

Cultivation and Composition of Commercial Tourism Zones in Yunnan, China

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By

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Abstract

This thesis examines the composition and cultivation of commercial tourism zones in Yunnan, China. I identify expectations tourists bring to their travels, and how receiving communities meet and transform those expectations, based on fieldwork in five receiving communities. I argue tourists have three primary motivations in touring to Yunnan: pursuit of the exotic, the natural world, and personal freedom. I situate this argument within three academic literatures: the scholarship on tourism in China, Chinese ethnic minorities, and the anthropology of tourism. I break the actors in Yunnan's commercial tourism zones into four artificial categories of on-location actors: local residents, Han or ethnic minority migrants, foreign expatriates, and tourists. Commercial tourism zones such as Dali, Lijiang, Shangri-La, Shaxi and Xizhou form not only as a response to tourists' desires but also as a result of municipal policies, and individual cultivation of tourism. I conclude by suggesting analysts can and should consider local resident participation in tourism cultivation when assessing the efficacy of tourism in poor regions as a tool for poverty alleviation.

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To my interviewees: 我饮水思源，谢谢你们。

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“Tourism is nothing more than leaving your mundane location for someone else’s mundane location, going somewhere strange, to do something familiar.”¹-Xiao Yu, college student and daughter of guest house owners in Shangri-La

Introduction

I met Xiao Yu by chance at a guest house. I flew into Diqing Shangri-La Airport in early August. We had detoured to Lijiang and arrived on a delayed schedule. My legs were cramped when I exited the Beijing flight into the crisp twilight of Shangri-La. I paid a woman driving her friend home, in order to catch a ride to the old town. I failed to find the guesthouse I had seen online, ending up at the guest house of Xiao Yu’s family. Xiao Yu’s position in her community as an ethnic minority migrant from another part of Yunnan exemplifies the diverse and complicated nature of Yunnan’s commercial tourism zones. Xiao Yu indicated a sense of fatigue about the banality of tourism, even as it has been promoted within China as a salve to the fatigue of urban life.

Shangri-La Old Town, or Jiantang, caters to tourists by focusing on ethnically themed architecture, goods, and activities, including the architecture of the guest house her family runs. While Shangri-La Old Town, is within a Tibetan Autonomous area, Xiao Yu belongs to the Bai ethnic minority. Her family is originally from the Dali area of Yunnan several hours to the South. The Old Town is composed of not only Han Chinese and Tibetans, but also other ethnic

¹ 旅游就是从自己待腻的地方到别人待腻的地方，去陌生的地方，做熟悉的事。

minorities. My findings confirm much of the extensive existing scholarship on tourism in Southwestern China. They enrich this scholarship because, although my sample of interviews is small, it is varied, spanning from Yunnan province's Shangri-La, Lijiang, Shaxi, to Xizhou, and Dali. Xiao Yu's position geographically and culturally ties into larger themes of mobility and tourism in China today. Eclectic and increasingly mixed populations are forming at these tourist destinations, pursuing the sentiment expressed by Deng Xiaoping when he famously stated "To get rich is glorious."

Xiao Yu was about to leave home for university in Jiangsu province when I met her in the summer of 2016. She spoke animatedly of forging her own way in a city, expressing the search for newness and discovery that led many tourists, myself included, to her family's doorstep. We were both in our early 20s, and both driven, at least in part, by a sense of curiosity for the world around us. While stating that she has participated in domestic travel in China, and looked forward to experiencing new locations, Xiao Yu addressed tourism with a refreshing pragmatism. I aim to analyze the expectations of tourists as they are drawn to some of Yunnan's most popular tourist destinations, and the composition of these commercial tourism zones, with the enthusiasm and practicality Xiao Yu employed in her own descriptions. As Amanda Stronza argues in her 2001 annual review, tourists and anthropologists have a lot in common.

Stronza summarized the existing literature on the anthropology of tourism through two main categories. The first seeks to locate the origin of tourism and the second aims to detail tourism's impacts. Stronza observed most anthropological work on tourism tends to fall into these categories, demonstrating that the literature focusing on impacts of tourism has focused on the hosts, while the motivations to tour component addresses the tourists themselves (2001). While I interacted with many tourists in China, the majority of my interviews were with the residents of

tourist destinations, and the conversations we had consistently returned to themes about tourists' expectations and motivations for visiting these locations, and the composition of these commercial tourism zones. Yet, as in Xiao Yu's case, I discovered my sample was difficult to categorize into "outsiders" and "insiders."

Categorizing my demographic was challenging, as demonstrated by a woman whom I will call Nainai. The distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" becomes unclear when an individual, like Nainai, moves to a city, builds a life and identity there, and then refers to their original hometown. The majority of "hosts" I interviewed were also "guests" in the sense that they were not originally from the area in which they participated in the tourism industry. To address this confusion, I am defining four artificial categories of on-location actors within these commercial tourism zones, local residents, Chinese migrants, foreign expatriates, and tourists. Despite this mixed demographic, my interviewees were consistent in identifying three main expectations for tourists visiting Yunnan: natural beauty, freedom from the constraints of urban society, and pursuit of the exotic. I address the origin and implications of these three motivations and examine their placement in the specific locations I visited.

I define a "commercial tourism zone" as a tourist location in which the vast majority of activity within the area is somehow attached to tourism, and the nature of that community orients itself to align with tourists' expectations. These communities are the result of not only tourists' interests, but also cultivation by on-location, or distant actors. I divide cultivation into two main categories, "passive" and "active" to describe the ability of actors to profit from and define the natures of these commercial tourism zones. Passive cultivation is local residents renting out their homes within a commercial tourism zone and moving to an outside area, while active cultivators make a direct profit from the tourists through work in restaurants, hostels, souvenir shops, etc. I

argue that the presence of local residents as active cultivators of tourism in these locations can be considered an indicator as to whether or not tourism is an appropriate tool to alleviate poverty in any specific area, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) claims (Feiner et al. 2002, Goodman 2004, Honggen 2003 Wu et al. 2010). One of the central concerns I had while conducting my interviews was that it appeared active cultivators in these areas were often migrants, not local residents. While local residents exist in an increasingly complex context of mobility, and tourism is not their only means of escaping poverty, I question the choice of developing tourism as a means of alleviating poverty in specific regions. My interviews suggest that while tourism can be an effective tool for raising the standard of living in a specific region, it does not inherently achieve this. I use the term “specific region” here to denote that while tourism may be generally beneficial to a province, or even a nation, that does not necessarily mean that developing tourism in a poor area will automatically bring prosperity for locals.

