsequent marketing and branding as Yunnan's foremost tourism resource since the late 1990s unleashed a new boom in creating tourist destinations along this route.⁶⁷⁰ Around this time also, the province was designated as a demonstration site for environmental conservation and sustainable development and promoted as a Great Cultural Province.⁶⁷¹ It is in this light that we have to see the new growth in tourism in Yunnan, where the opening up and development of new destinations for tourism has not only become a major means and strategy for poverty reduction and economic development, but also to assert and create new local and regional identities. New in this development is not only the inclusion of tangible and intangible heritage in the development, but heritage as the basis of (re-) development. However, as village after village jumps on the heritage bandwagon, reviving and re-inventing their tangible and intangible past, only few places stand out and can set themselves apart from their neighbours by innovation, careful planning, concern for the environment, and ethical governance. One of these places is Shaxi, which has been chosen to become a model for sustainable rural development.⁶⁷²

Organization of case study chapters

This and the following chapter are dedicated to the introduction and analysis of my case study site and field work. In this chapter I will first introduce Shaxi as a place and a landscape of ancient culture and history before presenting the preservation efforts of the Shaxi Rehabilitation Project (SRP) of the early 2000s which led the way for Shaxi's transformation from a backward traditional

⁶⁶⁹ Most of the public funding went into road infrastructure, large-scale urban development, tourism and mining, and Yunnan experienced rapid economic growth but little decline in poverty. By contrast, the Guizhou Province economy grew sluggishly during the nineties, but the rate of severe poverty declined faster than in Yunnan. Indeed, the average annual per capita net income of Guizhou's poor counties far exceeded Yunnan's in spite of Yunnan's much higher overall GDP growth rate. For more information on the different development paths of these two western provinces, both rated amongst the poorest in China, see Donaldson, *Small Works*; See also, J. Wen, *Tourism in Yunnan Province and the Xishuangbanna Prefecture of China: Achievements and Prospects*, Working Paper No. 30, 2013, Working Papers on Biodiversity Conservation: Studies in its Economics and Management, mainly in Yunnan, China, University of Queensland.

⁶⁷⁰ Sigley, 'The Ancient Tea Horse Road and the Politics of Cultural Heritage ...'.

⁶⁷¹ See, 'China – Yunnan Province Sustainable Tourism Initiative', *SW-Associates* (web page), n.d., <http://www.sw-associates.net/china-yunnan-province-sustainable-tourism-initiative/>

⁶⁷² Feiner et al., 'Sustainable Rural Development Based on Cultural Heritage. The Case of the Shaxi Valley Rehabilitation Project', *DISP 151*, ETH Zurich, Switzerland, 2002.

village to a model heritage and tourist town. Here, I will also evaluate the goals of the SRP and the resulting responses in conservation work.

In the next and concluding chapter I will document Shaxi's (accelerated) transformation into an increasingly popular tourist destination. The study uses empirical work to support the theoretical framework and findings of the previous chapters on local and global perspectives of cultural heritage, tourism, and minority peoples, as well, it opens up debates about old and new paradigms of development, about contesting ideas of heritage preservation and tourism management, about local power structures, and about traditional communities in the transition to modernity: Shaxi as a microcosm of tourism and economic development in contemporary China.

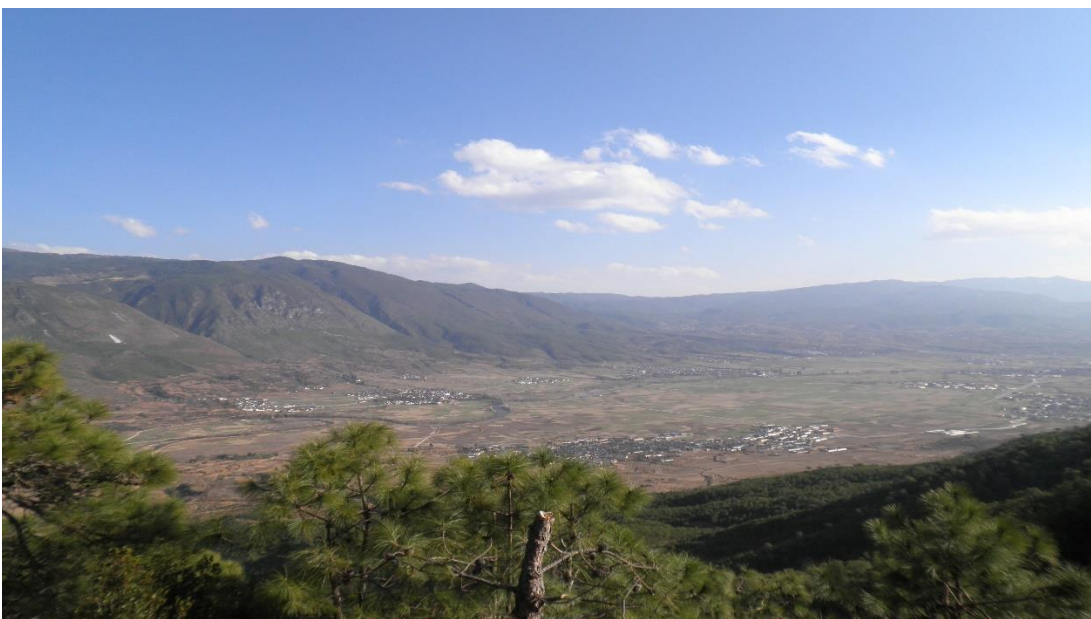


FIGURE 15: SHAXI VALLEY FROM SHIBAOSHAN

Shaxi: A Short Introduction

History

The archaeological history of Shaxi (沙溪) can be traced back more than 2400 years to the Spring and Autumn Period (771-481 BC) and the Warring States Period (481-221 BC). Ancient graveyards at Aofeng Mountain and a copper mine at nearby Huacong Mountain suggest that the valley was one of the original sites of Yunnan's bronze culture.⁶⁷³ Archaeological finds of bronze artefacts

⁶⁷³ See for example, various Jianchuan and Shaxi tourist brochures and histories; in particular, see

dating back to 1200BC suggest early human settlement in the region as well as early trade connections with ancient Chinese civilizations.⁶⁷⁴ Further, cowrie shells found in the area hint at an early trade relationship with coastal regions to the south.⁶⁷⁵ The Southern Silk Road⁶⁷⁶ which connected Yunnan with south-east Asia and Tibet dates back more than 2000 years when there was already ongoing exchange between cultures of the south-east Asian subcontinent and the region, also influencing Shaxi.

In ancient times, Shaxi valley had become an important node of exchange as salt was traded from the neighbouring salt mines of Misha Valley, Laji Well in Lanzhou, Nuodeng Well in Yunlong, and Qiaohou Well in the south of Shaxi valley. By the Sixth Century, tea and other commodities were increasingly traded along this already used path, reaching as far as the Tibetan *Tubo* Empire to the west and the Indian civilizations to the south, spanning more than 3500 km. Shaxi valley's favourable climate and abundant products soon engendered a thriving culture of business and trade. It became an important stopover and distribution centre on the trail, trading almost anything that horse caravans needed, including salt, rice, sugar, sesame oil, dairy products and groceries, and later tea leaves, horses, fur, cloth, silk, opium, and medicinal herbs. This extensive trade also stimulated and promoted wide-ranging cultural exchange between ethnic groups, including Bai, Yi, Tibetans, Thai, Burmese, and in particular with Indian cultures, and Indian Buddhism soon began to flourish in the area.⁶⁷⁷ The trade route grew in importance during the independent kingdoms of *Nanzhao* (738-937) and *Dali* (937-1253) in the region who also formed alliances with and were influenced both by the Tibetan *Tubo* Empire (吐蕃) to the west, and the Tang (唐) and Song (宋) dynasties to the north-east. The impressive grottoes of Shibao Mountain behind Shaxi testify to the importance of these regional empires long before Yunnan became part of the Chinese empire after its defeat of the Mongol Yuan (元) dynasty in the 14th century.

Shaxi Sidengjie – the only surviving market town on the ancient Tea and Horse Caravan trail, Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshi, 2002.7 (沙溪寺登街: 茶马古道上惟一存的古集市。昆明: 云南民族出版社, 2002.7) In Jianchuan (Jinhua) county town, near the Jianhu Lake lie the ruins of Haikoumen (海口门), which is the original place of Yunnan spotty bronze, dating back more than 3000 years. See, *Jianchuan, a place where my dream and passion are embedded*, Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshi, 2004.11 (梦与激情抵达的地方。昆明: 云南人民出版社, 2004.11).

⁶⁷⁴ B. Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds. The Making of Yunnan (Second Century BCE to Twentieth Century CE)*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009. Trade relations between the region around Shaxi and Central China date back as far as the Shang Dynasty (1600-1012BC).

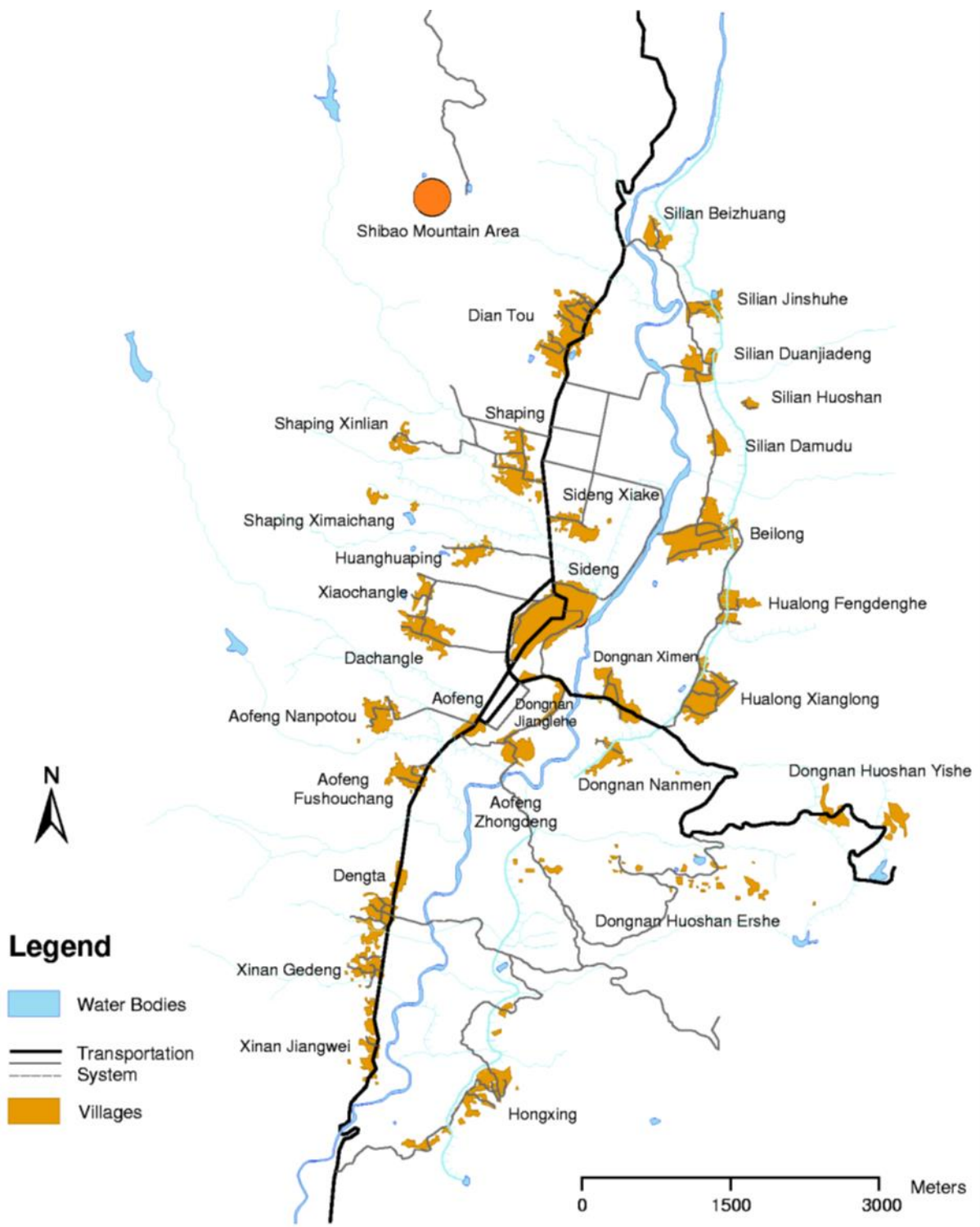
⁶⁷⁵ Yang, 'Horses, Silver, and Cowries ...'; see also, H. U. Vogel and S. Hieronymus, 'Cowry Trade and its Role in the Economy of Yunnan: From the Ninth to the Mid-Seventeenth Century. Part 1', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 1993, pp. 211-252.

⁶⁷⁶ The Southern Silk Road can be viewed as an overarching term for the many trading routes (that often overlapped), including the Ancient Tea Horse Road which connected Yunnan with South-East Asia, Tibet and China's central plains.

⁶⁷⁷ DH Li, 'The Influence of Indian Buddhism on Bai Identification and Understanding of Their Origins as a People: A Research Note', *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2009, pp. 19-23.

However, Shaxi's fate was sealed by the middle of the twentieth century when political turmoil and the building of new roads and modern means of transportation put an end to the trade on the ATHR.⁶⁷⁸ From then on, Shaxi, completely dependent upon this trade for centuries, was propelled back into isolation and a mainly agrarian life. Due to its geographical isolation there had been little development, therefore Shaxi Valley could preserve the once typical combination of cultural, religious, commercial and architectural components of the region.

⁶⁷⁸ It is said that Chinese troops on their way to Tibet in 1951 requisitioned all the horses and mules in the area, which put an end to the trade. As well, private markets were soon banned in the early socialist era.



MAP 5: SHAXI AND SHAXI VALLEY (SOURCE: SHAXI LOW CARBON COMMUNITY CENTRE, SLCCC)



FIGURE 15: FUNERAL RITUAL IN FRONT OF SHAXI XINGJIAO TEMPLE

Geography

Shaxi village lies roughly in between the two major tourist destinations of Dali and Lijiang and also connects directly to Shangrila which provides an access point for travels further north and west to Tibet or Sichuan province. Shaxi is situated in a beautiful, remote and fertile valley in the north-west of Yunnan province at an elevation of 2100 meters. Nestled between the imposing

Cangshan (苍山) mountain range which towers over the fertile Dali-Erhai plain, and the obstructive Hengduan mountains which house the World Heritage site of ‘The Three Parallel Rivers’ (*sanjiang bingliu* 三江并流), Shaxi valley only opens up in a north-south direction following deep gorges and the course of the Heihui river, a tributary of the Mekong River.



MAP 6: SHAXI IN RELATION TO LIJIANG AND DALI

Political Administration

Politically, Shaxi is organised as a *zhen* (镇) a small administrative town surrounded by a cluster of administrative and natural villages in the valley and the nearby hills, and is also one of China's 'historical town of provincial and national importance' (2006) with 4A ranking (2012).⁶⁷⁹ The next higher level of political administration is Jianchuan County government of the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP). Shaxi valley, with Shaxi *Sidengjie* at its centre, includes 14 villages⁶⁸⁰, extends in length 15km and has a width of about

6km. Its population of about 23,500 consists of eighty-four percent Bai minority people, while other

⁶⁷⁹ Shibaoshan-Shaxi was designated an AAAA national level scenic area in 2012 (石宝山-沙溪古镇荣膺国家 AAAA 级景区), in *Flying Shaxi*, Shaxi People's Government Publication, 2012 (*tengfei de Shaxi 腾飞的沙溪沙溪镇人民政府*, 2012). Shaxi is also one of China's 108 nationally acclaimed villages (*mingpian*), and one of the 20 most beautiful rural villages.

⁶⁸⁰ There are 14 administrative villages, 49 natural villages, and 76 hamlets, in *Flying Shaxi*;

minorities in the valley include Yi, Lisu, and Han.⁶⁸¹ Jianchuan County is considered one of the last cultural strongholds of Bai people.⁶⁸²

Society and Economy

About ninety percent of the local Shaxi population is still involved in agriculture, growing traditional and typical crops suitable for higher altitudes, such as rice (only one harvest), corn, wheat, barley, rape seed, beans, as well as cash crops such as ginseng and tobacco. In higher altitudes and steeper terrain in the mountains (mainly inhabited by the Yi minority) other crops are also grown, especially potatoes, and minorities there also engage in collecting of non-wood forest products (NWFP) such as mushrooms and medicinal herbs which contribute substantially to their livelihood (see Figure 16 below).⁶⁸³ Orchards mainly comprise stone fruit and chestnuts.⁶⁸⁴ Animal husbandry, in particular the raising of pigs, is wide-spread. The annual average income in Shaxi is still very low, however, agriculture is well integrated in the local economy and its growth stimulates the retail and manufacturing sector in Shaxi.⁶⁸⁵ Outmigration is still high to supplement the low income from agriculture. Small enterprises in Shaxi include a ginseng factory, rape seed oil distilleries, alcohol distilleries (baijiu), a mushroom packaging factory, two brick and roof tile factories, restaurants, guesthouses, and retail shops. The tourism industry in Shaxi is still developing, and according to 2012 statistics there were around 68000 domestic and international tourists visiting Shaxi, reaching a revenue of 20 million yuan, and only 36 guesthouses and farm stays with a capacity of circa 700 beds.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸¹ *Flying Shaxi*, 2012 figures.

⁶⁸² Feiner et al., 'Sustainable Rural Development Based on Cultural Heritage ...'. The Jianchuan County Bai population comprises 90.16%, see, 'Protecting and Developing the Most Beautiful Ancient Town of Shaxi, Focusing on Bai Nationality 's Cultural Ecology' (original title: baohu yu fazhan Yunnan zui mei guzhen Shaxi zhaoyan baizu wenhua shengtai 保护与发展 云南最美古镇沙溪着眼白族文化生态), *news 163.com*, 10 September 2015, <http://news.163.com/15/0910/21/B36BF1KF00014JB5.html>, accessed 11 September 2015.

⁶⁸³ F.K. Huber et al., 'Livelihood and Conservation Aspects of Non-wood Forest Product Collection in the Shaxi Valley, China', *Economic Botany*, Vol. 64, No. 3, 2010, pp. 189-204.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Huber et al., 'Livelihood and Conservation ...'; the planting of walnut trees has been encouraged by the government as result of sloping land conversion program (SLCP) to compensate farmers for the loss of land.

⁶⁸⁵ At the time of the 'discovery' of Shaxi by the Swiss (2000), the annual income of farmers was around US\$120 per year (Feiner); in 2012 this was 4529 yuan, still low by national standards;

⁶⁸⁶ This number climbed considerably, and in 2014, 116,000 domestic and foreign tourists visited Shaxi, with total tourism income of 24.3 million yuan, see above, 'Protecting and Developing the Most Beautiful Town of Shaxi ...'.

Agriculture is practiced by a vast majority of households in Shaxi, both in the mountains and the valley for subsistence and cash income (Figure 3). In addition to agriculture, livelihood diversification is a key strategy. In the mountains, 96% of all households participate in the collection of NTFPs, compared to 41% in the valley. When looking at the cash income from the sale of different NTFPs, the importance of edible mushrooms is evident, as 79.2% \pm 21.5% of the NTFP income of the households in the mountains and 73.2% \pm 40.5% in the valley derives from the marketing of mushrooms. Medicinal plants contribute 11.5% \pm 15.1% to the NTFP-income of the households in the mountains and 10.0% \pm 25.2% in the valley. The remaining NTFPs, such as wild orchids, small game, and wild food plants contribute 9.3% \pm 18.3% of NTFP-derived income for households in the mountains and 16.8% \pm 36.5% in the valley.

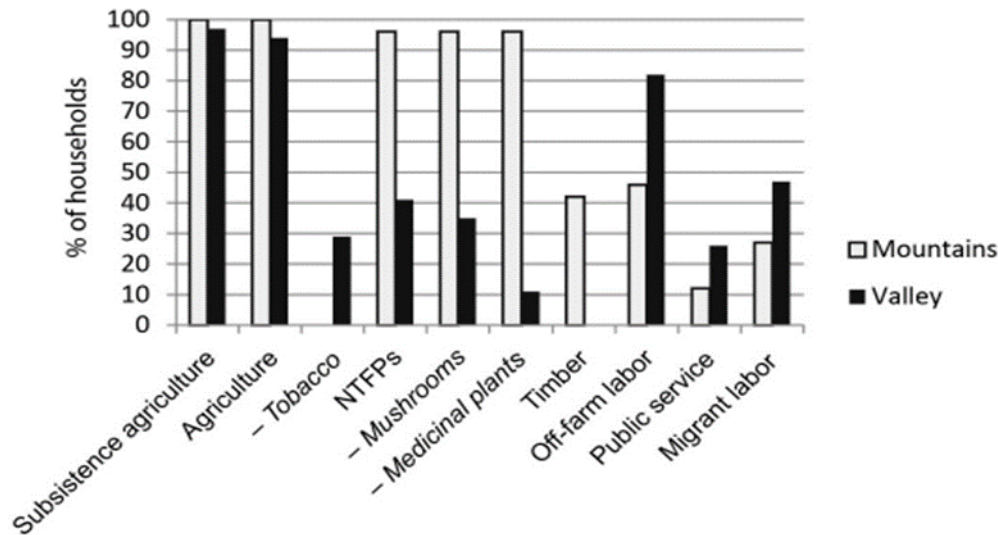


FIGURE 16: LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES IN SHAXI VALLEY. SOURCE: K.H. HUBER ET AL., 'LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES IN SHAXI, SOUTHWEST CHINA', *SUSTAINABILITY*, 2015, No. 7, PP. 3204-3229.

The Cultural and Natural Heritage of Shaxi Valley

In the chapter on minority peoples in China, I have discussed in more detail the origin and history of the Bai people as an ethnic group and as one of the dominant minority people in north-west Yunnan. I have further talked about the Bai people's strong identification with both their Bai ethnicity and the official Bai minzu label, in particular since the arrival of tourism in the Dali area. In this section, however, I will narrate the Bai in the context of their historical, cultural and natural heritage in Shaxi valley to find out how its recent revival as a stop-over on the Ancient Tea Horse Road has impacted on the lives of the Shaxi local communities.

The Old Market Square: Sidengjie

While salt and tea horse caravans (*mabang* 马帮) had already for a long time passed through the Shaxi valley, it wasn't until the early Ming dynasty that Shaxi Market Place (*Sidengjie* 寺登街) came into being. In the early 14th century Xingjiao Temple, the only Ming dynasty Azhali Buddhist

temple of the Bai nationality in China, was built against Aofeng hill in the centre of the valley. It contains rarely seen excellent examples of Ming *duogong* and significant frescoes (spared by the ravages of the Cultural Revolution), including the mural of a female Buddha.⁶⁸⁷ The temple was built for the many Buddhists in Shaxi valley and those passing through on their caravan journeys. For their convenience the trading market was finally moved from its location further down the valley to the front of the temple which is the layout of Shaxi *Sidengjie* today.⁶⁸⁸ Slowly the Market Place developed around Xingjiao Temple and more stores and inns, some with beautifully ornate entry gates and exquisitely carved wood- and stone work, appeared around its red sandstone paved square. Many beautiful traditional Bai folk courtyards were built by those people who made their fortune as caravan chiefs or merchants on the Tea and Horse Caravan Trail.⁶⁸⁹



FIGURE 17: XINGJIAO AZHALI BUDDHIST TEMPLE (RENOVATED)

⁶⁸⁷ See also, Li, 'The Influence of Indian Buddhism on Bai ...'; Xingjiao Temple is now a provincial level cultural relic. The frescoes at Xingjiao Temple include a fresco from the Nanzhao and Dali kingdoms (Crown Prince in the Garden), and an extremely rare mural of a female Buddha (Sakyamuni Descends to Hell), perhaps the only female Buddha in the whole of Buddhism. Duogong are the large and often intricately crafted and painted beams supporting the roof. See, *Shaxi Sideng Market – the only surviving market town on the ancient Tea and Horse Caravan trail*, Kunming, Yunnan, Nationalities Publishing House, July 2002. (*shaxi sidengjie, chama gudao weiyi xingcun gujishi* 沙溪寺登街, 茶马古道上惟一幸存的古集市, 昆明云南出版社, 2002.7).

⁶⁸⁸ 'Sidengjie' refers to today's Shaxi Market Place. In Bai language 'si' (temple) stands for the Xingjiao Temple, 'deng' means 'a place of', and 'jie' indicates the market. See Huang Yinwu, *Reading Time in Shaxi*, p. 23.

⁶⁸⁹ One of these courtyard houses was that of Shaxi's most famous merchant and caravan leader, old Ouyang, which was used as an Inn and stables. Today it is a kind of museum (Ouyang dayuan) as it represents the magnificent vernacular architecture of the time.



FIGURE 18: KUIXING TOWER AND THEATRE STAGE WITH SURROUNDING BUILDINGS (RENOVATED)

Later, in the Qing dynasty (17th -20th century), the Kuixing Tower (*kuige* 魁阁) and Theatre Stage (*xitai* 戏台), a three-tiered pagoda with stage, was built opposite the temple which today dominates the view of the market place and which is said to be an architectural masterpiece of the Bai people.⁶⁹⁰ The top tier of these towers usually contains a shrine dedicated to the God of Scribes, and as a representation of Bai culture they give testimony to their reverence for learning and culture.⁶⁹¹ These theatre stages were the centre of entertainment in the villages, and in busy times and on market days there were daily and nightly performances on the theatre stage in Shaxi. Over time, a large number of theatre stages were built in other villages in the valley.⁶⁹² It was also at this time that the main thoroughfares through Shaxi, the north, south and east alley, developed, with the north alley being longer than south alley, testifying to many more Tibetan caravans travelling from the north between Jianchuan and Shaxi. East alley is leading to the river and the ancient *Yujin*

⁶⁹⁰ The stage is the highest historical building in Sideng Village and one of the most beautiful in the valley, and replicas of it can be found in Dali and the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park in Beijing (Huang Yinwu).

⁶⁹¹ Kuixing Towers (a tower for the God of Scholarship) have an interesting history dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties, and the promotion of Confucianism through the issuance of Imperial Decrees. Kuixing is a Taoist deity venerated both as a patron saint for the arts and for good fortune in examinations. There are many Kuixing Towers to be found in Shaxi valley, demonstrating the wisdom of the local people and the popularity of Confucianism. One of the inscriptions in the Pagoda reads: 'The glories of culture aspire to the heavens', in *Shaxi Sideng Market*, Kunming, Yunnan Nationalities Publishing, July 2002, p. 73 (Shaxi Sideng Jie *cha ma gudao shang weiyi xingcun de gujishi* ,沙溪寺登街-茶马古道上惟一幸存的古集市, 昆明: 云南民族出版社, 2002.7).

⁶⁹² These were often combined in one structure or separate, and were built in different architectural styles. There's a saying in Jianchuan, 'every village has a tower, every stockaded village has a theatre stage' (*cuncun you guige, zhaizhai you xitai* 村村有魁阁, 寨寨有戏台). Starting from the entry to Shaxi valley at Diantou village, Shaxi has 19 towers and stages, 11 of them in good condition and different styles. In fact, during the golden age of Jianchuan these were found in just about every village, and there are still many theatre stages today.

bridge.⁶⁹³ Defensive gates and walls were built to protect the village and caravans from bandits. The lay-out of the Market place took shape at the height of Confucianism in Shaxi, therefore the orientation of the buildings, the use of simple wooden doors and windows on the facades, and the uneven cobblestone alleys, all express their social ranks and order, reflecting an ‘orderly Confucian community’.⁶⁹⁴ Besides the ‘ancient bazaar’ *Sidengjie*, there are many other historical relics, sites and natural spots (most of them still unknown to the public and in a derelict state in need of urgent restoration), most importantly, Shibao Mountain.

Shibaoshan: The Cultural Treasure House of Shaxi Valley

Nearby Shibao Mountain (*shibaoshan* 石宝山) - a major tourist attraction since the early 1980s when Shaxi was still undiscovered - houses a great number of the region’s cultural treasures.⁶⁹⁵ This mountain range with its unique natural stone forms (*Danxia, Lanxi*) and many well preserved



FIGURE 19: GUANYIN TEMPLE (SHADENG CUN) SHIBAOSHAN

temples harbours Shaxi's history and legacy, attesting to the long and deep cultural exchange between the region and its neighbours to the south, to Tibet, Nepal, India, and beyond. Shibaoshan’s most important site, the 'Stone Bell Mountain' grotto cluster (*shizhongshan* 石钟山) includes statues, stone carvings, and murals; reliefs, cliff paintings and portraits of Buddhas, bodhisattvas (Guan-yin), and deities, of kings of the Nanzhao/Dali kingdom, their families and followers; figures of foreigners, and the carving of a female reproductive organ (*ayangbai*), giving evidence to once great civilizations, empires and religions that influenced the local people and culture.⁶⁹⁶ It is easy to see that Bai culture and history became one of adaptation, adoption, and

integration of diverse peoples and cultures, that is, the Bai people are pro-actively and proudly syncretic.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹³ This bridge was of major importance as it was the main entry and exit point for caravans (*nanlai beiwang mabang de bijingzhilu* 南来北往马帮的必经之路), 沙溪。走过大理，路过丽江，别错过， in *Shaxi Sideng Market*, p. 13.

⁶⁹⁴ Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*, p.129.

⁶⁹⁵ Shibao mountain has been a major tourist attraction since 1982 and houses the 'Stone Bell Mountain Cave' (*shizhongshan shiku* 石钟山石窟) which was among the first batches of major cultural relics under State Protection Level in 1961; the Danxia landforms comprise six sites in South-West China and were included as World natural heritage in 2010, see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/645> ;

⁶⁹⁶ The ‘Stone Bell Mountain Cave’ is being compared to the world-famous Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes (Shaanxi) on the ancient Silk Road.

⁶⁹⁷ S. K. McCarthy, 'Whose Minority is it anyway? Minority Cultural Politics and National Identity in the PRC', PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2001.

Religion

The influence of regional empires, diverse religions and peoples left a deep and lasting impact on the local population which they still celebrate as their heritage today. A mixture of beliefs and alien cultures were selectively admitted, inherited, and assimilated into the local Bai culture, in many ways reforming religion to meet their demands.⁶⁹⁸ The local religion was influenced by forms of animism, totemism, and ancestor worship, but later Bai people also adopted practices from Chinese Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. But it is the practice of *Azhali* Buddhism, a form of esoteric Tibetan Buddhism, and the now almost vanished secret ceremonies, which had the greatest impact on the Bai people as a whole, and which kept its important place in local people's life.⁶⁹⁹ Today, in most villages the worship of Guanyin, the (Indian) Goddess of Mercy⁷⁰⁰, is combined with the worship of the 'local god', or *benzhu*, who protects the local people, and every one of the Bai ethnic group is a follower of this deity from birth. Together with *Azhali* Buddhism, *Chongbai benzhu*, the



FIGURE 20: ROADSIDE ALTAR

worship of the local 'tutelary spirit', has been the most important form of religion amongst the Bai and is also the most characteristic of Bai traditions.⁷⁰¹ As I could witness through regular visits to local temples and participation in religious celebrations, and as Mackerras had also noted in the 1980s, the influence of religion is still strong, in particular among rural (middle-aged and older) women, and Bai people particularly in the rural areas still strongly 'believe in religion' (*xinjiao*).⁷⁰² The

local temples (*benzhumiao*) are still visited at all important occasions, such as weddings, births and funerals, and house building (beam raising ceremony) and rituals are performed. At other times, the local temples serve as social places for the old people of the village where the older men chat and play cards or mah-jong, and the older women worship and chant or cook feasts for the gods and themselves. Here, a distinct 'division of labour' in the use and distribution of duties in the temple is

⁶⁹⁸ Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*, p. 83.

⁶⁹⁹ For more information on *Azhali* Buddhism, see Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*; or D.H. Li, 'The Influence of Indian Buddhism on Bai Identity...';

⁷⁰⁰ See, H.B. Chapin, 'Yunnanese Images of Avslokiteśvara', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1994, pp. 131-186.

⁷⁰¹ See e.g., Y. Zhao, 'Remaking Social Boundaries: the Construction of Benzhu Worship in Southwest China', *Asian Ethnicity*, 2015; see also Wechat forum article, 'Dali Bai Minority Worship Habits of the Lord, 90% of Yunnan People Do Not Know (original title: 大理白族的本主崇拜习俗, 90%的云南人都不知道! dali baizu de benzhu chongbai xiguan, 90% de Yunnanren doubuzhidao)

[http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s? biz=MjM5MjA5MzUyMQ==&mid=210296960&idx=3&sn=a4cc7118ae88241bbc64371f4ba4b7df#wechat_redirect](http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?biz=MjM5MjA5MzUyMQ==&mid=210296960&idx=3&sn=a4cc7118ae88241bbc64371f4ba4b7df#wechat_redirect), accessed 9 July 2015.

⁷⁰² C. Mackerras, 'Aspects of Bai Culture ...'; for more information, see also <http://www.ethnic-china.com/>

noticeable. Many rites, celebrations, and festivals are generated around these local belief systems which are still, or again, performed.



FIGURE 41: LOCAL TEMPLE GODS

Bai Architecture: Three Houses, One Wall (sanfang yizhaobi 三房一照壁)

As evidenced by the beauty of the *Sideng* Market, the most prominent of Shaxi's cultural heritage is the traditional Bai architecture, also represented by its vernacular buildings, such as private courtyard homes, or *yuanzi*, built with stone foundation, mudbrick walls, and wooden interior in a three-houses-one-wall-and-inner-courtyard arrangement.⁷⁰³ They are the pride of the Bai people, and traditionally, many of the houses have elaborately crafted entry gates, intricately fashioned wooden doors and windows, the walls of the houses are adorned with Bai painting, and the courtyards are often filled with potted flowers. Therefore, wood carving (*mudiao* 木雕), stone masonry (*shidiao* 石雕), and architectural building craftsmanship have developed as strong local traditional skills and have long been a thriving trade in the Jianchuan County.⁷⁰⁴ Local businesses, wood craft artisans, and the local government are keen to further these skills and support the establishment of training centres in the county town and various villages around.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰³ Bai architecture, especially in Xizhou, displays a level of sophistication and grandeur seldom seen in a rural setting, and most Bai courtyards have gone beyond the mud brick and wood architecture of the other ethnic groups. Author's interview with Brian Linden, August 2014.

⁷⁰⁴ Jianchuan has rich cultural and architectural heritage and is being slowly developed for tourism. For more information, see P. Scally, 'Getting Away: Jianchuan Old Town', *GoKunming*, 25 November 2013, http://www.gokunming.com/en/blog/item/3103/getting_away_jianchuan_old_town ; It was named the 'Home of wood carving in China' in 1996 by the Ministry of Culture and its wood carving products have long been attracting a highly diverse national and international clientele. Stone masonry traces its popularity back to the stone lion carvings from the Wei through to the Qing dynasties that form the cultural landscape of 'Thousand Stone Lion Mountain' (*Qianshishan*, *Manxianlin*), a historic site nearby Jianchuan, formerly known as Jinhua. See, various tourist booklets, e.g. *Jianchuan, a place where my dream and passion are embedded*, p.145.

⁷⁰⁵ In a nearby small village of Shaxi, there is a training centre for wood carving, established in a small courtyard house, which is led by a local master who instructed a small group of new students, composed of all ages and both gender. The centre has been running for three years and is supported by the government under the 'Project Hope' umbrella, where enrolment is free and tools are supplied (Personal Interview, December 2011).

Festival and Folk Arts

The local cultural heritage includes local delicacies (*minshi* 民食, *tesecai* 特色菜), traditional clothes, and a distinct language (*baihua* 白话). It includes folk art such as cloth embroidery (*buzha* 布扎), but song and dance (*getiao* 歌舞) - as in most minority areas in the region - are the most popular expression of their culture. The unique Bai folk songs (*baiqu* 白曲/*baizu diao* 白族调), the Buddhist (Taoist) chanting and rituals, and Buddhism tone of *Azhali* ancient music (*dongjing guyue* 洞经古乐) are honoured as ‘Living Fossils of China’s Rituals’.⁷⁰⁶

Many other forms of Bai folk song exist, e.g. the *daben qu*, or ‘long



FIGURE 22: SHIBAOSHAN SINGING FESTIVAL



FIGURE 23: FESTIVE BENZHUMIAO AT TAIZIHUI

songs’, the *duige* or ‘dialogue singing’, the (*dongshan*) *dage* beating dance, a collective dance popular amongst the Bai all over Jianchuan county, and Bai opera, known as *chuichui qiang* (blow tones), an art form combining folk music and dancing. The music is often heavily influenced by Buddhist themes and tones, and some are also influenced by or are of Han origin.⁷⁰⁷ In the remote village of Mapinguan in the mountains in Shaxi valley, villagers still perform ancient

Yunnan opera, clad in ancient costumes, once a year at spring festival. Shaxi people celebrate many religious and popular festivals, including the Crown Prince Festival (二月八 or *taizi hui*) which commemorates Buddha’s birth and is the most important and distinct Bai festival; the torch festival (火把节), also widely celebrated by the Yi minority; and the annually performed Shibaoshan Singing Festival (*shibaoshan gehui* 石宝山歌会), or Chinese people’s ‘Valentine’s Day’ (*baizu de qingrenjie* 白族的情人节), which has been included as a national-level intangible cultural heritage.

Shaxi’s Natural Heritage

Shaxi’s natural heritage comprises stunning mountain terrain which is part of the Hengduan Mountains. The agricultural heritage of the region is significant, as agriculture has dominated the

⁷⁰⁶ In various tourist brochures, also in *Jianchuan- a place where my dream and passion are embedded*, p.137.

⁷⁰⁷ The influences or origins of local ethnic music are often heavily contested, as for example, the Naxi people claim *dongjing* music as their cultural heritage, while it is also ascribed to have its origin in the Han Tang court. For more information, see X. Su, ‘Commodification and the selling of ethnic music to tourists’, Vol. 42, No. 4, 2011, pp. 496-505.

Erhai region around Dali since the Neolithic era, and people have developed complex water conservancy and irrigation projects. Farmers in Shaxi valley still rely predominantly on agriculture for income and still follow traditional practices of water distribution, and the planting and harvesting are aided by mules, donkeys, and water buffaloes.⁷⁰⁸ Many festivals have their origin in the rituals, myths, and legends woven around the seasonal cycle of agriculture. Small villages built in traditional Bai style dot the large expanses of paddy fields in the valley and add to the beautiful, peaceful, and aesthetic landscape which is one of Shaxi's greatest assets. The appreciation of the natural landscape also includes the (knowledge of) harvesting and use of wild fruits, roots, herbs, nuts, and mushrooms (non-wood forest products, NWFP).⁷⁰⁹

As is apparent from the above account, Shaxi's long history as an important stop-over on the tea and horse caravan trail has left a rich cultural legacy. While trade and the ringing of the bells of mules and horses passing through the valley has long stopped, Shaxi has recently experienced a reawakening and renaissance of its former glory.

Constructing Shaxi: The Shaxi Rehabilitation Project (2002-2020)

Leading the Way: The SRP and the Rebirth of Shaxi



FIGURE 24: SHAXI POSTER (SRP)

In 1999, the Jianchuan government invited a team of Swiss experts to discuss opportunities for development in the area.⁷¹⁰ Shaxi was not on the official itinerary, but when they saw Shaxi and the scenic valley from atop a mountain, they convinced their guides to take them down to explore. They were so impressed by what they saw and learned from local elders and historians, that they were determined to save this jewel on the Ancient Tea Horse Road. In order to attract funding for restoration, the team prepared a nomination for Shaxi, and in 2002 the

⁷⁰⁸ At a village meeting organized by the *Shaxi Low Carbon Community Centre* (SLCCC) it was voiced that the allocation and distribution of water is not being done on an equal basis. While the fields in the valley along the Heihui River are provided with irrigation water from the small dams along the river, the fields on the lower mountainside are dependent on rainwater only and therefore are lower-yielding. Similarly, clean water from the nearby spring Bailongtan (a scenic spot in Shaxi) is not made available equally to users.

⁷⁰⁹ C. S. Weckerle et al., 'Mao's Heritage: Medicinal Plant Knowledge among the Bai in Shaxi, China, at a Crossroads between Distinct Local and Common Widespread Practice', *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 123, 2009, pp. 213–228.

⁷¹⁰ The invitation of foreign NGO's/experts by local governments to assess and help develop potential tourism sites has been a common practice since the late 1990s. See also, Weishan (US-China Art Exchange), Pingyao (GHF), Shangrila (Swiss UNDP), Dong villages in Guizhou (GHF) and more.

World Monument Fund included Shaxi Market Place on its Watch list of *100 Most Endangered Sites*, as:

[T]he Shaxi Market Area, located in China's Yunnan Province on the historic Tea and Horse Caravan Trail that links Tibet with Southeast Asia, is the most complete surviving example of a trading centre along this route. The Shaxi Market contains an intact theatre, guesthouses for merchants, a temple precinct, and is surrounded by protective gates'.⁷¹¹

This was the start of the *Shaxi Rehabilitation Project (SRP)*, led by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and funded by national and international agencies, as well as local partners from Jianchuan County, Dali Prefecture and Yunnan Province authorities.⁷¹² Following the nomination, the Swiss-Chinese project team prepared a comprehensive preservation and development plan not only for the historic market square and surrounding villages, but also for the sustainable economic development of the whole Shaxi valley with a time plan from 2004-2020. The Project consisted of three phases and six modules: 1) Shaxi Historic Marketplace Restoration, 2) Sideng Historic Village Preservation and Development, 3) Sustainable Development of Shaxi Valley, 4) Ecological Sanitation and Waste Management, 5) Poverty Reduction and Cultural Preservation, and 6) Events and Dissemination. Phase I (2001-2004) included restoration, preservation and development planning for the market place and surrounding village, and restoration work on temple and market place commenced.⁷¹³ Further, programs for infrastructure and environmental sanitation were initiated. Phase II (2005-2006) included further work in the temple, the establishment of a management office, the Shaxi Town Master Plan, and a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for Shaxi valley. Phase III (2007-2010) included the final restoration (paintings) of the temple, the Regional Economic Development Strategy for Shaxi Valley (REDS) report, and management support. Phase IV (September 2011-May 2012) was initiated to assess the current Master Plan for Shaxi and work out detailed plans for new development zones inside (including zoning regulations) in order to meet the present and future needs as well as to offer a solid decision basis for coming investment plans.⁷¹⁴ The Modules were designed so they could be independently organized and

⁷¹¹ *World Monument Fund*, <http://www.wmf.org/project/shaxi-market-area>.