Pursuit of the natural world serves as a main motivator for many tourists visiting Yunnan. When I asked tourists why they chose Yunnan as a travel destination, the beautiful scenery and clean air often figured into their answers. The allure of Yunnan as an untouched paradise is appealing to wealthy urbanites. The pollution of China’s major cities makes daily life unpleasant, and even in smaller cities such as Kunming, people wear face masks to shield them from the pollution. This combines with events such as food scares to create a longing among urbanites for pristine natural environments (Yan 2012). While Kunming is within Yunnan, the image sold to tourists is one of untouched wildlands (Oakes 1998, Klingberg 2014). Several of my interviewees identified natural landscape and improved air quality as reasons for vacationing in Yunnan. A guest house owner in Shaxi remarked that while some tourists were aware of the town’s historical importance as a trading center along the tea-horse road, many simply came

because they heard it was beautiful.

Yunnan's landscapes are exciting, especially for tourists who have potentially lived their whole lives in cities. Yeye, an interviewee who has lived in Yunnan his whole life, remarked that the province's lack of large scale industry in comparison to China's East Coast mega cities, has transitioned from a drawback to a benefit. Urban living is now positioned as "normal," even mundane. Tourists are drawn to Yunnan because its diverse natural scenery is perceived as exotic to visiting urbanites. This desire to tour the majestic natural world, and view wholesome village lifestyles, is partly rooted in a disenchantment with the urban middle class stability many Chinese have, and still are, striving to achieve. Young people especially, who have grown up seeing their parents put in long hours to reach middle-class milestones, such as home and car ownership, sometimes find it hard to reconcile that their futures may look the same. Older generations have recent historical traumas to inform and inspire their quest for stability, while younger urbanites are growing up with an increasingly comfortable standard of living (Barton 2013, Walder & Yang 2003). Many individuals my age spoke of travel and adventure as enrichments they hoped to incorporate in their lives. I frequently heard Chinese tourists say they were "escaping the confines of work" through travel.

I argue this value for personal freedom among younger generations has roots in a glossing over of recent historical events, such as "The Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution" (1966-76). While older generations experienced hardships on a national scale during this period, Chinese people of my age have not had have this experience (Barton 2013, Walder & Yang 2003). Many of the migrants who relocate to commercial tourism zones in Yunnan are young people. When asked why they chose Yunnan as opposed to the megacities of the Eastern seaboard, they often described the same qualities they believed drew tourists, the beauty of the landscape, the freedom

of feeling they were living a life they themselves chose, and the excitement of living in such a diverse location. These answers are practical to an extent, and yet there is a sense of rebellion in bypassing the big city urban experience for more remote locations in Yunnan.

Personal freedom was associated with concepts of individual expression, for which mobility was central. Many tourists imagined the freedom of travel as a fundamentally Western quality, evident in the marketing of tourist experiences. Many of the coffee shops I visited functioned as coffee shops by day and bars at night, with food such as burritos, sandwiches, burgers and salads. Pots of succulent plants would be poised around postcards of open plateaus with English language phrases such as “Adventure awaits!” or “Be free!” next to a menu selling coffee. In one café, the only hint I was in an autonomous area of China, instead of a college town in the U.S., was a menu featuring “Yak Burgers,” written in both English and Mandarin Chinese, but notably not Tibetan. Yak Burgers are a telling example of how commercial tourism zones are oriented by active cultivators of tourism to fulfill tourists’ expectations. Burgers are a popular menu item in part because of their hybridity. Combining a Western dish with a local food source, the Yak burger is neither Western nor Tibetan. They are a curious invention of tourists’ desires, with a side of fries. All of my interviewees agreed domestic tourism greatly outnumbered foreign. This Western theme therefore had more to do with selling a “travel lifestyle” to Chinese tourists than it did to making foreigners feel at home. Travel was promoted as both “worldly” and “freeing.” This interest in western, themed locations and activities highlights another key motivator interviewees identified to me: the pursuit of the exotic.

Travel agencies emphasized exoticism by emphasizing ethnic diversity as an attraction in the most popular old towns of Yunnan. Dali Old town is famous for its Bai people, Lijiang Old Town for the Naxi, and Shangri-La Old Town for Tibetans. The old towns strengthened this

association through “staging” of cultural displays. Through examples such as the elaborate headwear of Bai people used solely for weddings displayed as everyday clothing to tourists by tour guides in Dali, or the abundance of shops selling Tibetan ritual knives in Shangri-La, culture is commodified and changed in these commercial tourism zones. These cultural displays often had more to do with entertainment than with education, as is especially apparent in the surprising appearance of African drum shops throughout these old towns. While an African drum shop is an unlikely sight in most areas of China, including Yunnan, these shops are numerous in Yunnan’s old towns. While I have yet to see an African drum shop in Kunming, Yunnan’s largest city, the small old town of Dali has at least three, feeding into the general themes of exoticism marketed to tourists.