⁷¹² Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*, pp. 172-73. While the first phase was financed by ETH Zurich (DEZA) and Jianchuan County, the subsequent phases were financed by entering into competitions organized by WMF and then matched by Chinese government funds. A part of these funds went to the development of the county town Jianchuan (Jinhua).

⁷¹³ Also in the initial phase, Shaxi was entered into a competition for heritage conservation and J. Feiner and the SRP team won an award which secured further funding for the project. The sponsors included the World Monuments Fund, the Robert Wilson Challenge Fund, American Express, and the Swiss Association for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage in China.

⁷¹⁴ Executed by KUPDI (Kunming Urban Planning and Design Institute) and LEP Consultants AG, a spin-off of ETH Zurich and long-time partner for developments in China (Kunming). <http://www.lepconsultants.ch/en/projects/past-projects/517-shaxi-rehabilitation-project-phase-iv-revision-of-master-plan-and-elaboration-of-detailed-plan>



FIGURE 25: SRP MODULES

was drafted which includes a zoning and transportation plan, a sustainable basic infrastructure plan, a tourism development plan, a protection and development plan for historic sites, and an investment plan.⁷¹⁶ These are all elements of an overarching model of sustainable rural development which the project has as its main objective and it was hoped it would provide an example for similar sites, in particular for other historic villages in the Himalayan foothills of Yunnan.

implemented. The first and second phase were led by both the Swiss and Chinese project teams and the project was handed over to the local government in December 2007 at the beginning of the third Phase of the SRP (2007-2009), however the Swiss team continued to support the project.⁷¹⁵ An integrated and comprehensive regional plan

11. Shaxi Rehabilitation Project (SRP): Market Place Restoration (Module

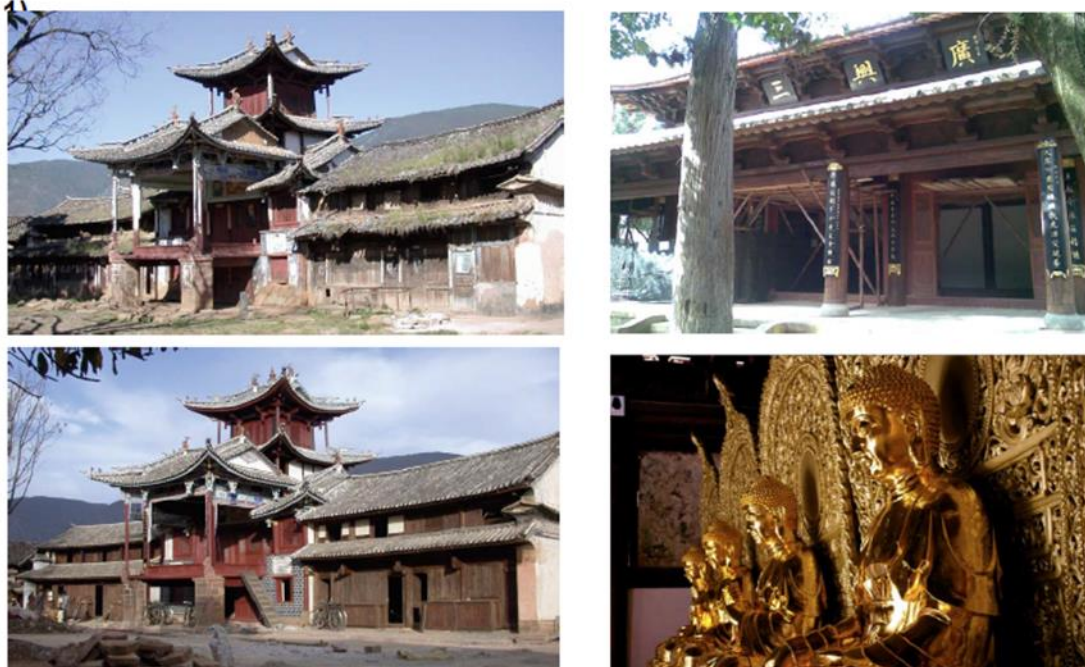


FIGURE 26: SHAXI REHABILITATION PROJECT (SRP): MARKET PLACE RESTORATION

⁷¹⁵ For more information on the Shaxi Rehabilitation Project, see Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*; Feiner et. al., ‘Sustainable Rural Development ...’.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid, Feiner et al., ‘Sustainable Rural Development..’.

The SRP is a model and a milestone in cultural heritage preservation where all the 'classic' problems of authentic restoration, or restoring the heritage back to its original form, emerged, and had to be



FIGURE 27: RESTORATION OF OLD GATES

dealt with.⁷¹⁷ The restoration work was so challenging that the team had to constantly change and adapt its plans as new problems surfaced. All these painstaking methods proved time-consuming and costly, and seeing how other towns in the area, including Lijiang, were benefitting from demolishing old buildings and rebuilding in traditional style, the local government became keen to copy the model.⁷¹⁸

However, the Swiss team was unconditional in its insistence to *restore* buildings and that new additions were made fully visible rather than disguised as old and made to blend in by using modern and faux-traditional style.⁷¹⁹ According to Huang Yinwu, the local leading architect of the SRP team, there were, of course, problems in terms of Western and Chinese approaches to restoration and preservation in the way '[we] respect history and culture', and while there are little misunderstandings when dealing with technical and practical



FIGURE 28: RESTORED SHOP FRONT IN SHAXI MARKET PLACE

aspects and history, the differences are in the 'thought process'.⁷²⁰ This is not surprising, as local builders would not have been exposed to any form or theory of preservation other than the local practice developed over many centuries, and, while the two teams did synthesise their approaches, this tension clearly reveals the fundamental problems of the prevailing scientific/expert-based Western-centric preservation model, biased in terms of

authenticity and tangible heritage. In actual fact, the overall Guiding Plan was designed according

⁷¹⁷ Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*;

⁷¹⁸ Yuan Yuan, 'Making an Old Town New', *Beijing Review*, 26 March 2012,

http://www.bjreview.com.cn/nation/txt/2012-03/26/content_442205.htm, accessed June 2014. A similar mindset of local authorities threatened the restoration of the old town of Weishan near Dali, where already Lijiang was cited as a model of development not to follow (China-US Exchange)

⁷¹⁹ Ibid, Yuan Yuan, 'Making an Old Town New', *Beijing Review*, 26 March 2012;

⁷²⁰ HY, interview, 2011/12.

to Western planning approaches, above all to a Swiss Guiding Planning.⁷²¹ However, it was always of most importance to the foreign team that the project takes Shaxi's unique geographical,



FIGURE 29: RESTORATION OF THEATRE STAGE CEILING

ecological, social and economic conditions into consideration and uses only local materials and traditional techniques where possible. Referring to preservation methods in Japanese villages, it is also noted that applying traditional architectural methods in preserving ancient buildings makes regular maintenance possible and more applicable instead of building mock-ancient buildings after the original

one has been demolished.⁷²² The SRP is also a model and milestone insofar as it not only strives to restore (rather than rebuild) and preserve the cultural heritage of Shaxi, but also laid the foundation for long-term development, promoting all-round sustainability of development for this fragile valley that is fast becoming a major tourist destination. In particular, the emphasis was to be on slow development, on changing the mindset of people, on organizing the community, build on experience, and enhance the importance of the local heritage for it to become meaningful.⁷²³ It was specified in the planning that 'tourism will not be the sole vehicle for the viability of Shaxi communities', and to 'develop tourism and other industries in the valley by preserving and rehabilitating its cultural heritage, its ecological qualities, and its social structure'.⁷²⁴ Thus the comprehensive conservation was built into the framework of Shaxi's social and economic developmental state based on the unique character of its cultural heritage.

'Heritage Work' In Shaxi: Theory Put into Practice

One of the opening paragraphs in architect Huang's *Reading Time in Shaxi* is that the SRP started with 'understanding Shaxi', understanding its people, its history and culture, its geography and ecology.⁷²⁵ It is a still on-going project (2004-2020), and every step since its initiation has impacted on and has involved the local population, although not in the sense of decision-making power.⁷²⁶

⁷²¹ P. Bertschi and M. Junker, 'The Sustainability-Oriented Guiding Plan for the Shaxi Valley', The Shaxi Rehabilitation Project, IRL-Institute, ETH Zurich, Semester Thesis, July 2004. The restoration intervention was executed according to UNESCO charters, in particular the Venice and Granada Charter, and Burra Charter but also considering local traditions.

⁷²² 'Traditional Villages: How the World Preserves Them', *China Culture* (web page), 13 March 2015, http://www.chinaculture.org/2015-03/13/content_606882.htm, accessed 3 November 2015.

⁷²³ HY interview, 2011/12.

⁷²⁴ Feiner et al., 'Sustainable Rural Development...'

⁷²⁵ Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*;

⁷²⁶ Here the distinction has to be made between *canyu* and *canjia*, the former meaning taking part, join in, while the latter means actively taking part;

First, after Shaxi's discovery, local archives, family histories, and elderly's memories were searched in order to reconstruct an approximate authentic visual representation of the ancient Market Place and important buildings. Likewise, the help of locals and local historians was needed to reconstruct an historical account of Shaxi, and which then could be woven into the popular narrative around the Ancient Tea Horse Road (ATHR).⁷²⁷ After all, this is what Shaxi is about. At the same time, the



FIGURE 30: RESTORATION OF OLD HOUSES

Shaxi project is only a small mosaic stone in the larger concept of a 'regional culture path' in Yunnan.⁷²⁸ The popular narrative around the ATHR preceded the SRP team marginally as other towns in Yunnan (Lijiang, Shuhe, Dali, Shangri-la) had already been associated with its label. And since the early 2000s, many more ancient towns and villages along the ATHR are being restored (Weishan, Heshun, Pu'er, Nakeli and more), even ATHR theme parks are being built.

However, the inclusion of Shaxi on the WMF Watch list and its promotion as an ancient town (*guzhen* 古镇) and as the 'last remaining Market town on the ATHR', gave the brand a new boost, and Shaxi a new life.

During Shaxi's restoration, mostly local craftsmen – who already had a high reputation in restoration work - were employed and an exchange of skills took place where local craftsmen would show the SRP team the traditional approaches of their craft, while the foreign architects would 'reacquaint them with traditional techniques and materials' and expose them to 'scientific methods' by training them in modern approaches to preservation. This balanced and cooperative team work approach - also referred to as the 'Spirit of Shaxi' - was to facilitate a rich know-how transfer and guarantee an appropriate adaption to local conditions.⁷²⁹ It was also an invaluable lesson for local craftsmen, as the building boom has continued in Shaxi and around the valley and all properties within the heritage buffer zone have to be built in the traditional way. These workers are now in high demand throughout the year, whereas in the past building was mainly done in the agrarian off-season during winter time. Today, the transformation of old houses (*lao fangzi*) into modern guesthouses (*kezhan*) and the building of new houses in traditional style increasingly requires that these workers are skilled in both traditional (mostly exterior) and modern (mostly interior) building methods. This revitalization has instilled a new pride and created a new appreciation for traditional

⁷²⁷ The SRP team could not draw on photographic evidence of the old town, as Shaxi had never been inventoried.

⁷²⁸ F. Wuersten, 'Ein wieder entdecktes Bijou. Restaurierungs- und Entwicklungsprojekt in Südwestchina', 14 July 2003, www.ethlife.ethz.ch, accessed 10 December 2012.

⁷²⁹ Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*, p. 174-5.

Bai architecture amongst the local population, and in interviews and surveys conducted by the author and the *Shaxi Low Carbon Community Centre* (see below) it was revealed that many people preferred the traditional style houses to the modern (brick and concrete) style, and either supported the up-keep or renovation or the building of new houses in the traditional style.⁷³⁰ More so, since they have become aware of both the potential monetary and heritage value of traditional houses. The increasingly high demand in traditional building and other construction work (roads, paths) related to the improvement of the old town has also had a positive effect on outmigration as more and more men are now able to find construction work close to home.⁷³¹ Therefore, the revitalization and the continuation of the demand of the traditional building craft skills is a positive outcome, ‘positioning heritage as an integral part of socio-economic development and cultural life today not peripheral to it’.⁷³²

The Chinese government initially subsidised the renovation of old courtyard homes for local people, but outsiders have to renovate at their own cost.⁷³³ They cannot buy properties and usually only get



FIGURE 31: TRADITIONAL HOUSE BUILDING: STONE FOUNDATION, MUD BRICK WALLS AND WOODEN BEAMS

shorter-term leases (5-20 years). However, it was never stipulated how to renovate the old houses, except in the core preservation zone, and in many instances, as spending did not have to be accounted for, the subsidies were not being used for renovations, therefore ‘these handouts’ were not the best way to encourage people to repair houses.⁷³⁴ While most households could apply for ‘renovation money’, it was not sufficient and there was still a selective process, which leaves many other, older-style houses situated within or without the heritage

zoning and those in other villages vulnerable to decay. Most local farmers are still poor and cannot afford to renovate an older house, let alone to heritage preservation standards, nor can they afford to build a new one. In particular in the outlying villages untouched by tourism, living conditions are

⁷³⁰ In particular the middle-aged and older people preferred the older style building. See, SLCCC survey, My Survey; one other reason why building in traditional style is still more popular is because of the make-up of building materials: modern houses (brick and concrete) must be built quickly, whereas traditional buildings are built slowly, whenever there is time and/or money.

⁷³¹ OY (relative) interview, October 2014; according to this interviewee of a neighbouring village to the question of how villagers in non-tourist villages can make money, construction work is lucrative, especially construction leaders or foremen are amongst the richest people in the village. Women also work in construction, but only in the agrarian off-season, and are paid less as they only do the unskilled labour, such as carrying concrete and rocks.

⁷³² D. Rodwell, *Conservation and Sustainability in Historic Cities*, Wiley, 2008, p. 187.

⁷³³ Government subsidy at the time of research (2011) were Y10,000 per household. However, often, different family members make up a different household but still only occupy one house, therefore, multiples of the subsidy can be applied for with the government. According to some business owners, prices for leasing houses have been going up continually and substantially, and the bureaucracy around it has become more difficult (casual conversation);

⁷³⁴ HY interview, 2011/2012.

still very basic, and villages and farmers depend primarily on government projects, such as the ‘Build a Socialist New Countryside’ or ‘Develop the West’ in their development.⁷³⁵ Also, many courtyard homes are inhabited by multiple households or individuals and family feuds over property deeds are frequent, therefore selling or leasing is often problematic and houses may further deteriorate.⁷³⁶ This is also an obstacle for the government, who, like in Xizhou, would like to move the residents out to begin with tourism development.⁷³⁷ One of Shaxi SRP’s ‘demonstration’ renovations, the Ouyang dayuan, is also a case in point. It is one of the most famous and intact historical vernacular building in Shaxi – meanwhile a kind of museum - once owned by the richest caravan leader in Shaxi and was chosen as it is an exemplary model of local Bai merchant architecture. Knowing the value of the house, today, the Ouyang dayuan is still in the hands of some of the descendants (six brothers) as they dispute over property rights of the house.⁷³⁸ Similarly, while many original residents of the old houses in the centre were bought out by the government at the time of the SRP and moved elsewhere, the property owners of two adjacent shops in the centre refused to sell and, although the focus of restoration was on public buildings, the SRP team had to include them when they restored the main historical caravan inn, the *Laomadian*.⁷³⁹

In reality, what all this means, is that only houses that are being leased out (mostly to outsiders) can be renovated, other houses mostly get ‘improved’ bit by bit, whenever there is money, the rest falls into disrepair. While the cost of construction labor has remained about the same, material cost for both new and traditional houses has risen considerably, in fact wood has doubled in price, and as logging has been banned long ago, wood for building now comes from as far away as Lijiang and Shangrila.⁷⁴⁰ Huang Yinwu reasons, the building boom is ‘because the Market Place is getting famous’, and while the number of houses being built is more or less the same, ‘more people want to build closer to the Market Place ... closer to the famous centre’. However, when asked if people are wealthier now and can build or renovate houses, he thinks people’s wealth is more or less the same. This would mean that people’s livelihood in Shaxi has not improved greatly in recent years, as would have been expected due to increased tourist numbers. Findings that support these claims

⁷³⁵ R.E.R. Harwood, ‘Negotiating Modernity at China’s Periphery: Development and Policy Interventions in Nujiang Prefecture’, PhD Thesis, University of Western Australia, 2009; D. Lu and W. A.W. Neilson, (eds.), *China’s West Region Development. Domestic Strategies and Global Implications*, Singapore, World Scientific Publishing, 2004.

⁷³⁶ For example Yeye’s house, also one of the oldest in Shaxi, is inhabited by three parties. This is also still prevalent in places like Xizhou, where most locals still live in their (multi-) courtyard homes, usually more than one family.

⁷³⁷ BL interview, August 2014.

⁷³⁸ R. Hartmann Schweizer, ‘Karawanserei’, *tec* 21, 29-30, 2006.

⁷³⁹ Huang, *Reading Time in Shaxi*, p. 127. What complicated things was that charity funds could only be used for public buildings, therefore they could not include these shops in the restoration. Original owners of houses in the centre that were willing to sell were compensated with land just outside the centre that would also give them easier access to the fields.

⁷⁴⁰ For Chinese furniture and art objects the famous red wood from Myanmar is used.

point mainly to the still poor integration of the tourism sector with the local economy, that is, there is little flow-on effect from tourism earnings into the local economy.⁷⁴¹

However, as the SRP progresses - now fully in the hands of the Chinese government - and the different modules are being addressed, different sectors of the local economy should benefit from tourism development and vice versa. In a comprehensive report prepared in 2009 by the SRP team (ETHZ and LEP) which envisions the future of Shaxi's sustainable development, the economic potential of Shaxi *Sidengjie* and Shaxi valley was assessed and specific recommendations, guidelines, and timelines were proposed.⁷⁴² A similar report had been prepared earlier in 2004 to investigate the sustainable tourism development of Shaxi and Shaxi valley.⁷⁴³ According to this report, Shaxi, overall, lies within a 'high attraction' zone for tourism and it is projected that tourism can lead to substantial improvement of other sectors of the economy, e.g. the revival of the local craft and manufacture industry, and therefore will also contribute to poverty alleviation. However, because Shaxi is only a small town, and is situated in a valley limited in space and expansion, the report suggests, it has to focus on a middle to high market attractiveness in order to guarantee sustainable rural development, including relaxation, cultural, nature, and educational tourism. Many of these projections are reliant on factors such as protection of the environment, taking advantage of local products (Shaxi as organic food brand), avoiding mass tourism, strengthening and diversifying local industry, integrating businesses and industries in the local economy, restricted land-use, improving agriculture and infrastructure, as well, there is a strong inter-dependence with the development of tourism in the greater Shangrila Tourism Zone and neighbouring valleys, such as Eryuan and Jianchuan County.⁷⁴⁴

Questioning the Preservation Model: Local, Foreign or Sino-Foreign?

The possible realization of the projections of the above tourism and economic development plans, however, seem to still lie in a distant future for Shaxi. Meanwhile, tourism has been arriving slowly, and many tourists have been observing an almost disquieting emptiness of Shaxi Market place, that

⁷⁴¹ P. Bertschi, 'Regional Economic Development Strategy for Shaxi Valley', Shaxi Rehabilitation Project, SRP (Rural Pilot Shaxi), Training and Research Program 'Environment', China (TRP-E), September 2009.

⁷⁴² This 'scientific report', the *Regional Economic Development Strategy for the Shaxi Valley* (REDS), analysed in detail Shaxi's economic situation at the time and projected a number of future scenarios for Shaxi's economic development, using in-put/out-put analysis, SWAT, PESTLE, and other analytical methods. This report, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), was part of Phase III of the SRP (December 2007- 2020).