My thesis therefore highlights these three expectations tourists bring to their travel experiences in Yunnan: pursuit of the exotic, personal freedom and natural beauty. Commercial tourism zones are cultivated, by local actors as well as state incentives, to respond to these expectations, and reflect them back to the travelers. To adequately address these communities within the context in which they occur, I will be engaging three major, yet interconnected academic literatures: Chinese tourism, the anthropology of tourism, and Chinese ethnic minorities. Chinese tourism is a multidisciplinary topic that can be approached from various fields, while the anthropology of tourism is broader geographically yet narrower in its approach. The existing literature on Chinese ethnic minorities is an essential third literature due to the ethnically diverse demographic makeup of Yunnan, as well as its implied “exoticism.” My primary resource and the foundation of this project are the interviews I collected during the summer of 2016, as well as several follow-up interviews that were conducted online. I divide local residents, migrants, and foreign expatriates into the artificial categories of either active or

passive cultivators of tourism. Understanding their engagement with, and ability to benefit from tourism can serve as a measure of the industry's ability to produce profits for local communities.

Methods

My purpose in writing this thesis is to better understand the complex position of local residents, migrants, expatriates and tourists in commercial tourism zones while connecting into larger discussions of tourism, ethnicity and mobility. My interviewees complicate concepts of “insider” and “outsider,” “host” and “guest,” in the context of a nation whose population is increasingly mobile. In what ways are communities at popular tourist destinations reshaped to become commercial tourism zones? Who lives in these areas, how did they come to be there, and how do they view tourists? What do they believe draws tourists to their homes? While tourism is propagated as a developmental tool, does it alleviate local resident poverty in a way that justifies state investment in rural tourism over other forms of development? How does increased mobility impact local residents, and commercial tourism zones more broadly? Through the experiences and opinions of my interviewees, I analyze the highly-commercialized Dali and Lijiang Old Towns, the more remote yet similarly structured Shangri-La Old Town, and models of sustainable tourism: Xizhou and Shaxi. The structures of these commercial tourism zones utilize images of exoticism and natural beauty, while propagating travel as a form of personal freedom to attract tourists. I put the data I gathered from these specific areas into conversation with three existing literatures: Chinese tourism, ethnic minorities in China, and the anthropology of tourism.



Figure 1 China map



Figure 2 Yunnan Map

Rapid development of transportation networks and new technological advancements are

allowing tourists in China access to new destinations. The availability of Internet resources for independent travelers has provided alternatives to the previously state-organized tour group model. Policy changes regarding mobility in China have also created potential for outsiders to set up businesses and homes in these newly forming tourist destinations. The result of these changes is dynamic communities in tourist destinations. I believe there is no single narrative to aptly describe these tourist destinations in which outsiders and locals mix to provide tourist experiences for travelers. A longtime resident whose family has lived locally for generations may work alongside a foreign national from the U.S., in a business that markets largely to domestic Chinese travelers, but also to foreign nationals and visitors from other parts of Yunnan. Rather than focus exclusively on the roles of hosts and guests, my interviews suggest belonging is relative. However, I do not mean to suggest all actors within these communities are equally able to cultivate positive interactions with outsiders, or wealth. While there has been extensive research on tourism in China, the rapid expansion and transformation of travel communities in Yunnan justifies this study. Due the dynamic change occurring in these areas, it seems this is a topic on which there is always more to say.

Beginnings

I began my research in spring of 2016. I prepared my research questions and protocol for IRB approval through the University of Colorado in the month of June. The initial direction of this thesis focused more heavily on topics surrounding Yunnan's ethnic minorities. This emphasis was largely due to the focus of my Study Abroad program that spring, SIT (School for International Training) China: Language, Cultures, and Ethnic Minorities. I spent late June to early August in Hebei province, interning at a summer camp while waiting for IRB approval. Fortunately, I was approved during July and could make a two-week trip through Yunnan's

tourist destinations interviewing Chinese tourists and foreign expatriates who fell in various places along the lines of insider and outsider. I spent between two and four days at each location, visiting Shangri-La, Lijiang, Shaxi, Dali, and Xizhou, for a total of five focus locations. These locations were chosen specifically for the ways in which they orientated themselves around tourism, and my previous familiarity with them. I chose to narrow my research on the centers of these destinations due to time constraints. However, these cities have tourist areas, as well as more residential areas. My experiences and interviews in Dali Old Town for example, while affected by outside attractions, do not claim to represent the lives of individuals living in residential areas in the broader Dali area.

The composition of SIT China greatly influenced my choices when I composed an initial protocol and design for this thesis. Through classwork as well as group trips, I was able to build familiarity with Yunnan Province. My travels in Yunnan included: a week-long independent study trip to Tiger Leaping Gorge, near Lijiang, and a month-long independent study period during which I based myself in Dali, and made shorter excursions North, and as far south as Jinghong. This month revolved around my capstone paper on Yunnan's flower food customs. These trips informed my thesis because they were my introduction to the wider Yunnan province beyond the capital, Kunming, and marked the starting point of my interest in tourism. Tourism was ubiquitous throughout my flower food interviews. Through observing the ways in which tourism shaped this culinary tradition, I became interested in what other ways tourism was influencing daily life in Yunnan.

I drafted my initial IRB protocol during this independent study period, and while the topic of this thesis differs greatly from my SIT capstone paper, it also addresses similar commercial tourism zones. One of the central influences to both these inquiries is the mixed

composition of hosts in Yunnan's commercial tourism zones. This complexity influenced my protocol design in that I did not focus on purely "locals" and "tourists," but on the individuals I encountered in these locations and the variety of roles they played in relation to tourism. I interviewed individuals based on random encounters and social connections, rather than a specific ethnic group, profession or age. My subjects were chosen because of their interest in participating in my project. Their testimonies provide insights into their specific lives within these locations.

Limitations

The most difficult aspects of this project were the short timespan during which I had time to interview and language barriers. The two-week data collection period was determined by my IRB approval, and the date I had to return to the U.S. for classes. This factor determined my focus on central areas, such as old towns, versus larger geographical areas. The timespan also determined the areas I visited as they were areas I was already familiar with, that modeled adaptations to tourism I believed would be interesting to investigate. The unexpected benefit of this was that between the locations I chose and the timespan I had to complete the project, my trip across Yunnan mirrored the well-trod tourist route. While moving through Yunnan in this manner provided the experience of the typical tourist in these areas, it also limited the scope of this project in that I had only a short period at each location.