⁷⁴³ P. Bertschi, 'Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for Shaxi Valley', Diploma Thesis, Volume 1/2, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, 2005. This report is a guideline only, and the local government is not obliged to put these measures into practice.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid, Bertschi, 'Sustainable Tourism Development...'

it is more like a 'stage set' than a place⁷⁴⁵, or more like an open-air museum, which calls restoration projects like the SRP into question if people do not use the newly re-vitalized heritage site. It also seems that Shaxi local people, and by extension places like Shaxi that had heritage projects 'imposed' (and I don't mean that in a negative sense) on them, live in a kind of surreality, as well as a lull marked by passivity, in particular when the local population is not included in the (next stage of the) revitalization process. The SRP invigorated, engaged and puzzled them for a while, but now that renovations are done and finished, the buildings are being admired and enjoyed, but almost inevitably - as we shall see later - the market square is being gradually given over to tourists and outsiders.

In recent years, the conservationist message has been emphasising 'intangible heritage and an anthropological vision of culture as a dynamic and evolving process, the narrow concept of heritage as cultural relics and records from and about the past is superseded by one of socio-cultural continuity and enhancement'.⁷⁴⁶ This means, that historic cities should not solely be perceived as immobile objects admired for their historical and architectural value, but should be regarded as 'living spaces to be occupied and appropriated by local communities as an essential part of the process of safeguarding those communities' identities and sense of belonging.'⁷⁴⁷ Ultimately, heritage and its preservation is not about the past, but about the presence and the future.

The SRP has certainly addressed all these issues and made them a priority in the restoration project, including the adaptive re-use of restored buildings, the revitalization of traditional building skills and local craft, such as wood carving and stone masonry, the use of local resources, the priority of community needs, and more, and yet, the market place is a 'shell' and devoid of life. So how does a perceived successful model of restoration such as the *Shaxi Rehabilitation Project* (SRP) 'fail' to perpetuate the value of the heritage of the local people but instead it is being turned at once into a 'stage set' (rather than a living heritage) and a tourist site for public consumption and which then often causes a sense of alienation and disinheritance amongst the local population? What went wrong in the planning and development led by world-renown heritage and restoration experts? Or else, what happened since the completion of the restoration? I have explored the (touristic) transmutation of ancient towns in rural China in a more general context in chapter five and will analyse in more detail how these forces play out in the second part of the case study chapter below.

⁷⁴⁵ V. Michael, 'More on Yunnan', *Time Tells*, Blog, 17 July 2009, <http://vincemichael.wordpress.com/tag/shaxi/>, accessed 6 December 2013.

⁷⁴⁶ D. Rodwell, *Conservation and Sustainability in Historic Cities*, Wiley, 2008, Chapter 9, p. 187.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

In 2011, at my first field trip, the ‘shop front’ in Shaxi *Sidengjie* was not very diverse but shops were mostly locally owned. There were only a couple of woodcarving shops and most of the other shops were selling embroidered shoes that the women made themselves. The few cafés/restaurants/bars and guesthouses in the old centre were already in outside hands, most of them only between one and three years old. The traditional courtyard houses close to the centre were still occupied by local people. In this early phase of development (2004-2010), the government continued on a path of slow growth and also proposed a balance of growth of outsider/local businesses.⁷⁴⁸ In fact, the local SRP representative initially objected to any outside business in the centre as he had other developments in mind, but none-the-less the government approved the opening of the first outside business in 2006, a café, which has meanwhile become a popular local institution.⁷⁴⁹ In many ways, this move set the trend for future (outside) business development, it opened the flood gates, so to speak. By the beginning of the new decade more outside businesses had moved in, complementing the local small restaurants and shoe shops, but the town was still distinctly local. Local people then were looking forward to more tourists as they already felt the benefits of even the little extra money they made.⁷⁵⁰ However, in many ways they did not know what to do: they were deeply attached to their culture, at the same time they wanted change, but were also afraid of its risk.⁷⁵¹ The SRP team was encouraged when they realized that the rehabilitation program was generating local income and consequently drew up plans to ensure that development would continue to benefit the local people and not the government officials or other outsiders who were quick to try and gain benefit. In particular, they wanted to avoid to create a tourism environment such as in Lijiang and Dali. After more than five years of completed renovations of the Market place, and although Shaxi had even made it into the *Lonely Planet* South-West China version, Shaxi was still a quiet town with a distinct local feel about it, but change was imminent. Shaxi’s reputation as a ‘historic town on the Ancient Tea Horse Road’ and a ‘rural hide-away’ started growing at a greater pace, and so did the number of tourists and outside businesses.

⁷⁴⁸ WUX interview, 28 August 2014

⁷⁴⁹ HY interview, 2 August 2014

⁷⁵⁰ An early random short survey I took among the few businesses, however, mostly revealed that their incomes were ‘bu gou’ (not enough) or ‘hai keyi’ (just enough), but no ‘hao’ (good). In many ways this was not surprising as most of the shops in the old town sold almost exclusively identical ware, embroidered shoes. This indicated, amongst other reasons, a non-creativity and vision amongst the women, and the lack of a business model that the government could have provided as it was trying to promote handicraft.

⁷⁵¹ LCCC survey shows overwhelming agreement for change amongst all age groups;

Conclusion

This chapter has set the scene for the upcoming chapter in which I will analyse my ethnographical field work. Here, I have introduced Shaxi's long history and unique culture which was shaped by its cross-roads location on the Ancient Tea Horse Road and which has left a lasting legacy. The joint Sino-Swiss heritage restoration project of Shaxi *Sidengjie* in the early 2000s breathed new life into this long forgotten and poverty-stricken village and changed its course of development to become a premier tourist destination. It was the first and most important step for the preservation of Shaxi's cultural heritage and made local people newly aware of their roots and history, made them remember. The careful restoration of the ancient market place and the forward-looking comprehensive planning for tourism and economic development put Shaxi on the right track to become a viable model to be emulated. As well, by pioneering in sustainable, green and ecological rural development, the Shaxi model could also thoroughly challenge other models, such as the Lijiang model.

Introduction

Kuaisu fazhan (快速发展), fast development, has been the hallmark of China's drive for economic growth and modernization since the 'opening up and reform' period. The integration of tourism into economic planning of local governments has certainly sped up development in many rural and remote communities and made them more prosperous. Just how fast development occurs in many of China's rural tourist destinations has increasingly become the object of research, in particular as it relates to local social, cultural and environmental change. While Shaxi got off to a slow start since the restoration of the old Market Place finished in the mid-2000s, since the early years of the second decade Shaxi has been on a roller coaster ride of tourism *kuaisu fazhan* that locals were rather unprepared for. This chapter follows on from the previous chapter where I introduced Shaxi and the Shaxi Rehabilitation Project and is the account of my main field work in 2011/2012 and a follow-up visit in the summer/autumn of 2014. By analysing Shaxi's unique development path this study will show that the seemingly antithetical project of cultural heritage preservation and tourism development in China has become increasingly diverse, sophisticated, and potentially sustainable, however, in the majority of cases, these encouraging developments eventually change course and converge to a more mainstream model, indicative of heritage protection 'with Chinese characteristics'.

Constructing Shaxi: The Role (Models) of NGO's and Other Cultural 'Brokers' in Shaxi

While it is difficult for local people to influence government policy and action regarding the development of Shaxi (tourism, environment, ecology, and the economy), there are a number of other forces present, such as foreign and local NGOs and more and diverse stakeholders (private enterprise and individuals) that can serve as a 'monitor' or 'broker' to indirectly advance their own or local affairs in beneficial ways.⁷⁵² In Shaxi, there is small mix of cultural brokers and

⁷⁵² Foreign NGO's have a long tradition in Yunnan province – indeed, Yunnan has the highest number of foreign NGO's in China. See also, L. Hoffman, 'Rise of Volunteering in China: Transforming Cities and Personhood', Asia

development agencies which are helping Shaxi to realise its goal of comprehensive sustainable development and which co-exist and collaborate within a set of competing power dynamics. Together with local people's and local government initiatives they form part of the structural basis of current heritage protection in Shaxi.

The key players in action

The Ginkgo Society

The *Ginkgo Society* is a Sino-American conservation group based in Dali, which also specialises in eco-travel and cultural tourism. It was established in 2011 with the goal to protect Shaxi valley by 'establishing green-themed activities and preventing the kind of mass-scale Chinese tourism that



FIGURE 32: OLD THEATRE INN, SHAXI

has over-commercialized Lijiang and Dali'. Under the founders' (Barclay and Wu) direction, the society has recently finished the restoration and refurbishment of the *Old Theatre Inn* (former *Dragon Fly Inn*) complex, a meanwhile popular boutique guesthouse and internationally acknowledged eco-lodge, which is situated in close-by Duanjia village. The theatre stage (*xitai*) had long served as a village school and was initially restored

in 2006 as part of the SRP project of conserving key historic properties in Shaxi Valley. The society's latest project includes the restoration of the *Pear Orchard Temple* (*Ci Yin An* 慈荫庵), a former nunnery, in nearby Diantou village.⁷⁵³ In many ways, Chris Barclay sees himself as the 'inheritor' of the SRP project, in particular as he has a steady presence in Shaxi while the Swiss have long left, something criticised by many in the heritage community of such transient projects.⁷⁵⁴

Pacific Memo, 31 Januar 2014, http://www.asiapacificmemo.ca/volunteering-china-transforming-cities?utm_source=APM+266&utm_campaign=Decentralized+Asia&utm_medium=email accessed 4 February 2014; in the article the author points out: decentralization is typically associated with fiscal policies, taxation, etc., however, if we see volunteering as a form of decentralization, we realize that it is not only about 'localised' governance, but also about the processes that shape and produce identity and personhood, 'decentralization from an anthropological perspective, in other words, is a form of power that is shaping welfare provisioning in urban China and is in effect producing new urban subjects: volunteers.'

⁷⁵³ For more information, see www.shaxichina.com and <http://www.shaxichina.com/en-us/shaxi-yunnan/preserving-cultural-heritage.htm>; restoration was executed in a complete professional manner that exceeds county and prefecture cultural bureau requirements;

⁷⁵⁴ CB Interview, August 2015.

The beautifully restored *Pear Orchard Temple* (POT) opened its doors to the public in August 2014 after three years of renovations and includes a small visitor centre/shop, a vegetarian restaurant and café, tea room, meditation rooms, Yoga terrace, class rooms, and a room dedicated to Shaxi's history of the Ancient Tea Horse Road.⁷⁵⁵ With the approval of the government, the temple is now officially designated as Shaxi's visitor centre. Its aim is to attract visitors to participate in local village and temple activities, such as religious festivals, song and dance, Bai cooking classes, cultural excursions, village tours, hiking and horse trekking, to educate them about the local culture and promote sustainable tourism.

There have been some tensions in the past between Barclay, the SRP representative Huang Yinwu and others in terms of the local government allowing the lease and commercial use of Shaxi's heritage properties by outsiders/foreigners, such as the *Old Theatre Inn* and the *Pear Orchard Temple*, which according to them should have been kept in local hands.⁷⁵⁶ There were also disputes between Diantou locals and Barclay in regards to a late 'reshuffling' of villagers' share and use of space in the temple which clashed with the new use and refurbishment.⁷⁵⁷ In recent times, the purchase, appropriation and (mis-) use of religious sites by commercial entities (including governments) has been highly debated in the heritage literature.⁷⁵⁸ However, Barclay assured he has always been aware of the potential friction of secular and non-secular use, and he was being 'careful not to turn it into something else, as I'm the guest, the temple doesn't belong to me'.⁷⁵⁹

Importantly, the above *Ginkgo* projects (*Old Theatre Inn* and *Pear Orchard Temple*) acknowledge Shaxi's goal of regional and holistic development, also taking the pressure off Shaxi as central location of tourist sights and sites, and including these villages in the wider touristic landscape and its economic and social benefits as Shaxi *Sidengjie* usually takes the limelight. This goal has been vigorously reiterated by government officials lately as Shaxi – already on the limits of capacity - is

⁷⁵⁵ Incidentally, local/county government officials were invited to the opening of the temple but did not show up as the event was considered 'too commercial, with foreigners and all...', WYX conversation at opening of temple.

⁷⁵⁶ Local teacher Wu then operated the theatre as a small guest house and later, as the guest house was not successful, Wu and Barclay upgraded it and called it the *Dragon Fly Inn*. The dispute over the now renamed *Old Theatre Inn* was eventually resolved by Barclay going into partnership with Wu whose wife is a local from Duanjia village.

⁷⁵⁷ In particular, it was the 'messiness' of villagers who use the temple to pray and play that necessitated the changes, as in that state the temple would not be 'presentable' for the public.

⁷⁵⁸ See e.g., 'Temple Closing to Reject Commercialization Reopens', *chinadaily.com.cn*, 18 August 2014, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/culture/2014-08/18/content_18438905.htm, accessed 20 June 2015; other examples are Shangri-la's historic Songtsanlin Temple and monastery, also called the little Potala Palace, which has been lavishly refurbished and touristified; as well, the famous Shaolin (Kungfu) temple in Shaanxi province, made infamous by its head monk, referred to as the 'CEO monk'; see, 'Shaolin's CEO monk Shi Yongxin a 'philanderer' and 'corrupt'', *The Australian*, 11 August 2015, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/shaolins-ceo-monk-shi-yongxin-a-philanderer-and-corrupt/story-e6frg6so-1227477818699>, accessed 29 August 2015.

⁷⁵⁹ CB interview, August 2014; in fact, the lease period of the temple is thirty years after which it will go back into the possession of the village.

moving forward with tourism development in the valley.⁷⁶⁰ In many ways, the *Ginkgo Society* is ‘leading the pack’ with its concrete sustainable tourism projects as the government and other ‘cultural brokers’ follow track. The *Ginkgo Society* has also helped renovate a local court-yard home to be used for home-stays for students. A new initiative of ‘One Village – One Host’ aims to set a new example of how hitherto undeveloped villages in the valley can be included in the tourism economy by creating a self-sustaining system that will allow them to keep close to their farms and homes, and gives young people an opportunity to earn income locally and receive training.⁷⁶¹ There is certainly a pro-active, hands-on and more radical approach to heritage and tourism development as *Ginkgo Society* is foremost a business-oriented foreign organization, but, as we have seen, it is therefore also more subject to criticism. As models in heritage restoration the above popular guesthouse retreat and temple enjoy national and international reputation (see TripAdvisor), and in this way - like the Linden ‘brand’ in Dali - also contribute to Shaxi’s ‘branding’ as an ecologically and sustainably oriented tourist destination.

The Shaxi Cultural Centre

As the oldest institution in Shaxi supporting heritage protection, the *Shaxi Cultural Centre’s* philosophy has always been to create a new model for tourism development in Shaxi, one which



FIGURE 33: BAI GIRL PREPARING FOR TOURISM WORK

promotes healthy and responsible cultural, environmental, and social sustainable development based on the goals and experience of the SRP project.⁷⁶² The Centre has achieved important ground in negotiating village rights by urging the local government to create a protected preservation zone within which outsiders are forbidden to buy land or structures, only to lease them, ensuring that the most historic area of Shaxi Market Place and the surrounding neighbourhood will always remain in the possession of the local Bai people. In particular, it promotes the preservation of Shaxi’s cultural heritage and Shaxi as an ‘educational base for indigenous knowledge’, including arts and crafts, agriculture, and traditional medicine. A few times a year

for a week or so, the *Shaxi Cultural Centre* fills with a group of young overseas students, organized through the *Cultural Centre of Learning and Development (Kunming)*, who conduct research on

⁷⁶⁰ See, ‘Shaxi Town to Build an Upgraded Version of Tourism Development’ (沙溪镇打造旅游发展升级版), *Dali Daily* (online), 15 July 2015, <http://dalidaily.com/lvyou/120150715/1082654.html>, accessed 10 October 2015.

⁷⁶¹ See, <http://www.shaxichina.com/en-us/shaxi-yunnan/preserving-cultural-heritage.htm>.

⁷⁶² ‘Shaxi: A New Model of Tourism Development’, *Shaxi Cultural Centre*, <http://www.shaxiculturalcenter.org/en/phil.php>

various aspects of local minority culture in Yunnan for their university/school project.⁷⁶³ Today, however, for the most part, the Centre functions as a guest house and offers its guests (on demand) cultural experiences, such as a library, traditional song and dance performances, tea culture, bicycle tours, and hiking trips into the valley, to Shibaoshan and nearby mountains and villages. Some of these activities have lately been commissioned to a resident local Bai artist - my friend and informant - who now intermittently serves as 'cultural broker' at the Centre as a guide, teacher, and performer. Her enthusiasm and tireless commitment to not only communicate and disseminate Bai local culture in this capacity, but also to continuously (re-)learn her culture through self-education and training with the cultural bureau in Jianchuan, is however barely recognized by higher authorities, but could be put to much better use as, for example, an official cultural ambassador in Shaxi (in a paid position) with the local cultural bureau.

The Shaxi Low Carbon Community Centre

The *Shaxi Low Carbon Community Centre* (SLCCC) was established in 2012 under the leadership of Huang Yinwu, the leading architect and local representative of the SRP.⁷⁶⁴ Its goals are 'to provide knowledge, technology and support to local people to empower them to develop a sustainable economy'.⁷⁶⁵ In Huang's words, 'we would like to demonstrate sustainable rural lifestyle and help local people benefit from local development'. To achieve this, the Centre plans to conduct some pilot programs to test their feasibility and to 'help the local people understand what we are doing exactly'.⁷⁶⁶ The Centre has published the first bi-lingual material, the *Shaxi Low Carbon Tourism Guide* (map) and a *Shaxi Low-Carbon Village Guide* (a set of picture postcards of villages in Shaxi valley, see Appendix), items that are promoting 'to employ low-carbon mobility whenever possible'.⁷⁶⁷ It is still in a developing phase but has already initiated a number of pilot

⁷⁶³ These activities are mainly organized out of Kunming University by Lu Yuan, the wife of original founder of the *Shaxi Cultural Centre*, Sam Mitchell. The outcome of these immersion programs are school/research papers, some of them published at SIT, and previously printed in book form edited by Sam Mitchell (who tragically died a few years ago). See, e.g. SIT Study Abroad, <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/>, accessed 10 December 2013.

⁷⁶⁴ The Centre has acquired the old primary school in neighbouring Aofeng village to use as its base, and the local government has made available the abandoned old *City God Temple* (城隍庙) which includes many separate temple buildings and the largest screen wall (*zhaobi* 照壁) in Yunnan. The school is being renovated (2012) and there are plans to restore the temple for multiple use.

⁷⁶⁵ *Shaxi Low Carbon Tourism Guide* (map)

⁷⁶⁶ HYW interview, September 2014; Director, LCC Beijing, interview (while visiting Shaxi), December 2011; It is a joint project initiated by the Swiss Agency for Development and the Chinese government and is financed by the Swiss-China project 'Low Carbon Cities China' has projects nation-wide in China. See interview (1) Huang Yinwu, and (2); China has been actively pursuing a 'green' and sustainable development, including the use of renewable energies. In recent times it forged partnerships with other countries to create 'low carbon cities' for a new-style urbanization that create ecological cities with a focus on improving the quality of life. See, S. Hao, 'China's Path to the Construction of Low-Carbon Cities in the Context of New Urbanization', *China Finance and Economic Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2014.

⁷⁶⁷ *Shaxi Low-Carbon Village Guide* (*shaxi diban lvyou* 沙溪低碳旅游) and *Shaxi Low-Carbon Tourism Guide 2014* (*shaxi diban lvyou dao lantu* 沙溪低碳旅游导览图); these are the first printed tourism guides/maps since Shaxi's restoration.

programs and rural development projects, such as *nongjiale* farm stays. However, the *SLCCC*'s



FIGURE 54: AOFENG CITY GOD TEMPLE SCREEN WALL

activities are currently (2014) on hold for lack of funding and therefore they are being integrated into other currently running (government) projects.⁷⁶⁸

This includes the raising of awareness of low-carbon activities in local economic (agriculture) and potential tourism development of Mapinguan, a small cultural village deep in the nearby mountains about to be made accessible by road construction and developed as a 'Minority Cultural Village'.⁷⁶⁹

Business Migrants and Outside Residents

Within the growing number of outsiders, there is a small number of enthusiastic and idealistic individuals, guest house and café owners, even long-stay tourists, and recently China's new breed of 'mountain-changers', who have decided to make Shaxi their home and thus feel responsible to contribute in some way to the well-being of the local community.⁷⁷⁰ Some café owners conduct English classes for local school children and keep a small library in English, while others organize free guided hiking tours into the mountains.⁷⁷¹ Many of the establishments are supportive of the local economy and use local businesses for their supply, buy directly from farmers and the local market, and encourage farmers to diversify products (e.g. goat cheese) and become more organic.⁷⁷² Most businesses employ local staff, but in lack of (government) organized training programs, they are themselves responsible for their training, and therefore it is mostly in-situ training for the lower skilled labouring jobs, rather than educational or vocational training that would benefit them more in the future.