The second challenge of this project, the language barrier, manifested itself in several ways. I faced two specific difficulties regarding the language of my interviews. The first was the barrier between myself and Mandarin speakers. I have studied Mandarin Chinese for four years, and have spent a total of a year living in China. While I could understand the basic meaning of what interviewees were telling me, there were nuances I did not grasp. By asking for clarification

from native speakers and professionals, I strove to accurately capture the deeper implications of the language. My goal was to be aware of my language abilities and vigilant of possible divergences based on what my interviewees meant to communicate and my understanding. Any quotes I translated for this thesis from follow up interviews are found in the original Mandarin in the footnotes. There are several brief quotes I wrote in my notebook in English, that due to later losing my audio files I no longer have the original Mandarin for.

The second language barrier I faced in Yunnan was the one between Mandarin speakers and other dialect speakers. While Mandarin is often understood by residents of Yunnan living in tourist destinations, and by young people who have had to learn it in school, many speak a local dialect at home. Mandarin is the only Chinese language I speak, and this meant I was unable to communicate with many older Chinese, as well as those from more isolated areas. Non-Mandarin speakers are in less of a position to profit from tourism, as they are unable to communicate with urban tourists. This thesis is influenced by the lack of these non-Mandarin voices. In addition, even for those who understand Mandarin, it a language deeply associated with the central government in China, so my reliance on Mandarin underscored my position as an outsider. While it is impossible to say to what exact extent using Mandarin as the language of my interviews influenced my findings, I believe it is important to note this influence.

I also recognize that while my focus on tourist centers allowed me to observe the tourism industry in Yunnan directly, it also meant my subjects were primarily people who could benefit from that industry. I was not able to interview out-migrants from these areas. Therefore, I want to acknowledge the potential effect of this outward movement on my demographic. My interviewees all regarded tourism in a positive light. It is important to clarify that the stories and perspectives I have had the privilege to collect for this thesis are reflections of my specific

sample of interviewees and while informative and relevant to the current state of tourism in Yunnan, do not constitute a comprehensive study.

Fieldwork

My interviewees fall into two groups, those who I met while on my August fieldwork trip, and those who I had known previously through my Study Abroad program. Interviewees who I met on site generally fell into the category of local residents, migrants, or foreigners. I conducted one follow-up interview online with an individual I had already interviewed in person, and one with an individual I was unable to meet in person. Twelve interviews were conducted during my fieldwork trip, for a total of 14 interviews, with 13 individuals. The ages of my interviewees varied from late teens to mid-sixties. No minors were interviewed for this thesis. The largest portion of my interviews were with individuals in their 20s. I believe this was due to two factors. The first factor was linguistic, specifically fluency in Mandarin and familiarity with English. I found in areas that traditionally spoke dialects, young people were generally more comfortable with Mandarin than their parents or grandparents. Similarly, students and professionals in their 20s often have had to learn some English throughout their education. While I conducted interviews in Mandarin, familiarity with English among youth made me seem more approachable. The second reason is that as a twenty-one-year-old, others within my age bracket were more interested in asking me questions about my life in the U.S. and form friendships with me than their older counterparts. While I did interview older individuals as well, people in their 20s are better represented in my findings. It is fair to note that the interviewee who was most critical of tourism was older than most of my demographic, this leads me to wonder whether part of my interviewees' optimism for tourism may be linked to their youth. While I can neither confirm nor deny this, it is interesting to consider how this project may have differed had my

demographic been older.

Ethical considerations were an additional, important component of how I chose my subjects, and how I conducted interviews. Tourism is considered a low-risk topic to study in China. The central government and many Chinese academics support tourism based on economic potential and strengthening of national identity. The topic is complicated in Yunnan because of the ethnic component to tourism practices. Ethnic tourism in China is marketed through productions such as traditional minority dances, minority themed architecture and souvenirs. When ethnic tourism is presented by tourism agencies and supported by state propaganda as an acceptable and celebrated practice, western critiques of this subject have often highlighted negative impacts on local communities and ethnic agency. I understood from the existing literature that issues of agency and repression were often intertwined with tourism to these areas. To accommodate this political sensitivity, I designed my interview questions and the manner of my interviews to ensure the interviewees were always able to express as much or as little of their perspective as they wished.

My interviews were between twenty minutes and an hour in length. The length of time depended on the amount of information my interviewee wanted to share on the topic, and the amount of time they had available to spend with me. While I did have interview questions I designed before conducting the actual interview, the time spent on any one question, or the follow-up questions asked, depended on the interest of the interviewee. This flexibility allowed me to conduct interviews as conversations. I offered no compensation for interviewees as I wanted to be sure they felt no undue pressure to participate. Often in between my questions for interviewees they would have questions of their own about the U.S. The overall unfolding of the interview was casual. I made sure all interviewees consented to have their stories used as data for

this thesis. All interviewees were made aware they could leave at any time. I was careful to ask open ended questions and to not pressure interviewees if they seemed reluctant to answer a question. While none of my questions were personal in nature, in situations where interviewees appeared uncomfortable I would make sure they understood they did not have to respond to any questions they did not want to and did not have to speak to anyone's experience but their own. I was fortunate that throughout this project I found most people were excited to share their perspectives and to have a conversation with me.

My intended methodology for recording interviews was a combination of an audio recording and detailed notes in a field journal. The notes served to quickly flip through information, and the audio recording would ideally serve as a more exact account of our conversation. This method also allowed me the convenience of not having to write down exact quotes and stop the flow of the conversation. Unfortunately, I had been recording these interviews on my phone. It broke three days before returning to the U.S., and I lost the audio recordings. I still had my field journal and could use the notes as my record for this thesis. However, this event did change the nature of my data in that I had few exact quotes. This led me to add an additional step to my methodology after I returned to the U.S.

One of the advantages of living in the age of social media is that through sites such as WeChat I have been able to keep in contact with several of my interviewees after leaving China. While time zones and Internet connections limited my ability to ask for follow-up interviews, I was able to conduct two through instant messaging. While this is a small sample compared to the in-person interviews I conducted over the summer, it allowed me to view specific quotes in a way that I lost with my audio files. The ability to see exactly what word was used to express a concept, as a non-native speaker was invaluable. While these interviews were not a part of my

initial methodology, they helped compensate for the loss of the audio files.

Conclusion of Methodology

Mishaps aside, my methodology was one of fortuitous, chance encounters. My interviews were either obtained based on friendships from the time I had spent in China, or resulted from individuals I met on the road. My position as a young, Mandarin-speaking, solo traveler aided me greatly in making connections. Conversations would begin organically, one of the first questions I would often be asked was why I was traveling through Yunnan, at which point I would share my project. After ensuring the person I was talking with would like to be interviewed, I would ask for a good time and location to conduct the interview. Often, we would continue the conversation and I would begin note taking and recording, other times they would not be able to in that moment but would suggest a later date and location. An example of one of these encounters was the owner of a Shanxi noodle shop in Shangri-La. The owner did not have time to be interviewed, but he was interested in my project and gave me the number of an American working in the tourism industry in that area. While I could not interview the man in the noodle shop, he was happy to provide another contact for me, who I was then able to interview the next day.

My sample size is small, and ultimately represents a demographic created by accessibility. Despite this, I believe this thesis offers a unique insight into the lives of my interviewees and the ways in which they conceptualize tourism's role in their communities and country. I believe these stories set within the context of nationalism, economic expansion and increased mobility in China today, shed light on the larger discussion of these issues. My interviewees spoke of tourists' expectations to escape the mundane, experience the natural world, and search for adventure. The communities I visited consisted of migrants, local residents, and

foreign expatriates. These mixed groups, and the variety of responses they shared, suggest the costs and benefits of tourism in China are neither as uniformly positive as state programs suggest, nor as negative as one might fear.

Tourism in China

Travel in China during dynastic times was reserved for Emperors, scholars and monks. Today's vibrant tourism industry indicates how much has changed. Travel in China was especially transformed during the 20th century, molding itself to the climate of each period. Throughout the 1920s, adventurous and wealthy foreigners began flocking to the China in search of an exotic travel destination. This ended during the political instability and societal trauma of the Opium Wars in the 1930-40s, after which China became more isolationist in response. Traders and missionaries entered forcibly, but China was not a popular travel destination for foreigners at this time (Schoppa 2006; Lew & Zhang 2003). Domestic political travel rose under Chairman Mao in the 1950s, as he encouraged Red Guards to travel throughout China, although forced migration is in some instances a more apt description. Travel in the name of political revolution was encouraged, but leisure travel was considered bourgeois. Following the "opening up" of China, and the transition to a market economy under Deng Xiaoping in 1978, leisure tourism became popular in China. Foreign travelers were the first to take to Chinese tourist destinations. However, after considerable reform efforts in the 1980s and 1990s, domestic tourists began to outnumber foreigners (Lew & Zhang 2003,). In 1998 China's inbound tourism surpassed chemicals and foodstuffs becoming the country's fourth largest exporter (Kruse & Xu, 2003). Factors such as transportation, relative political stability, and a rising middle class with expendable incomes have contributed to the popularity of tourism in contemporary China.

Conditions for Tourism

The World Bank measures China's GDP growth for 2015 at 6.9% (World Bank 2017). This rate of growth is much lower than recent years, marking a downward trend from the

14.195% growth rate in 2007. To allow for a comparison, the United States had a growth rate of 2.4% in 2014, an increase from the 2009 crash at -2.7%, but still below 2004's 3.7%. In 2015 China's GDP reached 11.01 trillion U.S. dollars, while the U.S.'s GDP reached 18.03 trillion. Deng Xiaoping began this growth in 1978 when he shifted from a central-planned economy to a market economy. This transition marked a shift from the stigmatization of wealth throughout the Mao era, as GDP growth averaged at 10% a year. Eight hundred million people escaped poverty on the coattails of these reforms, and this growth represents the fastest sustained expansion of any major economy (World Bank 2017). The unprecedented economic growth the nation has experienced in recent years has had a pervasive effect throughout all its societal structures, an influence especially evident in tourism.

The rise of the urban middle, and upper class in China's cities has formed the foundation for domestic travel. Most travelers exploring Yunnan today are domestic tourists on vacation, yet my interviewees identified this as a recent shift from foreign tourists. A 2013 article by Dominic Barton in the McKinsey Quarterly states that 75% of Chinese urbanites' salaries place them in the middle class, up from 4% of urbanites in 2000, and 68% in 2012. Barton goes on to document spikes in Chinese purchase of luxury goods such as "high-end bags, shoes, watches, jewelry, and ready-to-wear clothing," as well as products associated with the middle class such as fabric softeners (Barton 2013). While China's rapid expansion has resulted in high economic inequalities between areas, the Eastern mega cities are home to a population with an emerging income surplus. This wage gap makes poorer Western areas of China a financially viable tourism option in which this new middle class is able to vacation. Drastic changes in political and economic realities have created an environment in which vacationing is both possible and appealing in China today.

Tourism has become a mode for expressing socio-economic status, both within China and globally. Domestically, travel serves this purpose in that it demonstrates disposable income through the ability to take time off work, the funds to purchase transportation, housing and other miscellaneous costs such as entry fees and souvenirs. Vacationing declares to neighbors and coworkers that a family is prosperous, and able to invest not only in sustaining their lives, but also enriching them. Pritchard and Morgan describe marble ornaments as a Yunnan-specific souvenir travelers often purchase. They argue the display of these ornaments has less to do with the authenticity of the object than it does as a marker of financial stability. Souvenirs are one of the ways travelers are able to represent their travel experiences, and thus their prosperity, to social circles at home (2005). Travel has also become more public due to social media. Similar to in the U.S., young people in China document their lives through photos and blurbs about their activities. This allows travelers to share their adventures within their social circle, while simultaneously connecting them into global communities of backpackers and travel bloggers who celebrate “travel as a lifestyle.” I encountered college students whose parents funded their domestic travel due to the belief that it is an educational activity, a mark of China’s ascent to prosperity and stability. This increase in expendable income within the middle class has enabled tourism in two ways. First, more money makes travel possible, and second, travel is a marker of status that serves to demonstrate this wealth to others.