A Wider View

⁷⁶⁸ HYW interview, September 2014

⁷⁶⁹ HYW interview, September 2014; on current work in Mapinguan, see '建筑师在做什么黄印武: 我在沙溪十三年' ('What is the architect doing? Huang Yinwu: I have been thirteen years in Shaxi'), 9 August 2016, [http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s? biz=MzA3NzkwMTg5MQ==&mid=2649716506&idx=2&sn=ddbeedd23bd2ae11b32bf10c8f91026b&scene=0#wechat_redirect](http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?biz=MzA3NzkwMTg5MQ==&mid=2649716506&idx=2&sn=ddbeedd23bd2ae11b32bf10c8f91026b&scene=0#wechat_redirect), accessed 10 August 2016; interestingly, a new form of financing, 'crowd funding', is used to help revitalize Mapinguan;

⁷⁷⁰ These include foremost the first generation business migrants, e.g. owners of the iconic *Laomadian* hotel (2002), the Old Tree Café (2006), the Youth Hostel Horsepen 46 (2008), the Woodfish (2011), and a few others.

⁷⁷¹ For example, the Old Tree Café, Yezi café, Woodfish restaurant, Horsepen Youth Hostel;

⁷⁷² According to some outsiders who purchase directly from farmers, villagers mostly farm organic for their own use, but are non-organic for commercial use.

Restoration efforts as the ones above (*Old Theatre Inn, Pear Orchard Temple*) join a growing list of foreign-leased up-market/boutique (some of them heritage hotel) accommodations in Yunnan, including L. Brahm's *Shambala Serai Heritage Hotels*⁷⁷³, the *Linden Centre* and the *Shaxi Cultural Centre*, who all actively support new forms of eco/rural tourism based on a 'low carbon foot print' philosophy. These (heritage) enterprises acknowledge Shaxi as a place of cultural immersion, of education and raising of awareness of culture, heritage, and environmental issues, as ideal experiential learning ground for student groups, for low-impact cultural adventure activities and more, to guard its cultural heritage. In this way, they contribute more meaningfully to the dissemination of Bai culture and are also starkly different from most of the newer hotels/guesthouses in Shaxi old town that are primarily suppliers of tourist products (accommodation, food, entertainment) 'without a cause'.

This is also a point that Brian Linden makes in regards to China's upscale hotel market where "nobody's taking the lead to do anything sustainably; all they're doing is just tapping into a flow of tourists", so "[S]ome people have to come in here and really show China that there are other models ...".⁷⁷⁴ However, they do this often at considerable personal and financial cost as foreigners cannot own property which is usually under lease agreement, so, legally it is problematic, and they are at the mercy of the local authorities.⁷⁷⁵ According to both Chris Barclay and Brian Linden, local and higher-up authorities in general are helpful and do not actively interfere in the restoration process - a kind of passive support - but in contrast to local businesses, foreign businesses have to strictly comply to conservation/building rules, laws and regulations (and are subject to giving perks, such as free accommodation), and often foreigners go well beyond what is required.⁷⁷⁶ Brian Linden observes that there exists a marked inequality in heritage protection, one which is not executed objectively, and where not everyone is held to the same standards. He continues, '... the liberalization of Cultural Heritage protection is therefore not good, as for example the Shuanglang model shows'.⁷⁷⁷ From such accounts it becomes clear that although locals do not have a lot of direct veto power in (any) decision-making, they assert power in different ways that for one is in

⁷⁷³ See, 'Shambala Serai Himalayan Heritage Hotels', *Project: China Building Restoration*, n.d., <http://chinabuildingrestoration.com/china-projects/shambhala-serai/>, accessed 13 November 2015.

⁷⁷⁴ M. Ives, 'From Outsiders to Innkeepers in China's Sleepy Countryside', *New York Times*, 14 August 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/14/business/global/in-chinas-countryside-travelers-find-foreigner-run-hotels.html?_r=0

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., M. Ives, 'From Outsiders to Innkeepers in China's Sleepy Countryside ...'; also personal interview with Brian Linden, August 2014; foreign companies have to pay an up-front investment fee to start a business, which in 2011 was US\$100,000, however, for example, the renovation of the *Pear Orchard Temple* cost more than US\$250,000 (CB interview). Brian Linden has recently handed the Centre back to the authorities because of the risk of legal responsibilities, e.g. in case of a fire or similar.

⁷⁷⁶ CB interview, August 2014; and BL interview, August 2014; see also, 'Restoring the Pear Orchard Temple at Shaxi', *Beijing Foreign Radio* (北京外语广播), 26 August 2015.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., BL interview, August 2014; see more about Shuanglang in the chapter on 'new ancient towns';

line with the government's rhetoric of ethnic participation in the economy, social stability, and a harmonious society, but serves their own (selfish) needs, such as non-compliance to regulations (heritage protection, building on valuable agricultural land, logging) or extraction of other benefits. It also becomes clear that local governments (Cultural Bureaux) are only powerful in the face of (mostly foreign) clients that have to accord to rules and legal procedures, while local people do what they want.⁷⁷⁸ As such, breaches are widespread, including in Shaxi, and commonly accepted, and therefore they can be construed as a form of local agency in lieu of real participation in the tourism industry.

On the other side of the heritage protection project is the customer or consumer who is typically considered a threat to the preservation of local culture and heritage. Beyond this threat, Brian Linden also draws attention to a more abstract threat in such environments, saying, 'Chinese guests cannot monetize experience, but they can monetize a room, furniture...', basically saying, in general, they do not appreciate the intangible aspects of heritage nor respect a more ecological and sustainable behaviour. However, the stay in his heritage hotel is all about cultural experience, both of the intangible and tangible heritage of the local community and region, therefore he wants to keep certain tourists out but faces challenges of balancing this selectiveness.⁷⁷⁹ This measuring of outcomes in purely tangible and monetary terms also resounds with the (Tibetan) owner of Shangri-la's *Arro Khampa* Tibetan Lodge and *Thanka Centre*, saying that although the government provides some funds and supports education and training, it does not give enough support to cultural inheritors/ transmitters, it mostly 'supports products they can see'.⁷⁸⁰

These are important and telling quotations that indicate the importance of 'other' models for cultural heritage preservation and heritage tourism in China. As we have seen above, foreign NGO's, such as the *World Monument Fund* (WMF), the *Global Heritage Fund* (GHF), or *The Nature Conservancy*, play a crucial part in creating preservation 'models' and providing much needed funds for it. And as Huang Yinwu remarked of Shaxi's SRP partners, these international (aid) projects are necessary, they facilitate exchange, help locals to discover other approaches and ideas, and if they weren't there, things would happen, but of course it would be totally different.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., BL interview, August 2014;

⁷⁷⁹ BL interview, August 2014;

⁷⁸⁰ DK/AK interview, September 2014. Dakpa Kelden, the owner of the Arro Khampa, has extensive experience with government policies of heritage protection concerning NGO's as he has long been active in heritage protection as the founder of the Tibetan Thangka Academy which is part of the Shangri-la Association of Cultural Preservation. He is also the son of a famous local muleteer (*lado*) on the ATHR who wants to continue the heritage of the business savviness of merchants on the ATHR, such as his father, and is also in the process of building a chain of boutique hotels in strategic locations of the ATHR in Yunnan. See also, www.shangrilaassociation.org

⁷⁸¹ HYW interview, 2011/2012

Local Preservation Initiatives

Foremost, these are the domain of the government, represented by the local cultural bureau and the Shaxi old town (heritage) management office. There are also many folk artists, some of them honoured as cultural transmitters (*wenhua zhuangcheng ren* 文化传承人). Often retired teachers and government officials continue to dedicate themselves to local cultural heritage protection by still working actively with the local heritage bureau. It is also noteworthy to mention some of the village associations - part of every village life in China - that help keep up the local traditions, arbitrate disputes, and communicate with the government, in particular these are the *laorenhui* (association of elders) and *mamahui* society (women's association). Importantly, the wish and the willingness of ordinary locals (*baixingren* 百姓人) to pass on their traditional knowledge of daily life activities, their language, and their life rituals and religion, has the most impact, as without this 'living culture' heritage preservation has no meaning.

a. Locals: Shaxi's Performance Stage

Shaxi's cultural stage consists mainly of various (non-professional) village dance troupes that practice and perform frequently and for free in a casual way at the Market Place/Theatre Stage. Their performances are encouraged and mostly organized by the cultural bureau - in particular when government officials, media and tourism representatives visit Shaxi - but in general they do not get paid for it, or are only paid a token contribution.⁷⁸² For the most part, performances are more like practice runs for main events, and the repertoire is only small, consisting of the *bawangbian* (霸王鞭), the local traditional Bai dance, or variations of it from the other ethnic groups, and which are then repeated at every performance. Often, the music and dance sequences have been reworked and modernized both for the dancers own enjoyment and for tourist consumption, as was discussed earlier.

⁷⁸² Casual talk with dancers, 2011/2012;



FIGURES 35 AND 36: SHAXI DANCE TROUPE – CHANGING FROM BAI INTO NAXI COSTUMES

Regardless of such politicking, however, the dancers in Shaxi love their practices and performances and love the fact that both tourists and villagers enjoy them too. In particular, they enjoy the pre-performance spectacle of putting on gaudy make-up, changing in and out of different costumes, getting themselves into position, socialising, etc., which is always accompanied with a lot of talk, laughter and checking out the audience. This may be because mostly these are still unofficial, small-scale, performances, far from the ‘phenomenon of ethnic oppression in a world of tourism’.⁷⁸³ But while these performances are still only marginally staged or, in MacCannell’s words, ‘front-stage’ performances, there is no doubt that in particular Western tourists look for the less contrived and more authentic ‘back-stage’ experience away from loudspeakers that blare out modernized ethnic music in low quality to highly repetitive modernized dancing segments that lack originality.⁷⁸⁴ Front- and backstage - if they exist at all - are still blurry here as tourism has only just arrived, most performances are still very unprofessional, and given the dancers own enthusiasm for the modernized re-interpretations, the search for ‘back-stage’ authenticity may be in vain. This is in contrast to MacCannell’s more recent findings that ‘nowadays everything is “back-stage”’, but as I would argue, in Shaxi’s case, everything is ‘front-stage’ as a ‘back-stage’, or the distinction between front and back, or private/public, social/secret, and I might add, professional/unprofessional, never existed or has long disappeared.⁷⁸⁵

When I asked why there are no performances in the Market Place and the Theatre Stage although it is tourist season, the Cultural Bureau chief told me that it is exactly this casual atmosphere (as

⁷⁸³ Cited in B. Hillman, ‘Paradise Under Construction: Minorities, Myths and Modernity in Northwest Yunnan, *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 175-188.

⁷⁸⁴ D. MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976.

⁷⁸⁵ D. MacCannell, *The Ethics of Sight-Seeing*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2011; The only exception are religious rituals, and in Shaxi this was pronounced as there existed secret rituals in both Taoism and Azhali Buddhism. However, these were always performed away from the public and have not been performed in recent times and are therefore not considered a ‘back-stage’ performance.

above) that he wants to keep alive in Shaxi, where people come to see Bai dancing and learn about Bai music, without any economic benefits, and where performers do it for the love and joy of their own culture, not for tourism. Therefore, earlier ‘mistakes’ have been adjusted and ethnic performances have been reduced to mainly occur at festival time and national holidays and some special occasions. And as Shaxi does not want to repeat the mistakes that Lijiang has made, he also enacted a ban on noise after dark - be it ethnic performances or a Shaxi nightlife - to keep the town quiet for locals and tourists.⁷⁸⁶ Similarly, the ancient music orchestra (*guyue* 古乐) only performs at special occasions, such as festivals, religious rituals, weddings and funerals, or by special invitation for government officials and occasional performances in Shaxi’s tourist hotels. While dance troupes are abundant, there are only few old music orchestras in the area, consisting of mainly older men. There is certainly no commercialization of folk art as is the case in nearby Lijiang. In fact, I argue, it is the absence of a dominant commodifiable cultural heritage, such as the *dongba* script of the Naxi people, or the Dong people’s ‘Kam Grand Choir’⁷⁸⁷, which prevents Shaxi’s outright commercialization, such as happened in Lijiang. Because of this, and as Shaxi’s traditional ethnic culture is eroding with increasing tourism, Shaxi depends increasingly on the attractions of other villages, like Shilongcun and Mapinguan, which are perceived to have a more authentic culture and are presently undergoing tourism development.

b. The Government

The Shaxi cultural management office (*Shaxi wenhua guanli hui*) whose responsibility it is to implement the heritage preservation and development plan, primarily manages the uses of the main heritage buildings in Shaxi, including the Xingjiao temple and Theatre Stage. In this capacity it has to comply with terms and conditions of heritage regulations specified by the Swiss side, such as zoning, and building regulations and materials. Some of the local residents find these regulations difficult to comply with and very ‘troublesome’.⁷⁸⁸ In contrast to many other famous historic villages, Shaxi does not yet charge an entry fee for the old town but has recently introduced an entry fee of 20Rmb for the temple and theatre stage (including museum). Presently, the government takes an approach of *gongtong baohu* (*xianzhengfu he minjian gongtong baohu* 县城政府和民间共同保护 government and people protect together), which also implies that in general locals cannot rely on

⁷⁸⁶ WHZ interview, October 2014.

⁷⁸⁷ The Choir is unique to the Dong minority and meanwhile enjoys international success, with its debut performance in Paris in 1986. In 2009, the choir - polyphonic singing without a conductor or musical accompaniment - was listed as an Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. See, C. Yang, ‘Kam Grand Choir Keeps Dong Culture Alive with Music’, *Women of China*, 13 January 2014, <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/culture/arts/16/8916-1.htm>, accessed, 14 February 2014.

⁷⁸⁸ ST interview, September 2014;

government or other institutions' help and funding, but are responsible themselves.⁷⁸⁹ The government's part of this deal consists of managing, or guiding, heritage protection as locals are not knowledgeable to do so, and a wide-spread view is that their awareness of heritage protection is 'lacking' (*bu qiang*) and needs strengthening.⁷⁹⁰ This deficiency, however, is increasingly being addressed by all levels of government down to the village level, in particular to educate people about the (economic and other) value of their traditional houses and appropriate renovation.⁷⁹¹ As we could also see from some accounts, the arrival of the SRP project has installed new pride of local heritage in villagers, and with increasing tourism locals have begun to newly appreciate the importance of aspects of their culture and realised the real threat to it, therefore more locals, including increasingly young people, do want to preserve their heritage (in particular, language, architecture, festivals, song and dance, history of ATHR) and want to be actively involved in heritage protection.⁷⁹²

External groups or organizations such as the *Ginkgo Society* or outside business migrants, have no veto power in decision-making on heritage and tourism development. Paradoxically, nor does Huang Yinwu, the representative of the SRP and *SLCCC*, although both joint government operations, and he can only try to influence the government.⁷⁹³ In the early development period (2005-2010), the people of Shaxi were readily embracing the gradual increase of tourism and saw many advantages and positives, and while in the following years, in general, they still welcomed tourism development, they were not always aware of the direction of this development and the long-term implications for them. Indeed, development has been happening so fast since that the local government, in many ways still inexperienced in the management of heightened tourism and economic development, is prone to make mistakes without a good master plan to follow.⁷⁹⁴ This is confirmed by a wide-spread view that the present government's tourism and heritage management is not good (*bu hao*).⁷⁹⁵ One local from another Shaxi village observed '... now Shaxi's development is very chaotic, is very terrible. These investors rent houses and transform them, that's

⁷⁸⁹ SCB interview, October 2014;

⁷⁹⁰ SCB interview, October 2014;

⁷⁹¹ HYW interview, August 2014;

⁷⁹² My survey 2011/12, LCCC survey 2012;

⁷⁹³ HYW interview, September 2014, OY interview, February 2012; this also came to light at a televised discussion round where local representatives of Shaxi were invited to Beijing to talk about the 'Shaxi model'.

⁷⁹⁴ At Spring Festival holiday week 2014, an unprecedented number of tourists visited Shaxi causing an emergency situation where guesthouses could not meet the high demand and a cavalcade of more than a thousand cars caused continuous traffic jams. (University research group). The government had to set up an emergency advisory office in the old town centre to direct visitors to accommodation outside the village. The same situation presented itself at National Holiday week, where the problem of accommodation and traffic jams was still not solved.

⁷⁹⁵ Various informal talks, including OY, ST, and others, including outsiders;

not good, it's not a good method'⁷⁹⁶ And one hotelier tried to rationalize it, explaining, 'there is a large cashed-up Chinese middle-class out there, and we are trying to give them what they want: luxury, comfort, beautiful scenery, and more'.⁷⁹⁷

While the government has always encouraged local participation, it has not given the help or training necessary for locals to participate in a constructive and meaningful way. It has also put no obstacles in the way of outside entrepreneurs - who were much more experienced and business savvy - to come to Shaxi and set up shop in the historic centre. In fact, the government completely deviated from its initial plans of only local and small craft businesses, to allow a balanced insider/outsider ratio, and arrive at a completely outsider-dominated business presence. And while it has been seeking more outside investment especially over the last few years, it has still not created a more fortuitous and fair environment for local business development. As one young local entrepreneur complained,

'... many young people are already back in Shaxi and do their own work, but more people want to come back to Shaxi, so we have to pressure the government to create more opportunities for us. We often come together and discuss and strongly oppose the government's faults. We want to elect a representative and get investors together and establish a Chamber of Commerce. In this way we can give good advice to the government and discuss and recommend our future in Shaxi together so it can be economically and environmentally protected. If Shaxi wants to do well, it needs many people to explore, you cannot let the government do it by themselves.'⁷⁹⁸

De-Constructing Shaxi: The Lijiangization of Shaxi?

As has been pointed out before, while the local government and people are insisting they do not want to become another Lijiang, the similarities are already there.⁷⁹⁹ This is also being increasingly noticed in Chinese social media, an important outlet which can make or break a destination, as

⁷⁹⁶ SLC interview, September 2014; Shilongcun nianqingren (因为现在沙溪的发展, 它是很乱的, 很糟糕的. 这些投资者租了房子以后对这些房子的改造, 它是 (早闹唔赞), 不好的。它是没有一个比较好的方法)

⁷⁹⁷ Informal talk with Shenzhen new investor/business man in Shaxi.

⁷⁹⁸ ST interview, September 2014;

⁷⁹⁹ This has been repeatedly voiced since the beginning of SRP by local government, Shaxi Cultural Bureau, and locals alike; ironically, as much as the Lijiang model has been and still is a model to emulate, these days it is much more often mentioned as the anti-model. Also ironically, while most visitors to Lijiang are aware of the 'contrived' authenticity, uber-commercialism- and commercialization, and that it has long reached visitor capacity, tourists still stream there in their millions every year.

Chinese travellers rely heavily on these platforms to choose their destinations.⁸⁰⁰ The counter-weight to the social media is the official media (e.g. CCTV, newspaper, official travel forums and tourism brochures), which, of course, heavily promotes Shaxi as a rich in cultural heritage, rural, quaint and quiet ancient village on the ATHR, and increasingly as a place of investment opportunities.⁸⁰¹ One of the oft-quoted advertising slogans reads ‘If you couldn’t come to Lijiang to see what it was like ten years ago, then come to Shaxi now’ (如果不能回到十年前的丽江，那么就来沙溪吧).⁸⁰² Apart from periodic government reports on the present situation and future recommendations on local tourism, there is also some interest to do scholarly research on Shaxi’s tourism development, much of which also points to the potential creation of a ‘second Lijiang’, acknowledging the problems of commercialization, erosion of culture, saturation by outside business and lifestyle migrants, and relocation of locals, as has been experienced and is being discussed by this author.⁸⁰³

The Kezhan – Culture Paradigm:

Already in the early tourism literature, such as Valene Smith’s *Host and Guests*, the blame for cultural destruction is usually put on the ‘guests’, which may include tourists, government, and outside business migrants.⁸⁰⁴ Indeed, the majority of ethnographic literature on tourism development in ethnic minority regions in China (and world-wide) has long been concerned with the impact of tourism (development) on local communities. Here we have also touched upon the issue of ancient villages and other tourist destination’s life cycle and the threat of their ‘creative destruction’.⁸⁰⁵ However, little has been written about cultural erasure caused by the local ethnic population themselves. In fact, Lijiang’s ‘successful’ development was almost entirely driven by Naxi locals and Naxi government cadres, which resulted in the removal and resettlement of almost all Naxi people that lived in the old town.⁸⁰⁶ Paradoxically, the Naxi people were then often accused

⁸⁰⁰ See for example, ‘Shaxi old town: making its own mark or is it another Lijiang?’ (‘大理沙溪古镇：做自己还是做第二个丽江’), web page, (http://yn.yunnan.cn/html/2014-03/03/content_3103317.htm, accessed 5 March 2014).

⁸⁰¹ ST interview, September 2014;

⁸⁰² See e.g. ‘Study on Tourism Development Model of Shaxi Town Based on Local People’s Rights and Interests’ (基于原住民权益的沙溪古镇旅游发展模式研究), web page, <http://www.51lunwen.com/travelmanagement/2015/0527/lw201505271003126007.html>, accessed 12 September 2015.

⁸⁰³ However, besides some comments on internet forums, there is no academic work in English on Shaxi.

⁸⁰⁴ V.L. Smith, *Host and Guests. The Anthropology of Tourism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, c1989.