Travis Klingberg credits financial but also geographical accessibility as a leading contributor to the expansion and diversification of China’s tourism industry. Specifically, transportation reforms in 1979 set the physical foundation for a more interconnected China (2014). The textbook The Development of China’s Transportation Infrastructure and International Connectivity also compares the total number kilometers of available railway

between 1978 and 2008. Transportation reforms had not yet been put in place in 1978, between 1978 and 2008 China's railways increased 3.6-fold, for a total of 21,000 km. The length of highways also increased by 4.2-fold, or 2,778,500 km (2010). These figures demonstrate the same economic growth fueling the urban middle classes. Transportation expansion facilitated the movement of goods, while providing the most basic physical framework for tourism within China, allowing for efficient, relatively inexpensive travel.

Tourists to Yunnan often begin their trip in Kunming due to the Kunming ChangShui International Airport, and the Kunming Railway Station. The most popular travel destinations in Yunnan are situated along the railway; this is expected as 85% of long distance domestic travel in China occurs on railways (Mak 2003). The core of a trip across Yunnan is to take the railways North-West, stopping along Dali, Lijiang and Shangri-La. There are many offshoots from this path, such as Xizhou and Shaxi, that tourists often visit. However, the concentration of tourists can be found in Dali and Lijiang. My first visit to Lijiang was during the off-season, and I was surprised to find despite the season the roads of Lijiang old town would fill at night to a point at which navigating the crowd was an effort. Dali experiences slightly milder crowds, and Shangri-La even less. However, any of these commercial tourism zones experience more tourism than, for example, Shaxi, located a bus ride from Lijiang or Dali.

Railroads determine the flow of tourists, with buses following as a close second. Areas that require private vehicles or backpacking are less frequented by tourists. Recent attempts to connect China to its neighbors through railways have met with difficulties. The Ruili railroad for example was forecasted to connect China to Myanmar, before Burmese citizen protests brought the project to a halt (Xinhua News 2011). Similarly, a railway reaching from Kunming to Bangkok is underway with an estimated completion date of 2019 (Eimer 2014). The path of this

railway through the less frequented south of Yunnan, as well as the paths of any future railway, will continue to reshape the geography of tourism in Yunnan. Communities along new railways will find they are now conveniently accessible to tourists.

Politics and Tourism

Relative political stability has encouraged an increase in domestic recreational travel throughout China. The Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution occurred between 1966 and 1976 under Chairman Mao Zedong. Mao's revolution encouraged a violent class struggle between the peasants and the bourgeois, resulting in imprisonment, torture and murder. Forced migration of urbanites to rural areas for re-education was another central feature of the movement. Andrew G. Walder and Yang Su placed the death toll between 750,000 and 1.5 million in their analysis of county annuals and rural impacts of the Revolution. Walder and Yang estimate a total of 36 million individuals faced some form of political persecution during the revolution. This figure does not include those who died and suffered during the famine of the Great Leap Forward (2003). The effect of the Cultural Revolution lingers in Chinese society, including the tourism industry. Domestic travel has become increasingly accessible to Chinese citizens. Throughout the period I traveled I found most of the independent travelers I met were young people. The college students and young professionals I met in hostels across Yunnan had never experienced political turmoil on the scale their parents likely did. Klingberg writes about a woman he interviewed and the generational gap between her and her mother regarding travel.

“She said she never felt concerned for her safety and she seemed almost nonchalant about traveling Sichuan's long, rough roads. She knew her mother probably wouldn't have felt the same way, and despite regular evening phone calls Yinghua never told her exactly where she was. While one generation traveled China's borderlands the other remained at home unaware.” (2014:172)

A more recent political trauma that has had lasting effects on the tourism industry is the

Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989. Student led demonstrations began in Beijing but spread to over 400 other cities. Protesters called for democracy, freedom of the press, freedom of speech and government transparency. Deng Xiaoping was paramount leader at the time, and declared martial law on the protestors. The exact death toll is uncertain, with estimates ranging between hundreds and thousands. This event was widely covered in international news and is associated closely with a sharp drop in foreign tourism to China. As domestic tourism continued to gain momentum throughout the 1980s and 1990s, foreign tourists decreased in response to Tiananmen (Ap & Suosheng 2003).

While domestic tourism's rapid expansion is associated with China's transition to a market economy under Deng Xiaoping, the tourism industry was also heavily directed and fostered by the CCP, not solely by market interest. This was made evident through various state efforts, such as the "Golden Weeks" which serve as two week-long vacation periods during which Chinese are encouraged to travel. The Golden Weeks surround the Lunar New Year and National Day (Wu et al. 2012). The Chinese National Tourism Administration and Provincial Tourism Bureaus serve as the distributors of tourism advertising and initiatives such as the CNTA's marking 1996 as the "Year of Leisure and Vacation" (Ap & Suosheng 2003, Honggen 2012). in efforts to boost the country's economy. Deng Xiaoping brought attention to tourism during his 1992 Southern tour. He famously climbed Huangshan mountain, underlining tourism as a fertile venue for economic development and national pride. This underscored state investment in mass tourism facilities, such as the establishment of parks, monuments, lodging, and transportation. The result was a mostly state controlled form of "package tourism" that became popular in the 1980s and 1990s (Klingberg 2014). The stereotypical Chinese tour group, complete with flag wielding guide and matching T-shirts, is a result of this tourism revival

initiative. A focus of this state supported tourism was a focus on “scenic spots.” This practice of viewing scenic spots feeds on a long tradition of scholarly travel during dynastic times (Nyiri 2011). While this form of tourism allowed tourists to visit important locations, as China continued to open and mobility became less restricted, individuals began to be able to make their own travel choices outside the state framework.