⁸⁰⁵ H. Huang, G. Wall, and C. Mitchell, ‘Creative Destruction. Zhu JiaJiao, China’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2007, pp. 1033-1055; C. Mitchell, ‘Entrepreneurialism, Commodification and Creative Destruction: a Model of Post-modern Community Development’, *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1998, pp. 273-286. 1998.

⁸⁰⁶ J. Goodman, ‘Why Lijiang Deserved its World Heritage Status, and What Happened Next’, *GoKunming*, 24 December 2014,

http://www.gokunming.com/en/blog/item/3391/why_lijiang_deserved_its_world_heritage_status_and_what_happened_next, accessed 24 December 2014.

of unfair localism by migrant (business) residents. What also contributed to it, Lijiang's cultural (artisan) Naxi elite has been withholding vital information in regards to the representation of 'authentic' *dongba* culture, in particular the pictographic *dongba* writing, which resulted in a *dongba* cultural hotchpotch tourism souvenir industry where entrepreneurs produced and sold their own imagined version of *dongba* culture.⁸⁰⁷ Or, as we have seen in the previous chapter, in many villages the local (ethnic) cadres re-construct, or completely invent - often against the will of other villagers - a 'marketable' history or tradition to entice visitors.⁸⁰⁸

As we have seen, four developments in particular symbolize 'Lijiangization', and which have already become a familiar pattern in local and regional tourism development: (1) the leasing out of the old houses (*lao fangzi*) in the old town by the locals and their conversion into guest houses (*kezhan*) and shops by mostly migrant entrepreneurs, resulting in the moving away of locals from the historic centre and an increasing 'Hanification' of local culture and tourism commerce; (2) the rebuilding or renovation of old houses in pseudo-ethnic style; (3) the over-commercialization of the local (Naxi *dongba*) tangible and intangible culture for tourism; (4) overwhelming tourist numbers. Shaxi, as mentioned earlier, had been designed to go down a different path of development. However, the rapid development from 2012 onwards shows a completely different picture and it is hard not to make the comparison and see a degree of 'Lijiangization' in small-town Shaxi. Indeed, Shaxi has changed so much that some investors do not want to waste their time with Shaxi.⁸⁰⁹

Spatial Transformation

Within a time span of two years, Shaxi village has gone through a radical transformation. Firstly, most visible is the overwhelming presence of outside residents/business migrants and tourists in the old town. This brings with it the increasing dominance of Mandarin/ Putonghua as the spoken language, while the Bai dialect is heard less frequently, in particular in the old centre. Second, as in Lijiang's case, local people have succumbed to the lure of making easy money by renting out their *lao fangzi*.⁸¹⁰ A veritable *kezhan* mania has been taking place in Shaxi, as an increasing number of outsiders (*waidi ren*) are renting and renovating these old traditional courtyard homes -

⁸⁰⁷ Zhu Yujie, 'Cultural Heritage Tourism and Sustainable Development at World Heritage Old Town Lijiang, China', Master's Thesis, Brandenburg University of Technology, Cottbus, 2007.

⁸⁰⁸ see e.g. Oakes, 'Heritage as Improvement ...'; Cornet, 'Tourism Development and Resistance ...';

⁸⁰⁹ BL interview, August 2014; Brian Linden on an offer to take over the most iconic hotel in Shaxi, the Laomadian. Also Lu Yuan, the owner/manager of the *Shaxi Cultural Centre* voiced concerns about Shaxi and considers other towns that are less commercial and more traditional for her study program;

⁸¹⁰ However, as OY stated, '... initially, the Swiss side gave money to the government to renovate the old town, which they did, but they also forcefully expropriated locals, who then complained, as after all, the old house is passed down by their ancestors. There are laws and regulations that clearly state that the government can, at will, forcefully appropriate, and the government has done that, which is extremely unreasonable'. OY interview, October 2014;

predominantly within the historic zone - and open businesses: bicycle rental, bric-a-brac art and souvenir shop, bars, cafes, and restaurants, and small guesthouses.⁸¹¹ Accordingly, the local landlords then have to move away from the historic core and many are (illegally) building new (traditional-style) houses on the outskirts of the village, mostly on plots that are designated as farmland, some of them are being built as guest houses.⁸¹² The prediction is that very soon these guest houses will be purchased by the still increasing number of outsiders coming to Shaxi to do business and local people once again will have to move away and build somewhere else, therefore using up more and more arable land, thus perpetuating the cycle of the kezhan-culture paradigm. Therefore, urban land conflicts have become more prominent, but the contestation for land in a fragile environment such as Shaxi valley is precarious and needs careful consideration when assessing present and future needs. However, the changes in spatial and urban development inside and outside Sidengjie are already significant and according to some locals should have been organized differently to safeguard its cultural integrity.⁸¹³ For example, the ‘embellishment’ of the river front by banking up the river and changing its flow and turning it into a public park is damaging to the environment and also stopped its vital function as an important and convenient thoroughfare for locals and their animals along and to the other side of the river where the local animal market is held.⁸¹⁴ The planned and already occurring wholesale infrastructure improvement, in particular road and housing construction and further urbanization will have considerable negative impact on the sparse land resources and environment.

Further, the creation of spatial boundaries - as in the physical delineation of old town and new town common in Chinese historic towns - almost always creates inequalities. In Shaxi valley the spatial boundaries are not only between old and new town (internal), but Shaxi and the rest of the valley

⁸¹¹ There are now between 80-100 guesthouses managed by outsiders, only three owned by locals (Huang Yinwu); compared to before the opening of the Dali-Lijiang highway, this number has doubled; numbers vary, depending what type of accommodation is included, such as *nongjiale*, *kezhan*, *jiudian*, etc.; see also, ‘Shaxi ‘shierwu’ healthy and orderly economic and social development’ (*Shaxizhen ‘shierwu’ jingji shehui shixian jiankang youcun fazhan* 沙溪镇“十二五”经济社会实现健康有序发展) weixin, 9 March 2016. <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-pcAAc1hlSZ9KV1oTWv1kw>, accessed, 10 March 2016.

⁸¹² ST interview, September 2014; Building on farmland is not illegal under Chinese law, and local regulations are allowed, but in Shaxi the authorities are bound to the Swiss memorandum on building regulations, including no building on farm land, no use of brick and mortar, buildings not higher than two stories, no modern buildings and more...

⁸¹³ HYW interview 2014; recently there has been a meeting addressing the needs for urbanization measures, such as building space, or relaxation of restricted zones. See also, LEP report, change of Master Plan (2011-2012): due to Shaxi’s growing local economy, tourism and transport sector, Jianchuan County Government mandated LEP Consultants AG and its partner company Kunming Urban Planning and Design Institute (KUPDI) for the revision of the existing Master Plan and the elaboration of specific detailed plan, to address these needs.

⁸¹⁴ Also, many a movie on the ATHR theme has been filmed on the village side of the banks of the Heihui River which could hold large amounts of horses and film props (as experienced by this author)

(external).⁸¹⁵ At this point in time a double centre/periphery paradigm still exists, where Shaxi old town (Sideng) is the touristic centre, and Shaxi new town is peripheral to this development, while Shaxi village (old and new town) is the centre of the valley and the other villages constitute the periphery.⁸¹⁶ This spatial divide is also a socio-economic divide along the creation and accumulation of wealth and status, with the outlying villages still in poor condition, while for example, to be a Shaxi local from the old town has long incurred pride and constitutes a form of social capital.⁸¹⁷ Jenny Chio, for example, in her study of rural villages in south-west China uses the concept of expansion (Big Bang Theory) to explain how tourism (travel, mobility) engages, maintains and produces distance, that is, how it simultaneously creates or reinforces differences - psychological, social, physical, political, economic, or imagined - between groups, while they continue to be part of an interdependent system.⁸¹⁸ Here, the politics of tourism and the forces that shape the transformation of space and place into tourism landscapes is highly visible.

Not Transformation but Gentrification

According to various sources, in this very short period of two years, both tourist accommodation and house lease prices have increased substantially.⁸¹⁹ While this is also already being felt by potential new buyers/investors in Shaxi, most businesses still want to be in the historic centre.⁸²⁰ Those locals that have so far resisted to rent out their *lao fangzi* are mostly struggling to make ends meet and suffer as commodity prices are increasing due to more tourism. There is a direct relationship between the growth of tourist numbers, outside business migrants and the improved standard of accommodation, which also means, increasingly *kezhan* and hotels are complying less to strict building/ renovation regulations and include more non-traditional and modern features in both exterior and interior and design (*waixiu guzhen jiumao, neijian xiandai sheshi* 外修古镇旧貌, 内建现代设施). Ouyang answered his own question as to why outsiders keep undermining

⁸¹⁵ However, in recent times, the internal division is becoming more fluid as a new old street with shops, hotels and parking is being developed which will become an extension of the old street and the first point of entry (and shopping) to Shaxi.

⁸¹⁶ Still another level of divide exists between Bai and other ethnic villages (Han, Yi, Lisu), in particular between those in the valley and those in the mountains. While the Bai are native to the region and constitute the majority population in Shaxi valley (90%), the Han immigrants, a minority, in surrounding villages are advantaged in allocation of land and crops. The Yi mainly live in the mountains in great poverty, while the Lisu live on the mountain side. Government efforts to resettle the Yi to improve their lives are mainly futile, while the Lisu largely conformed with government policies and moved to lower parts of the mountains.

⁸¹⁷ My Survey, 2012;

⁸¹⁸ J. Chio, 'The Internal Expansion of China. Tourism and the Production of Distance', in T. Winter et al. (eds.), *Asia on Tour. Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism*, Chapter 15, London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 207-220.

⁸¹⁹ ST interview, September 2014; ST is local entrepreneur and has recently renovated two courtyard homes in the centre, one of them a family yard, one as a guest house; he also renovated an old courtyard home into a hotel on the outskirts of Shaxi which a Shenzhen investor has bought.

⁸²⁰ Informal talk with *Woodfish* restaurant owner, a first generation business (2011).

(these) ethnic traditions, by saying ‘because it takes time to understand ethnic culture, it does not just suddenly happen’.⁸²¹ Bai architecture is one of the main attractions in Shaxi and the surrounding valley and Bai people are very proud of their beautiful homes. In many instances, however, renovations do not reflect the character of the local Bai ancient architecture, but are modernized in a pseudo native (Bai) style, as seen in other places such as Lijiang, Shuhe, or Shangri-la. But breaches are more frequent now because it has become more difficult to police the overwhelming number of new construction sites.⁸²²

The number of bigger hotels with larger capacity of beds, such as the new *Lanlingge*⁸²³, as well, more high-end, up-market boutique hotels/guest houses with all the mod-cons (and star-ratings on trip advisor), are on the rise. Some of these have entry gates, but not the traditional variety with elaborate wood and stone ornaments that invites people in, but the ultra-modern ones with key cards and code numbers that lock people out. Here, in the same way as a separation occurs between the old and new town, the distinction between mundane and touristic space is ritualised through gates.⁸²⁴ Some of the small business owners were obviously disturbed by this and complained to me (quietly) that they are not happy about the big hotels and their adjacent tourist shops as they will be a real threat to their livelihood, and, once the hotel (*Lanlingge*) will be open for business the fate of Shaxi is irreversible.⁸²⁵ As well, studies have shown that with bigger and larger capacity hotels being built, buying local becomes more complex and economic leakage is likely to increase.⁸²⁶

At my first visit in 2012, locals were still welcoming tourists and most shops in the tourist centre were still in local hands, but two years later, the shops (including in the new old street) had been mostly taken over by outsiders and the product, while diversified, is the generic tourist product found elsewhere in Yunnan, product ‘fit for the market’, not produced locally (as one tourist shop owner disclosed to me), and that often has no association with the local. Apart from these, a number of high-end boutique shops have appeared, selling tea and tea sets (*chaju* 茶具) and pseudo-ethnic clothes. The many shoe shops, where not long ago local women still hand-made embroidered shoes,

FIGURE : ONE OF THE OLD SHOE SHOPS IN SHAXI

⁸²¹ OYHY interview, (*yinwei minzu wenhua xuyao manman deliaojie, bushi yixiazi jiu neng xingde* 因为民族文化需要慢慢地了解，不是一下子就能懂的)

⁸²² WYX interview, August 2014; this is a rather dubious observation and a cynical statement considering that Shaxi is only a small town. Paradoxically, during my stay, the police went around town checking everyone’s business licence plates.

⁸²³ The *lanlingge* is the first large-capacity hotel in the core heritage zone, built by a Dali development company (2012-2014).

⁸²⁴ P. Nyiri, ‘Tourism, Modernity and Discipline in China’, in T. Winter et al (eds.), *Asia on Tour. Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism*, Chapter 11, London and New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 153-169.

⁸²⁵ Casual conversation with local (small) business women.

⁸²⁶ An increase in tourists increases the need for diversification, i.e. food stuffs, hotel accessories, shops, etc. not available locally.

have been replaced by shops that import (from Dali, Lijiang, or elsewhere) new ethnic style shoes that are more fancy, colourful, and intricately embroidered than the local version, and are available in most tourist towns in the area. These have proven very successful with domestic and international tourists alike as they look fashionable and stylish in a way that represent both the local and the global, the traditional (ethnic) and the modern. Even many of the small restaurants - once the domain of Shaxi local specialty cuisine (*tasecai* 特色菜) - are now run by outsiders and it is mainly the roadside food stalls that are run by local Shaxi women. Only the businesses at the far end of the



FIGURE 37: OLD SHOE-MAKING SHOP

main street towards Aofeng have stayed the same, as ‘tourists don’t come this far out and buy the kind of things we sell’.⁸²⁷ In general, as the town is modernizing, it has a more sanitized, ordered, and healthy appearance, including the iconic traditional and colourful *Friday Market*, something the government would have strived for to shun the label of ‘backwardness’ and dirtiness of the countryside and

instead create a more ‘civilized’ and healthy (tourist) environment.

Increasingly, as Shaxi locals are leaving the old town, it is being gentrified and turned into an idealised version of a historical rural retreat, more precise and paradoxically, into an idealized version of Shaxi itself. Two years ago, Shaxi still *was* the ideal (retreat), quiet and quaint, but the present and incumbent transformation is the idealization of the government project of modernizing (homogenizing) the country side, therefore bringing Shaxi closer to the inevitable mainstream generic ‘new ancient town’ model. The government heavily invests into the rhetoric of rurality, of relaxation, natural beauty, scenic spots, history, and an ecological way of life to boost eco and cultural tourism, as seen in Shaxi’s recent economic and tourism development reports, but this is now almost exclusively being done by way of tourism investment and infrastructure improvement.⁸²⁸ In fact, this acknowledges the expectations of the contemporary Chinese tourist that a sight/site be ‘developed’, and less emphasis need to be placed on ‘authenticity’.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ Casual conversation with various small variety stores and clothes shops.

⁸²⁸ ‘Shaxi town to build an upgraded version of tourism development’ (沙溪镇打造旅游发展升级版), Dali Daily (website), 15 July 2015, <http://daliidaily.com/lyyou/120150715/1082654.html>, accessed 10 October 2015.

⁸²⁹ Nyiri, ‘Tourism, Modernity and Discipline in China’;

'To protect the town, you have to first protect your own ethnic traditions otherwise the town is unable to withstand the impact of foreign capital, and thousands of years of our ancestors, and hundreds of years of inherited culture will slowly disappear. This is a very big problem. For the common people (老百姓) there is no system in place to solve this problem, we can only do small things in a positive way, but to do these things well, we need to rely on the leadership of the government'.⁸³⁰

Locals complain that the outsiders (*waidiren*) do not care about the local culture, nor does the present government (*zhengfu bu guan*).⁸³¹ While the 'first generation' outsiders seemed to be more engaged with the community - and indeed with each other - and there was a sense of responsibility and wanting to contribute to the development in Shaxi, it is mostly the newcomers that locals resent as they have no connection to the place, are only in it for the money, and don't observe building regulations.⁸³² To the question how he would describe the relationship between outsiders and locals, one young entrepreneur, after a lengthy pause, largely acknowledged both locals' and outsiders' mutual need and dependence⁸³³, while one of the older guest-house owners thought it was 'not so good, not so harmonious, you can barely get along'.⁸³⁴ A 'turf tension' is increasingly felt between locals and visitors, tourists and migrant businesses alike, but locals still want more tourists to come, as while outsiders already take the biggest share of the cake, locals are still hopeful to be able to benefit from tourist expenditure. Therefore, an attitude of 'instant gratification' by exploiting tourists who exploit their heritage, is now more prevalent, in particular during official holidays when hundreds of tourists a day move through the small centre and a large part of the local population is out engaged in small-scale make-shift business operations, such as food stalls. This also hints on other studies outcomes where the awareness of negative impacts, such as overcrowding or environmental pollution, does not necessarily lead to opposition towards further tourism development.⁸³⁵ At this point of time, this rather frantic, chaotic, but seemingly lucrative participation in the tourism economy for short periods of time is still allowed by the government to

⁸³⁰ OYHY interview, various 2011/12;

⁸³¹ OYHY interview, October 2014;

⁸³² WYX interview; OY interview, and many others; see also, 'Shaxi Old Town: Does it Make its Own Mark, or will it become a Second Lijiang' (大理沙溪古镇: 做自己还是做第二个丽江 *Dali Shaxi guzhen; zuo ziji haishi zuo di'er ge Lijiang*, *Yunnan.cn*, 3 March 2014, http://yn.yunnan.cn/html/2014-03/03/content_3103317_3.htm), accessed 3 August 2014

⁸³³ ST interview, September 2014.

⁸³⁴ OYHY interview, October 2014.

⁸³⁵ H. Xiao & L. Li, 'Villagers' Perceptions of Traditions in Rural Tourism: Some Observations on the Development of Rural Cultural Tourism in China, *Tourism Recreation Research*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2004, pp. 69-80.

maintain a harmonious society and is just another example how locals carve out a space for themselves in the competitive tourist industry.



FIGURE 38: TOURIST IN SHAXI OLD TOWN

Hand in hand with the above developments goes the real threat of a vanishing local cultural flavour, ethnic characteristics, and identity of place, which has attracted tourists in the first place. As a result, it is not only the traditional centre as a place that suffers lack of authenticity or threat of cultural erasure, but, especially in a small place like Shaxi, it becomes more and more difficult for local ethnic people to perpetuate their cultural activities (e.g. lack or intrusion of ritual and cultural space, working and leisure space⁸³⁶) and identity (language) as they are outnumbered, dispersed, and increasingly alienated from their authentic culture. Increasingly, a new ideology (*guannian*) and culture (*wenhua*) are

brought in by migrant residents and the modern tourist, foreign or Chinese, which imperceptibly influences and changes the local culture and traditions. As a result of this exposure, locals are mostly at a loss trying to integrate change and a modern lifestyle with low income and little know-how.⁸³⁷

The Government and Shaxi's Development

Much has happened in Shaxi since my first visit in 2011/12, changes that were planned, predictable, and prepared for (tourism infrastructure, modernization), as well as changes that have taken on a life of their own (tourism increase, kezhan-culture paradigm). In regards to the future of the SRP, Huang Yinwu summed it up, saying that now it is about setting new goals, readjusting to what worked and what didn't, and considering the availability of funding and people involved.⁸³⁸ This comment also referred to his own project, the LCCC, which has been temporarily halted after only two years because of lack of funding. Basically, heritage protection and tourism development is in government hands, but separate, and restrained by funding, but while funding is a problem, it is also

⁸³⁶ It was disturbing to witness how this ritual space was sometimes invaded, in particular during funeral rites which are executed in front of the temple. Often tourists would 'move in' close with their big and long-lensed cameras, shooting away to record a rare ceremony, literally a dying ceremony, while the mourners were wailing. However, because this space is both the only space for these rituals as well as the main tourist attraction, this will become problematic with increasing tourism, unless the rituals are moved away from the temple.

⁸³⁷ I. Nanay, 'Utopian Marketization and the Historical Fate of a Rural Society: Sideng Village, Shaxi Township', SIT Study Abroad, ISP Collection, 2010.

⁸³⁸ HYW interview, September 2015;

the setting of priorities and overcoming internal divisions that hamper projects.⁸³⁹ Adding to this, the government still only profits little from tourism, while the major beneficiaries are the (outside) businesses. In light of the lack of direct income from tourism but a continuing need for economic development the government has resorted to a policy of ‘first things first’ by trying to attract more external investment and businesses.



FIGURE 39: REPAVING THE MAIN ROAD IN SHAXI

This necessitated that the town was being made ‘tourist ready’, and since 2012 the government has increasingly invested in the construction of (generic) hard infrastructure (access roads, parking, hotels) and infrastructure befitting old historical towns (cobblestone alleys, ATHR monument, new shopping street, lighting), as well as the ‘soft’ building of the environment, such as ‘embellishment’ (river park, landscaping, red lanterns) and sanitation (waste

disposal) of the town.⁸⁴⁰ Besides the project of ‘small town urbanization’, the Shaxi government has also increasingly invested in local economic development, poverty alleviation, cultural development, and social services in Shaxi and throughout the villages in the valley, which has a positive impact on ordinary people’s lives (outside of tourism).⁸⁴¹ It has also set out to continually improve tourism industry quality, service and management. These measures then attracted more tourists, outside investment and outside businesses - largely in the form of guesthouses, shops, restaurants, and hotels - and increased the town’s popularity and exposure to the outside world, but also laid open its vulnerability as was discussed above.