Klingberg argues the recent upsurge in independent travelers marks a turning point for the industry, in which geopolitical knowledge is no longer the sole property of the state, but the shared experience of the people. This ability to choose individually where to go and what to see opens the possibility for Chinese citizens to form independent perceptions of their nation based on their actual lived experience in these travel destinations (2014). While traveling in China, I met Chinese who were young parents, traveling at their own pace with a small child, college students on break, and an artist learning a new trade while staying in hostels. This wide variety of travelers can move through destinations, as independent travelers, in ways traditional tour groups may not have been able to accommodate. The rise of independent tourism is allowing Chinese an alternative experience to the mass tourism experience propagated by the state, allowing for a greater diversity in experiences, and complicating the discussion of Chinese tourism.

Representation

Media representations are crucial to the formation of travel in China. Beth E. Notar discusses the transformation that brought Dali from being backwater of Yunnan, to becoming one of the province’s most frequented destinations. Notar argues this dramatic increase can be attributed to three main media representations that spurred both domestic and international travelers to seek it out. The first is *The Lonely Planet Guidebook of China* (1984), in which Dali

is praised for the “off the beaten path” atmosphere that the guidebook effectively changed as it encouraged multitudes of foreigners to visit the area. The second, a 1959 Chinese movie *Five Golden Flowers* (*Wuduo Jinhua*), in which Dali is depicted as a socialist utopia. Finally, the third media representation is Jin Yong’s “Heavenly Dragons” (*Tianlong Babu*), a martial arts novel (2006). Notar identifies these three media representations as crucial in forming a public concept of what Dali is, and depicting Dali as an attractive travel destination. Media representations influence whether a place is seen as desirable. My intermediate Chinese textbook, *Integrated Chinese*, featured Yunnan as a travel destination in its language texts (Liangyan et al, 2010). Lijiang was depicted as a quiet village with rich cultural and historical roots. The text took time to detail the winding rivers that cut through the village, and the ancient history implied by its architecture. This image is different from the bustling Old Town I later visited, with its numerous shopfronts and staged photo opportunities. Media representations of locations are varied in both accuracy and form. However, it is undeniable they impact the accessibility of the tourism industry in Yunnan.

Tourism as Poverty Alleviation

Employment and revenue is larger in tourism than any other industry, Karen Nichols states for every 15 workers worldwide, one is involved in catering to tourists in some form (2001). The provincial government of Yunnan invested 3.1 billion RMB in expanding tourism infrastructure in 1998. While the projects were aimed to improve tourism, they inadvertently benefited locals as well through improving public infrastructure such as highways. The spike in enterprises and corporations centering on tourism also provided many jobs to fill in the gap left by the collapse of the tobacco industry (Mueggler 2002; Chow 2005). Throughout the tourism efforts of the 1980’s and 90’s foreign exchange income from tourism in Yunnan increased from \$1.75 million

to \$16.43 million (Mueggler 2002). Provincial tourism bureaus and the Chinese National Tourism Administration, made efforts to support the growing industry in Yunnan throughout this period (Ap & Suosheng 2003). Propaganda centering around the minority nationalities found in Yunnan province played a central role in attracting travelers. The growth of the tourism sector in Yunnan has been interpreted by many as a means of lifting one of China's poorest provinces from poverty, however, the complications of tourism in this area have been written on extensively and deserve due attention in the landscape of this thesis.

Ethnic Minorities and the Han Majority

To understand the ways in which Han Chinese and Chinese ethnic minorities are interacting in commercial tourism zones it is important to analyze the movement of Han Chinese into Yunnan in a historical context. Dru Gladney said of China's representation of ethnic minorities: "One cannot be exposed to China without being confronted by its 'colorful' minorities. They sing, they dance, they twirl, they whirl. Most of all, they smile, showing their happiness to be part of the motherland" (1994: 95). The "happiness to be a part of the motherland" is key. While ethnic minorities may feel varying degrees of national pride, to express anything but gratitude for the Han majority, or the CCP, can be seen as a threat to split the unity of China, and is potentially criminal (Yeh 2014). Historical traumas and contemporary injustices are left unacknowledged in the name of a "unified" China. It is relevant to tourism in Yunnan to examine ethnic relationships in China, especially when many tourists and locals cite "ethnic culture" as a central expectation when visiting Yunnan.

Classification

Yunnan's ethnic minorities were cited repeatedly in my interviews, as well as throughout the existing literature as one of the strongest motivators for visitors to Yunnan. In the 1913 monograph "Marxism and the National Question" Stalin defined a nation as a "historically formed stable community of people arising on the basis of common language, common territory, common economic life, and a typical cast of mind manifested in a common culture" (Kaup 2002). This led to naming ethnic minorities in China as separate "*nationalities*," or "*minzu*" in Mandarin. These groups are often referred to as "*shao shu minzu*" meaning literally

“nationalities of small numbers.” Often, the history of how these groups came to be defined focuses on the ways in which minorities were defined, but leaves the Han majority unexamined. This is especially strange, when as Mitchell and Yuan argue, the Han majority does not meet Stalin’s requirements set to classify it as a singular ethnic group (2002).