While the former government’s priority has been to develop Shaxi first⁸⁴², the present Shaxi government (2014) is also positive about current developments in Shaxi and the prospect of extending the scope and framework to the larger area of the valley as ‘it is a good time now as tourism is prosperous and demand high’.⁸⁴³ As Shaxi has largely reached its development potential and land is getting scarce, the focus is now on containing carrying capacity in Shaxi, and developing

⁸³⁹ HYW interview, September 2014;

⁸⁴⁰ There is a nation-wide scheme of ‘town beautification’ (*meili xiangcun*) that especially tourist villages have to implement and which, like other similar regulations of town planning, again exacerbate their homogeneity.

⁸⁴¹ ‘Shaxi ‘shierwu’ Healthy and Orderly Economic and Social Development’ (Shaxizhen’shierwu’ jingji shehui shixian jiankang youcun fazhan 沙溪镇“十二五”经济社会实现健康有序发展), weixin, 9 March 2016, <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-pcAAc1hlSZ9KV1oTWv1kw>, accessed 10 March 2016.

⁸⁴² WZR interview, January 2012;

⁸⁴³ HYW interview, September 2014;

the valley, on connecting with other villages, and building a ‘Bai eco-cultural sphere’, a potential World Cultural Heritage landscape.

The Pro-poor Tourism Model. A New Way Forward.

Meanwhile, as more Shaxi locals participate in the tourism industry and profit from it, living standards in general have improved, but many more locals are also still struggling. In recent times, however, the Shaxi and County governments have been heavily investing in projects of poverty alleviation and development under the ‘constructing a beautiful countryside’ (*meili xiangcun jianshe* 美丽乡村建设) project to improve rural infrastructure that will create ‘a good hardware environment for the healthy development of the tourism industry’.⁸⁴⁴ The propagation of this new model of ‘tourism poverty alleviation’ or ‘pro-poor focus tourism model’ (*xuang tuijin* 双推进) includes access to special funding for the guidance of the majority of the local poor to actively participate in the process of development of the tourism industry by providing a variety of local products (foods, craft) and services and to ‘achieve the goal to get rich’.⁸⁴⁵ This new ‘obsession’ with organizing and mobilizing poor farmers to speed up their own development by participating actively in the tourism industry is slightly reminiscent of Mao-era mass campaigns. Locals, even those in poorer villages in the mountains, are becoming more creative and innovative in carving out a space for themselves in this race for riches by increasingly using the internet and mobile phone apps, such as Wechat (shop), to promote and sell local produce.⁸⁴⁶ All these efforts are combined to create a ‘National Poverty Alleviation Tourism Pilot County’.⁸⁴⁷ According to these and other official media reports, the local and county government seem to go in the right direction by tapping into Shaxi’s rich natural, ecological, and cultural resources by especially pushing the strengthening of the cultural tourism industry. While poverty alleviation programs make use of local cultural

⁸⁴⁴ See, e.g., Jianchuan County sing the ‘tourism-poverty alleviation’ chorus together’ (剑川县齐心共奏‘旅游扶贫合唱曲’), http://zgsc.china.com.cn/cyzn/tgtx/2015-05-22/349813_2.html, 2015-05-22 白乡剑川, accessed October 2015.

⁸⁴⁵ For example, within the ‘industrial cultivation’ part of poverty alleviation, special funds were used to purchase a set of 100 embroidery machines to improve the tourism product embroidery production capacity. As well, high-quality dairy cattle and chicken were bought. Funds from this project are allocated to the poor in Shaxi and nearby to allow e.g. for building houses in line with the local architecture and increase agricultural acreage and production for growing tourism demand, including planting more canola, maca, and other Chinese herbal medicines, as well as breeding wasps, goats and grow other organic agricultural products for the new tourism consumer market.

⁸⁴⁶ The Wechat ‘store’, or weishangdian (微店) has become very popular and is fully supported by local government by for example providing 3 and 4G internet. See, ‘Xiaoxiao weishang, dada xingfu’ (小小微商 大大幸福. 杨家村“互联网+扶贫”实现电商脱贫), 28 August 2016. http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?biz=MzI3NDAYNjM0OQ==&mid=2653987925&idx=2&sn=8abb25fed8d0b23bfdaa232f2d838f05&scene=0#wechat_redirect, accessed 28 August 2016. Many of my Shaxi friends use the Wechat shangdian to sell local produce, e.g. wild mushrooms, wild honey, medicinal herbs, wood carvings, and more, which otherwise would be almost impossible to sell, especially in larger quantities.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid, Jianchuan County sing the ‘tourism-poverty alleviation’ chorus together (剑川县齐心共奏‘旅游扶贫合唱曲’), 22 May 2015, http://zgsc.china.com.cn/cyzn/tgtx/2015-05-22/349813_2.html, accessed 22 May 2015.

resources, tourism development itself occurs mainly along the line of promoting infrastructure development and improving the investment environment on an increasingly large scale. The prospect of actively developing the rest of the valley may take the pressure off Shaxi and maybe avert its increasing commercialization, however, there is also a real danger that by building a large ‘Shaxi Chinese Traditional Villages Conservation Development Demonstration Area’, the valley will become a Bai cultural tourism theme park, or a ‘leisure-scape’ of mass consumption that caters for both the modern and post-modern tourist.⁸⁴⁸ The development of the last two years (2012-2014) has shown that the Shaxi government is not immune to decision-making and investment projects that are not favourable for Shaxi, (such as more large capacity hotels, mostly outside business migrants, and lack of support for local culture and population). In fact, these developments are in complete contrast to the official rhetoric of sustainable ecological and cultural tourism development, however they gain new traction as the focus is shifting to the valley and other cultural villages as potential tourist destinations.

Conclusion

Following on from the previous chapter where I have introduced Shaxi’s history, culture, and ‘discovery’, in this chapter I have described and analysed Shaxi’s development and transformation into a premier tourist destination. Instrumental in the construction of Shaxi at the time were a number of key players that shared its vision and goals as a model of heritage protection and sustainability in a poor, mountainous and ethnic diverse region, such as Yunnan’s north-west. In the first place, these were the SRP team itself - constituted of local, Swiss, and other foreign members - who did the restoration work in Shaxi for a number of years. Upon completion of the Market Place, for the first time, local people became aware again of their rich and unique heritage, in particular their architectural heritage and that associated with the ATHR. At the beginning of the SRP, the *Shaxi Cultural Centre* opened its doors to the public and the few tourists to support the ongoing restoration work and philosophy of heritage preservation by promoting a ‘new model of sustainable tourism development’ for Shaxi. This was validated in an official report in 2004, the *Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for the Shaxi Valley*, which was to serve as future guideline for Shaxi’s tourism development. This scientific report contained detailed analysis and case scenarios

⁸⁴⁸ See also, Q. Qun et al, ‘Creative Destruction in China’s Historic Towns: Daxu and Yangshuo, Guangxi’, *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, Vol. 1, 2012, pp. 56–66.

for tourism development in Shaxi and the whole valley based on its specific geography and natural and cultural condition at the time. It was later (2009) complemented by a comprehensive report on *Regional Economic Development Strategy of the Shaxi Valley* (Shaxi REDS). The new heritage restoration model of the SRP together with a new sustainable model of tourism development (Shaxi Cultural Centre) and the above reports were the basis of Shaxi's early (heritage) tourism and economic development that the local government could follow even when the Swiss had left. The Shaxi old town management committee was to implement the preservation and development plan of *Sidengjie* and has become the watchdog of the government to follow SRP heritage regulations. As Shaxi became more popular and developed ever faster in the following decade, other stakeholders came into play to shape Shaxi's future, foremost outside businesses that opened up new shops and guest houses and spatially and culturally transformed the town. Some of them in particular, such as the *SLCCC* and the *Gingko Society*, have become the new players in heritage and tourism development that have taken up the approach of sustainable and holistic development with the betterment of the local community in mind, and to keep a balance to the negative impacts already occurring in the old town. While most of the guest houses, cafés and inns are now in the hands of outsiders, those few that are in local hands, importantly, try to manage them in a way (visually and actively) that specifically promote the Bai heritage.⁸⁴⁹ Due to the lack of capital and also because of its inexperience with heightened tourism, the government has developed a market-oriented and rather laissez-faire style tourism governance where both locals and outsiders have to fend for themselves, but where locals have been decidedly disadvantaged because of lack of capital, skills, education, experience, and exposure to the outside world. As a result, Shaxi has become inundated with outside businesses and is now showing many signs of a 'Lijiangization', the anti-model of what Shaxi was set out to become, and its future is predictable.

While many of the changes that have been occurring increasingly impact on the local population and its cultural and natural environment, they have so far been variously welcomed, tolerated, or seen as necessary within the greater project of Shaxi's economic development, modernization, urbanization, and poverty reduction. Shaxi's 'Lijiangization' has so far mostly occurred as the 'culture-kezhan' paradigm detailed above, rather than a wholesale commercialization, mainly because Shaxi does not have a dominant cultural commodifiable resource, such as the Naxi *dongba* script. Shaxi's essence then lies in its history as 'the only remaining intact Market town on the

⁸⁴⁹ For example, the local Cultural Bureau chief is the owner of a guesthouse/inn in the centre of the old town where he also promotes Bai cultural heritage, in particular song and dance and other artistic events, while others, including the Ouyang guest house are known for their specialty foods, and again others introduce guests to the art of tea and emphasise ATHR themes.

Ancient Tea Horse Road', but it shares this label, the ATHR brand, with many other towns in the area.

On the surface, and what tourists (want to) see, but belying the reality what is going on underneath, Shaxi is a quaint and quiet rural idyll, in a beautiful natural setting, with many modern amenities, and one that still shows enough ethnic character and historical association with the ATHR to remain a popular tourist destination for some time to come. In fact, it is the modernization of the traditional, the creation of 'tradition-style' in architecture, ways of lives and narratives, the presentation of an up-graded version of an imagined past, that Chinese domestic tourists find especially appealing in the countryside and which resonates with government rhetoric of national heritage (preservation), unity in diversity, historical continuity, and overall development. Therefore it is not surprising that heritage conservation projects like Shaxi should transform from a globally-adopted/inspired preservation model into a locally-adopted preservation model with 'Chinese characteristics'.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have investigated how current policies and processes of and attitudes to heritage conservation influence the transformation of space and place in small-town rural south-west China. I have argued that China's overarching national goal of 'modernization' is still the basis of all political and rational policy-making (in this region) and where the rationale of a developmental state underwrites this goal.

I have structured the thesis in a way that runs from the general to the particular, where consecutive chapters relate to and reinforce each other. In this study I first introduced and established the discourses and practices of 'heritage' and 'heritage conservation' in both a global/international and a Chinese local/national context (Chapters One and Two). In China, these discourses are strongly tied to notions of economic and social development, national harmony and unity, Party legitimacy, and local identity, which are contextualised in the following chapters. In Chapter Three, I analysed China's unique path of tourism development in a historical perspective and its overall importance over the last three decades in facilitating fundamental socio-economic changes in China's quest for modernization, in particular in modernizing the Chinese countryside and its people. Here, concrete ideas of minority peoples as vital 'cultural resource' (heritage) in tourism and economic development appear. As a result of increasing tourism, the historic perception of ethnic minorities in China as 'low quality', 'backward' and 'uncivilized' has dramatically changed in public and official rhetoric to a more positive portrayal, both in terms of 'becoming modern' and national unity and identity (Chapter Four). New identity-making in contemporary China - cultural, ethnic, national, or other - has resulted in the emergence of new regionalisms and the rejection of old narratives, alliances and power holders (Chapter Five). Heritage conservation, production and consumption are used to (re-) create new narratives, foremost in the transformation of old traditional villages into 'new ancient towns', and have become the new symbols of a modernizing countryside (Chapter Six). In Chapters Seven and Eight I presented the case study where all the concerns of the previous chapters were discussed to arrive at the thesis argument that poverty alleviation and overall economic development are the primary concern of a modernizing Chinese countryside. This is largely achieved by employing tourism as the main driver of change, but while putting new values and new meanings on heritage assets for tourism consumption, this often results in the devaluation, erosion, and commodification of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Below, I will first explore the political, economic and social environment which nurtured the modernization of the countryside in the recent past. I will then present my findings from the case study and reflect on the status of Shaxi as a ‘model’ town of restoration and sustainable development, as a ‘new ancient town’, and as a globally acknowledged heritage site. I will conclude with a discussion on the proposed way forward for Shaxi.

Modernizing the Countryside

By definition, ‘modernization’ means the transformation from a traditional, rural, agrarian society into a secular, urban, and industrialized society.⁸⁵⁰ Above all, a ‘modern’ society is intricately linked with having undergone comprehensive transformation through industrialization. This transformation, however, is not a universal process and is thus highly complex as it is contingent on a multitude of ‘forces’ and ‘dynamics’ that are specific to a nation, country or society. Development is irregular, even unpredictable, and often violent, and is therefore a constant source of strain and conflict in modernizing societies.

Macro-economic Policies⁸⁵¹

This has also been characteristic of China’s development, in particular over the last thirty years since the Communist Party embarked on its comprehensive drive of national industrialization and modernization.⁸⁵² It first took place in China's coastal regions throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but which created a deep gap in social and material development between these coastal regions and inland areas, resulting in increasing discontent of the rural population.⁸⁵³ To address these potentially destabilizing disparities and sentiments, President Jiang Zemin (1993-2003) announced new development policies in the late 1990s for China’s western regions. The effects and implications of the new ‘West China Development Program’ have been widely discussed in terms of economic growth and reducing the inequality between the people of the coast and the people of the interior, environmental protection, poverty alleviation, trade and investment, but also in terms of national security and unity, and the extraction of natural and mineral resources for the interior

⁸⁵⁰ See, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/modernization>

⁸⁵¹ Here I use the framework as suggested by Ahlers and Schubert (below): *macro-policy* denotes a policy framework that features a central stimulus in terms of slogans and rough guidelines for implementation, while delegating the main work of policy concretization to local governments.

⁸⁵² For a comprehensive history/account of China’s recent modernization, see e.g.,

⁸⁵³ See *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, or Deng Xiaoping’s southern tour speech in 1992.

region.⁸⁵⁴ In particular, emphasis was on industrialization, transportation, and road and infrastructure construction. As such, the program was also highly criticised, in particular as to distributional benefits for women, indigenous peoples, local communities and other social groups who were not likely to gain from the economic progress.⁸⁵⁵

The ‘West Region Development Program’ was complemented by the ‘Build a Socialist Countryside’⁸⁵⁶ (BSCS) (*shehui zhuyi xinnongcun jianshi*) policy - initiated in 2006 by the Hu Jintao/Wen Jiabao leadership - which together have had enormous impact on rural communities. The BSCS has also exerted great influence on rural heritage practices as it aimed to stimulate economic, political, social, cultural and civil development in rural areas. ‘Constructing a new socialist countryside is an important historic task in the process of China's modernisation’ says the policy, and promised greater weight on the redistribution of resources and the rebalancing of income through rural investment and agricultural subsidies.⁸⁵⁷ New measures of the policy included the historical move of phasing out the agricultural tax, and subsidies for farming, health and education (including free text books and heating).⁸⁵⁸ Importantly, it prompted local governments to reorganize, streamline and focus their efforts to promote comprehensive rural development.⁸⁵⁹ A central aspect of the policies was ‘an increase in rural incomes and the transformation of the countryside through the promotion of urbanization and a gradual reduction of the rural population’.⁸⁶⁰

The latter policies (BSCS) in particular concern communities and are the major framework for local governments to guide their development, and are linked with other rural projects, including tourism development, the environment, and cultural heritage protection. The effect of these policies is evident in government rhetoric (reports, meetings, village visits) and action (farming, investment). For example, in Shaxi, but especially in the outlying poorer villages that are largely dependent on

⁸⁵⁴ See e.g., Lu and Neilson, *China's West Region Development*.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁶ This policy was proclaimed at the end of 2005 during the fifth plenary session of the Sixteenth CCP's Central Committee and officially approved as a government policy by the National People's Congress in March 2006.

⁸⁵⁷ J. Watts, ‘China vows to create a ‘new socialist countryside’ for millions of farmers’, *The Guardian*, 22 February 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/feb/22/china.jonathanwatts>, accessed 30 September 2016.

⁸⁵⁸ For an evaluation of the program, see A.L. Ahlers and G. Schubert, ‘Building a New Socialist Countryside’ – Only a Political Slogan?, *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2009, pp. 35-62.

⁸⁵⁹ A.L. Ahlers and G. Schubert, ‘Building a New Socialist Countryside’ – Only a Political Slogan?, *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2009, pp. 35-62.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., Ahlers and Schubert, ‘Building a New Socialist Countryside ...’.

agriculture, locals have emphasised the importance of government projects in improving people's lives, rather than benefits from tourism.⁸⁶¹

Rural Governance

The successful implementation of such historic reform policies was highly dependent on new institutions and an efficient governing system. As Ahlers and Schubert note of the BSCS, 'the results so far have shown that the triangle formed by central policy design, system-inherent institutional constraints and the embedded agency of local implementers can help to explain the cases of *effective* policy implementation', in fact, it 'has proved increasingly successful in reconciling the realization of local implementers' collective interests with the central state's overarching goals'.⁸⁶² The new policies initiating the 'reform and opening up' period, as discussed, have brought great changes to the countryside and have redefined central-local relations as they provided local governments with strong incentives for pursuing prosperity.⁸⁶³ Land reforms of the 1980s enabled local governments to gain control over state land which they could use for developing the economy. Decentralization of social power and a widening of the public sphere have also benefited ordinary people who have realised the importance of participating in policy and decision-making and new state-society relations have emerged. Since the late 1980s, at the village level, the community exercises 'self-government' through the *villagers' committee* (as the basic unit of grass-roots self-governance) and a local Party branch, which assist villagers to administer their own affairs in daily life. The villager's committees hold direct (democratic) elections which, seen together, enable new forms of political influence to potentially empower villagers.⁸⁶⁴ Further, other party or professional cadres are involved who have access to a wide range of resources, including funding, labour, and social networks to support the daily activities, and are empowered to some extent with governmental intervention.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶¹ Personal conversations with locals, summer 2014; in Shaxi, the old town/new town divide is apparent, where residents/businesses in the new town profit little from tourism in the old town and are thus more relying on government development plans.

⁸⁶² Ahlers and Schubert, 'Building a New Socialist Countryside ...'.

⁸⁶³ Z. Cheng, 'Dilemmas of Change in Chinese Local Governance: Through the Lens of Heritage Conservation', PhD, University of Sheffield, 2015. See also, T. Jacka & Wu Chengrui, 'Village Self-Government and Representation in Southwest China', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, (2015, pp. 1-24.

⁸⁶⁴ Rural self-governance is stipulated in the 'Organic Law of the Villagers' Committee (1998)' and states that the members of a villager committee are elected by villagers and held accountable to villager and villager representative assemblies, and are charged with managing village affairs and conveying villagers' opinions and demands to the government. However, the development of village democracy is uneven and does not necessarily lead to good governance or make village cadres accountable. The position of village cadres is complex as they have to balance competing demands from the state and villagers but are only temporary employees of the state, therefore also, economic incentives shape village cadres governance significantly. See, J. Kung, Y. Cai and X., Sun, 'Rural Cadres And Governance In China: Incentive, Institution And Accountability', *The China Journal*, No. 62, July 2009, pp. 62-77.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

It is by considering these new macro-economic mechanisms of developing the western regions and building a new socialist countryside, combined with a new constellation of governing power (holders) at the local level as a result of economic reforms and decentralization that we can make sense of how rural development has occurred in recent times, and how heritage conservation has become part of it.

'Heritageization' of the Countryside and the Transformation of the Traditional Village

Until the early 2000s when these new policies were first implemented, villages in remote rural western China, such as Shaxi, were amongst the poorest in China and mostly reliant on agriculture and village collective industries (co-operatives, SME's). However, even then, as Old Ouyang emphasised, people's lives had improved due to Deng Xiao-ping's new reform policies.⁸⁶⁶ Most of the young to middle-aged men (and some women) migrated to bigger cities, often as far away as Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangzhou, to take part in the economic boom and help build the new China, and support the ones left behind. Villages had become busy places again with rural markets, small private businesses, and village enterprises flourishing. Television became part of most rural households. New roads and houses were built and temples restored, while everything old was neglected or destroyed. Rural China was truly industrializing and modernizing, but was still poor.

By the late 1990s, there was a decisive shift in policy, practice, and perception to develop traditional villages and towns not only in larger numbers, but based on local cultural heritage. Local governments, spurred on by provincial and national government efforts to promote tourism as a way to fight poverty, became increasingly aware of their potential natural and cultural resources and savvy in ways to employ them. As I have elaborated in the chapter on the 'new ancient towns', the re-creation of old traditional towns into 'new ancient towns' is based on villages' more or less unique, or even completely invented, cultural resources, and the quest for their popularity has become increasingly competitive. Instrumental in small town/villages' development is the decision by local government cadres on how to develop, whether to encourage local grass-roots initiatives, bring in outside developers, or, more recently, form private-public partnerships (PPPs). In most cases, the model of outside development (businesses in partnership with local governments) was chosen and increasingly villages started to look the same as they were developed to a generic blueprint of Ming/Qing dynasty re-built architecture with some local cultural features (*difang tese* 地方

⁸⁶⁶ Personal Conversation, December 2011.

特色). Only few villages resisted development plans.⁸⁶⁷ Mostly village restoration followed the principle of ‘restore the old to look old’ (*xiujiu, rujiu* 修旧如旧), or ‘preservation-style development’ (*baohuxing fazhan* 保护性发展), with little regard to architectural integrity and authenticity, supplemented by a similar approach in re-creating intangible heritage and local historical narratives. An increasing alliance between ‘market’ and ‘party-state’ in cultural heritage and tourism development has given greater scope for the commodification of material and non-material culture, and the development of culturally oriented ‘theme parks’, ‘scenic zones’, and the transformation of ‘ancient towns’. At the same time, community participation in heritage protection and village (tourism) development is marginal, and locals are mostly employed in the complementary service industries.

Shaxi

One is tempted to adopt the view that Shaxi was only brought back into existence with the arrival of the Swiss restoration team and the following Shaxi Rehabilitation Project (SRP). However, one has to also acknowledge that villages and towns had a ‘life’ before their transformation into a tourist destination. As I have mentioned above, many villages and small towns had again become very lively and industrious places in the 1980s and 1990s, mainly due to rural agricultural modernization and other economic reforms as well as a general rural cultural revival. Local people had become more prosperous - if far from rich - perhaps also in a more equitable way, as there was no stratification of wealth and society in the way it would develop with increasing tourism. However, in most of the more remote and mountainous locations of the western regions inhabited by mainly ethnic minorities where farming was difficult and where there was no other source of income, villagers were/are still extremely poor.

Poverty alleviation through tourism and economic development was then also the main concern for Shaxi. As was discovered in the early 2000s, Shaxi had a most valuable potential tourism resource: the ancient Market Place *sidengjie* (mostly abandoned and in a bad state of neglect and disrepair at the time) with architecture dating back to the Qing and Ming era and associated with the millennia-old trading culture of the Ancient Tea Horse Road. The buildings around the Market Place constituted ‘authentic’ tangible local cultural heritage and were consequently painstakingly restored

⁸⁶⁷ See e.g. T. Ying and Y. Zhou, ‘Community, governments and external capitals in China’s rural cultural tourism: A comparative study of two adjacent villages’, *Tourism Management*, Vol. 28, 2007, pp. 96–107.

in the most ‘authentic’ and professional way according to international heritage conservation standards, but with consideration of local geography, expertise, skill, and circumstances. Shaxi was to become a unique model of poverty alleviation through heritage restoration and sustainable development in a rural, mountainous environment, where local people were to benefit from their heritage, but where tourism would only play a secondary role. While the major restorations of the Market Place finished in 2006, the SRP is a long-term project (2002-2020) and envisions the sustainable development of the whole valley.

The development of Shaxi can be divided into four periods: (pre-restoration) - restoration (SRP) – (tourism) development - ‘new ancient town’ construction. Shaxi’s transformation from an obscure traditional ethnic village to a desired tourist destination is not unique. In fact, this is the first and main critique, as Shaxi was designed to become a unique model of (economic and social) development and heritage conservation, and at the first stage of its development all the parameters were set and the foundations laid for progressing towards this goal. The first (restoration) and second stage (development) did mostly proceed according to Shaxi’s overall development plan.⁸⁶⁸ What was exceptional was the long period - six years - of ‘waiting’ and ‘adjustment’ between the finish of the restoration works and accelerated tourism development. It was a ‘waiting’ period (for the government and locals) in the sense that no-one really knew how long it would take for tourists to arrive and before benefits could be reaped, how the Swiss plans of creating new local industries and integrating them into the economy could proceed, or what kind of additional infrastructure was needed. For the preservationists (SRP, cultural bureau and heritage-minded locals and outsiders), however, the term ‘adjustment’ was more appropriate, as for locals the restoration period, while exciting in many ways, was also a time of great upheaval as the old town was practically turned upside down. After the major restorations were finished, for the first time, locals could again return to a ‘normal’ life. Further village and tourism developments were slow and mostly non-intrusive. Importantly, local people found new pride in their re-awakened heritage and history and were able to enjoy the magnificently renovated Market Place.

This was a critical time for the government to plan ahead and decide on its future path of development: should Shaxi continue on a path of sustainable growth, i.e. slow tourism growth, developing local industries (including crafts, food), diversify agriculture, limit the number of outside businesses, and more, that is, a path of growth that would mainly benefit locals? A path that was specifically designed for Shaxi by the SRP and scientifically thoroughly tested? Or should

⁸⁶⁸ See P. Bertschi and M. Junker, ‘The Sustainability-Oriented Guiding Plan for the Shaxi Valley’, The Shaxi Rehabilitation Project, IRL-Institute, ETH Zurich, July 2004.

Shaxi follow along the path of the highly successful Lijiang development model that would hopefully bring prosperity, fast? Or, alternatively, should Shaxi follow its own development path?

Judging by the speed and course of development since 2012, the Shaxi government has taken the latter option. In the case study I have elaborated on the specific changes that have occurred in Shaxi during that period, including the ‘culture-kezhan paradigm’ as prominent in the Lijiang model: the unbridled growth of outsider businesses and great increase of tourist numbers; violation of heritage preservation standards in building and restoration within the heritage zone; the fading of Shaxi old town’s original and authentic cultural character and visual beauty, or aesthetics, as increasingly a pseudo-local building style is applied, and building space has almost reached full capacity. The positive heritage work of some of the locals and outsiders is acknowledged and passively supported by the government, but has little influence overall in Shaxi’s development; and local people have (been) increasingly ‘moved out of the picture’ (the old town) and have to fend for themselves in an unequal and unfamiliar playing field. These are all a strong indication of Shaxi’s unsustainable growth and development. Recent local government and media reports suggest even greater and comprehensive changes as Shaxi and the valley are being turned into a 5-star tourist and ‘Bai Cultural and Ecological Zone’.⁸⁶⁹

But why did the Shaxi government choose this path of development? And why did the Shaxi commune (village committee) not object to the later developments that obviously disadvantaged them? As I have argued above, modernization is still the overarching goal and rationale of developmental politics in China. Modernization cannot be halted, and where it is resisted it is not modernization per se, but the way in which it occurs (on the local level), such as by exploitation, commodification, and destruction. Modernization comes to pass with or without tourism and has long been happening before the SRP arrived in Shaxi, in the countryside most notably through agricultural reforms. Tourism (based on heritage) is only a medium, a way of changing the countryside quickly, it accelerates development and modernization because of its potential material benefits. Meanwhile, ten and twenty years after tourism arrived in these remote regions, locals are privy to the gains that can be made and mostly accept the government’s position of accelerated development. Therefore, poverty alleviation through tourism is high on local governments’ agenda, in this region increasingly through sustainable cultural and ecological tourism in a cultural heritage-rich environment.⁸⁷⁰ However, as the case study has also shown, ‘sustainable’ development based

⁸⁶⁹ See e.g., ‘Shaxi Town to Build an Upgraded Version of Tourism Development’ (沙溪镇打造旅游发展升级版), *Dali Daily* (online), 15 July 2015, <http://dalidaily.com/lyyou/120150715/1082654.html>, accessed 10 October 2015.

⁸⁷⁰ Poverty alleviation through tourism is not a straightforward process, nor does it promise a successful outcome, but is highly dependent on government policy and practice. See e.g. poverty alleviation programs for Yunnan and Guizhou,

on soft (ecological) tourism and local heritage is often short-lived and more a propaganda tool than a reality.

The ‘turn’ in Shaxi’s development must also be seen within this rationale. On the surface, Shaxi has turned into a picture-perfect ancient town, as evidenced by the frequent visits of film crews, large groups of university student painters, professional photographers, media, artists, and lately by a throng of tourists whose ‘gaze’ does not go any further than the next selfie opportunity. It has become a desired tourist destination due to its unique heritage associated with (a new narrative of) the Ancient Tea Horse Road, its beautiful environment and ecology, and its reputation as a quiet rural hideaway. While it is an ancient town, its ‘interior’ has lately been thoroughly cleaned up, sanitized, and modernized to cater for urban tourists’ tastes and needs. Shaxi has thus very much become an idealized version of itself and a ‘playground’ for urban visitors.⁸⁷¹ More specific, as Oakes suggests, heritage display in rural China must be seen as ‘a project less concerned with preservation of the past than with exhibition as a tool for development and modernization, and for “improvement” of the village population’.⁸⁷² ‘Exhibition’ then includes not only the visual heritage display, or the ‘beautified’ village, but the encounter with urban/foreign tourists (who are exhibited) as a tool of development, modernization, and the improvement of the quality (*suzhi*) of the rural population. As with the whole cultural realm in China, this then also suggests that heritage and heritage display have become a field of governmentality and social regulation.⁸⁷³

The question is: could Shaxi have stayed in the ‘low-key’ tourism time bubble of 2006-2012 and develop and prosper naturally? Could Shaxi have resisted the influx of outsider businesses and gradually develop local skills and open local businesses, with only small numbers of tourist? Or would perhaps the fate of an eco-museum, or an out-door museum have suited Shaxi better, with the restored buildings at the core of the visitor experience? While these speculations are legitimate – after all China has a large number of folk museums and theme parks - they are unrealistic in Shaxi’s case. Shaxi has become too important. It is a nationally designated historic village and part of a much wider plan of not only the provincial and national governments to promote the Ancient Tea Horse Road, but the new Jianchuan County development plan, which also means that the County government is fully involved in Shaxi’s development. As well, in the Chinese government’s view, heritage cannot stay in isolation but must be visited and commoditised because of the pressure of

J.A. Donaldson, *Small Works. Poverty and Economic Development in Southwestern China*, Ithaka, Cornell University Press, 2011

⁸⁷¹ Oakes, T., ‘Sense of Place and Tourism: The Village as China’s Urban Playground’, *Tourism Tribune*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2013, pp. 1-10.

⁸⁷² Oakes, ‘Heritage as Improvement ...’.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, Oakes, ‘Heritage as Improvement ...’.

ever growing domestic tourism, for government revenue, and because heritage is an important pedagogic tool that instils pride in the nation and its long history.

The final question then is: considering Shaxi's development, can it be considered a new model of 'sustainable rural development based on heritage' as intended by the SRP, or is it just another copy-cat version, say of nearby Lijiang, of Hongcun or Xidi (Anhui), Pingyao (Shaanxi), or Fenghuang (Hunan)? In this thesis, I have come to the conclusion that while there are many ancient towns that have developed new approaches to tourism development by integrating heritage conservation and local socio-economic development, in the majority of cases these often laudable models eventually converge to a more (visually) recognizable mainstream model of 'heritage-tourism development', where - as tourism increases - heritage conservation becomes of lesser importance. Besides Shaxi, we have seen this above in the more detailed examples of Lijiang, Shuhe, and Dali, but hold our hopes for other places, like Xizhou that are on the brink of development. Here, we hope to see, that another good role model of local heritage preservation such as the Linden Centre, may inspire and convince other potential developers, investors, locals and government officials that heritage preservation is ultimately in the long-term interest of the town. Based on the 'authentic' heritage preservation of a nationally designated heritage site and its successful marketing for the town of Dali and Xizhou, the Linden Centre is meanwhile a locally and nationally acknowledged 'brand' and a viable new model for other towns going forward. What this suggests, is, that foreign-led preservation models like the Shaxi Rehabilitation Project, the Pear Orchard Temple, and the Linden Centre, may have an ever stronger role to play in China's cultural heritage conservation than the government.

Surprisingly, in many of the above cases there are international development agencies, such as the Global Heritage Fund, involved on the ground that execute and supervise restoration work to global international and World Heritage standards. Therefore, here we have to also ask the question: what does Shaxi's diverging development mean in a global context as a heritage site restored by an international agency and listed on the '100 most endangered sites' in the world with the World Monument Fund? Or similar cases, that have even become World Heritage sites? How does China reconcile these developments with its official commitment to heritage preservation to global standards and its position as a member of the World Heritage Committee?

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APPENDIX 1

World Heritage Sites in China (50) 2016

Cultural (35)

- Ancient Building Complex in the Wudang Mountains (1994)
- Ancient City of Ping Yao (1997)
- Ancient Villages in Southern Anhui – Xidi and Hongcun (2000)
- Capital Cities and Tombs of the Ancient Koguryo Kingdom (2004)
- Classical Gardens of Suzhou (1997)
- Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces (2013)
- Dazu Rock Carvings (1999)
- Fujian Tulou (2008)
- Historic Centre of Macao (2005)
- Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace, Lhasa (1994)
- Historic Monuments of Dengfeng in “The Centre of Heaven and Earth” (2010)
- Imperial Palaces of the Ming and Qing Dynasties in Beijing and Shenyang (1987)
- Imperial Tombs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties (2000)
- Kaiping Diaolou and Villages (2007)
- Longmen Grottoes (2000)
- Lushan National Park (1996)
- Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor (1987)
- Mogao Caves (1987)
- Mount Qingcheng and the Dujiangyan Irrigation System (2000)
- Mount Wutai (2009)
- Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples, Chengde (1994)
- Old Town of Lijiang (1997)
- Peking Man Site at Zhoukoudian (1987)
- Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor (2014)
- Site of Xanadu (2012)

Summer Palace, an Imperial Garden in Beijing (1998)
Temple and Cemetery of Confucius and the Kong Family Mansion in Qufu (1994)
Temple of Heaven: an Imperial Sacrificial Altar in Beijing (1998)
The Grand Canal (2014)
The Great Wall (1987)
Tusi Sites (2015)
West Lake Cultural Landscape of Hangzhou (2011)
Yin Xu (2006)
Yungang Grottoes (2001)
Zuojiang Huashan Rock Art Cultural Landscape (2016)

Natural (11)

Chengjiang Fossil Site (2012)
China Danxia (2010)
Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area (1992)
Hubei Shennongjia (2016)
Jiuzhaigou Valley Scenic and Historic Interest Area (1992)
Mount Sanqingshan National Park (2008)
Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries - Wolong, Mt Siguniang and Jiajin Mountains (2006)
South China Karst (2007)
Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas (2003)
Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area (1992)
Xinjiang Tianshan (2013)

Mixed (4)

Mount Emei Scenic Area, including Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area (1996)
Mount Huangshan (1990)
Mount Taishan (1987)
Mount Wuyi (1999)

APPENDIX 2

Interview matrix:

Official recorded interviews, open-ended

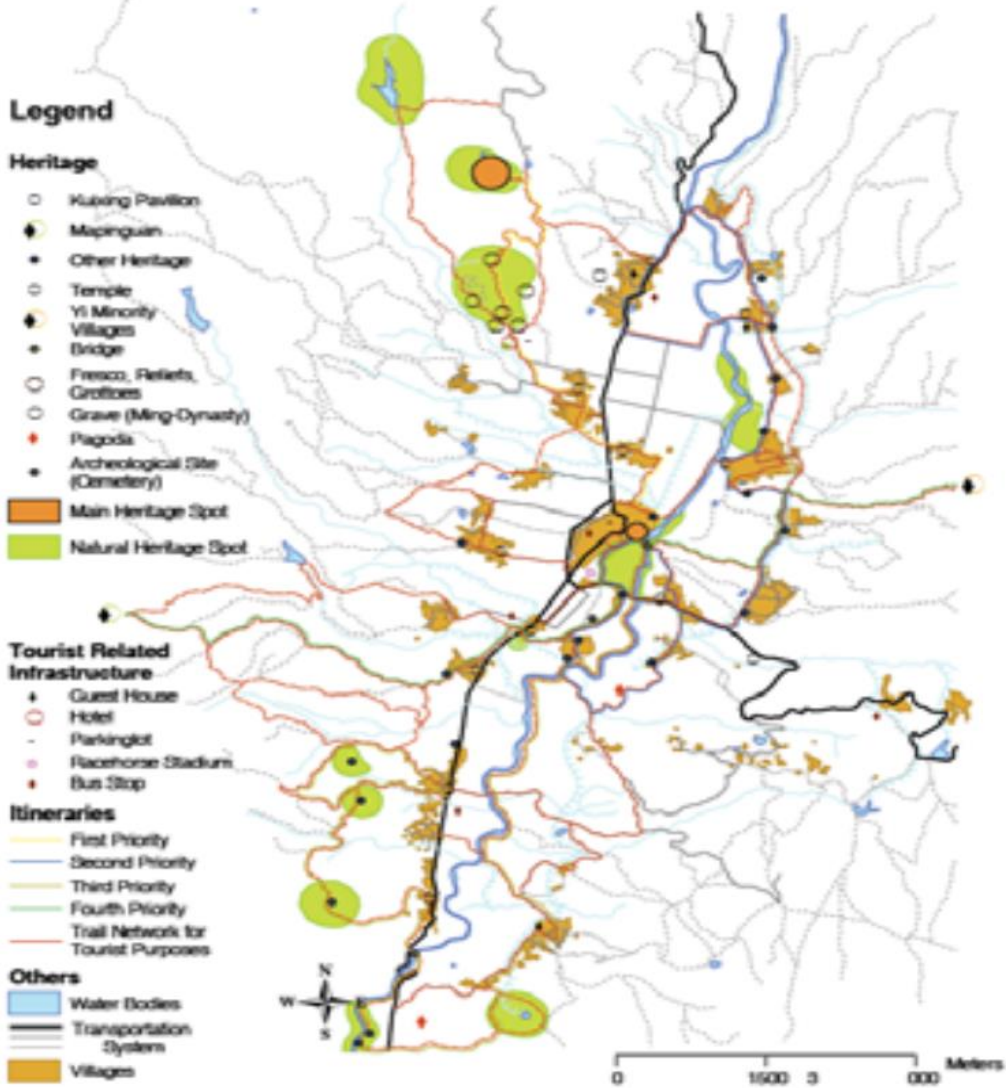
No	Interview	Position	Date	Code	Comment
1	Mr Li	Jianchuan Tourism Department	28/12/2011	LIJT	Dept of Construction and Housing also present
2	Mr Wang Zhuren	Shaxi Old Town Vice Party Secretary	07/01/2012	WZR	
3	Mr Huang Yinwu	SRP project manager	02/08/2014	HYW	Swiss SRP Representative
4	Mr Wu Yunxin,	Teacher, Jianchuan Tourism office	28/08/2014	WYX	
5	Ms Shirley (Fei-Fei)	Horsepen 46, Shaxi Youthhostel owner	04/12/2011	HP46	
6	Mr Ouyang Haiyun	Ouyang guesthouse owner, Shaxi	12/10/2014	OYHY	Various interviews, 2011, 2012, 2014
7	Mr Ouyang Zhang	Son, Ouyang guesthouse	01/01/2012	OYZ	
8	Mr Ouyang Shengxian	Ouyang dayuan	02/01/2012	OYS	
9	Ms A-liu	Bai Singer, Shaxi		AL	
10	Mr Duan	Jianchuan Cultural Centre (wenhuajuzhang)	09/10/2014	DJCC	Painter, artist, government official
11	Ms Ashley Oldacre	Shaxi Cultural Centre manager	07/12/2011	SCC/SLCCC	Various 2011/2012, 2014
12	Peter	Low-Carbon Centre (Beijing)	28/03/2012	LCCB	Director
13	Mr Yang Huimin	Shaxi Cultural Bureau (wenhuajuzhang)	04/10/2014 09/04/2012	SCB	
14	Shaxi Taizi	Shaxi Youth	09/09/2014	ST	various
15		Shenzhen entrepreneur, new hotel Shaxi	08/09/2014	SENT	
16		Shilongcun Youth	10/09/2014	SLCY	
17		Shilongcun Party Secretary	10/09/2014	SLCPS	
18	Dakpa Kelden	Shangri-la Cultural Heritage Association	26/10/2011	DK	
19	Dakpa Kelden	Arra Khampa	20/09/2014	DK	
20	Brian Linden	Linden Centre	03/08/2014	BL	
21	Chris Barclay	Pear Orchard Temple	16/08/2014	CB	

22	Teacher	Aofeng, Wood Carving Training Centre	17/04/2012	AWCTC	
23	Farmer	Neighbouring village	10/10/2014	OYR	Ouyang Relative
24	Xuan Ke	Musician	12/11/2011	XK	Lijiang Ancient Music Orchestra

APPENDIX 3

旅游路线与设施

Touristic Itineraries and Infrastructure



Source: Shaxi Rehabilitation Project (SRP): LEP