Gladney marks the birth of the Han majority as stemming from Sun Yat Sen’s skillful summoning of Han nationalism to overthrow the ethnically Manchu Qing rulers. Sun argued there were five ethnic groups in China: Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, Muslim (Hui) and Han (Hershatter et al 1996; Gladney 1994). Gladney argues Sun exaggerated and emphasized ethnic differences to unite the North and South against a common enemy,

As one who spoke Mandarin with a Cantonese accent, and lacking the strong connections to northern China, he would have easily aroused the traditional northern suspicions of southern radical movements extending back to the Southern Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.). Sun found a way to rise above these deeply embedded north-south ethnocentrism. The use and perhaps invention of the term Han Minzu was a brilliant attempt to mobilize other non-Cantonese, especially northern Mandarin speakers, and the powerful Zhejiang and Shanghaiese merchants, into one overarching national group pitted against the Manchu and other foreigners threatening China during the unstable period following the Unequal Treaties. (1994: 99)

Gladney connects this creation of Han Chinese nationalism to Julian Huxley and A.C. Haddon’s definition of a nation, “as a society united by a common error as to its origin and a common aversion to its neighbors.” Gladney remarks that he finds it surprising the “Han” as a singular ethnic group constituting 91.96% of the population has not been more seriously questioned (1994). If the Han majority were to apply for representation as a distinct ethnic group under the same Stalinist requirements set for minorities, it would not qualify.

The early PRC’s classification efforts lead to a drastic oversimplification of diversity, especially for those in borderland areas. The bulk of classification began in 1953 and increased in 1956. Despite these efforts, many groups are still seeking representation that has not been

officially granted, while others feel they have been classified into a larger ethnic group that does not represent their specific community (Kaup 2002; Coggins and Yeh 2014). Coggins and Yeh summarize the effect in describing the 55 ethnic minorities identified as “...a constellation of subaltern peoples whose destinies revolve around the executive nation-within-the-nation- the approximately 92% of the population that constitutes the Han majority” (Coggins and Yeh 2014: 11). This figure is significant, because while ethnic minorities are numerous in China, with Yunnan claiming a greater diversity than any other province, they exist within a nation that is predominantly Han controlled and occupied.

Yuan and Mitchell argue that while discredited in the west, the lasting effects of theories of social evolution in both politics and academia are only now beginning to be reexamined in China, thus enabling “...the Han majority to see itself as more advanced in the chain of human societal evolution” (2002: 142). Erik Mueggler speaks specifically to the Maoist state’s address of ethnic minorities as peoples “frozen” in primitive society, their inability to ascend to the level of the civilized socialist making them both pitiable and threatening. These minorities could progress from the primitive stage, onto the slave, feudal and capitalist stages, ending finally at the socialist stage (Mueggler, 2002). While no longer officially regarded as “scientific,” the Morganian undertones remain visible in Chinese society. Pál Nyíri has discussed this in the CCP’s approach to “development,” in which it encourages both migrants and tourists to populate western China on “developmental” grounds. He states both economic and civilizational development have been the main justifications for the relaxation of domestic migration regulation, as well as ongoing state sponsorship of tourism industries in peripheral China. Nyíri highlights political jargon describing the advanced technology and methods China has obtained from the west, and the ability of the country to now use this advanced experience to educate the

less fortunate (Nyíri 2006).

Emily Yeh makes a similar case for Han influence in Tibet. Han Chinese are encouraged to visit, or migrate to Tibet, where they are able to benefit from central government funds that Yeh refers to as the “apparatus” of state development. The presumption of “educational” benefits to locals by Han presence serves as an underlying justification. Nyiri and Yeh’s work both demonstrate “development” is complicated by civilizational tones. This is especially problematic when, as in Tibet, minorities are viewed as ungrateful for government funds that are made most accessible to Han migrants, whose educational presence they also do not adequately appreciate in the eyes of mainstream China (Yeh 2014; Nyíri 2006). The power of the minority classification is not only a surface separation of groups based on shared context, but an opening to attach to these groups concepts of social evolution. The following is a quote from Gan XueChun’s article “The Yi people of Yunnan,” published in 2000 by Yunnan People’s Publishing house,

The Yi have been regarded as a living example of the history of social development because of the simultaneous existence of different social development stages among the different branches before the 1950’s. For example, some Yi people in Xiaoliang Mountain were still under the slave system while some groups in Gejiu and Northeast Yunnan had entered the embryonic stage of a capitalist-commune system. This diversity dazzles people and has a strong appeal to thousands of researchers both in China and abroad. (2000, 77)

Gan’s address of social evolution is relevant to a broader Chinese understanding of the concept. Gan goes through the exercise of situating the theory in the past, but then connects it vaguely to the present; at no point is it directly debunked.

Han in Minority Spaces

Mobility and migration are crucial when examining the long history in Yunnan of Han Chinese entering ethnic minority spaces. David Atwill underlines a defining event in Yunnan’s ethnic history, the Panthay Rebellion, which occurred between 1856 and 1873. Atwill takes a

Hui-centric stance in his examination of the Panthay Rebellion, first discrediting the primary assumption of Chinese and western academic writing that the rebellion was the simple result of Hui hatred for Han Chinese, and the rebellion's origins were essentially religious. Atwill argues this simplification of the rebellion paints Hui as unfairly aggressive and fanatic, while omitting the multiethnic nature of the rebellion and the actions that manifested it (2003).

The late eighteenth century was a period of radical change for Yunnan, as a growing population of Han Chinese from the interior began to move out to the borderlands at the behest of government incentives. The province's population rose from four million in 1775 to ten million by 1850. Previously the demographic of Yunnan was a mix of ethnic minorities, including a large Hui population, and a small population of Han. The newly arrived Han Chinese began illegally occupying non-Han land, appropriating productive mines, and enforcing the Qing's economic and political borders in efforts to tie the area closer to the Qing. These actions stressed familial, and trading relationships with the rest of South East Asia and Tibet. The early nineteenth century marked a period of conflict between the Han and the Hui, the predominantly Manchu Qing dynasty rulers sided with the Han (Atwill 2003).

Officials of the Qing administration massacred Kunming's Hui population in May of 1816. A combination of local militia, imperial officials, and Han residents murdered between four and seven thousand Hui. Mosques were burnt, and official orders were given to "exterminate" the Hui people of Yunnan. The Kunming massacre was one of several, including Chuxiong and Heqing. In response, predominantly Hui led, multiethnic (including longtime Han residents), forces claimed Dali and founded the independent Kingdom of Pingnan. The image of the Hui as hostile instigators of the rebellion resulted in a series of laws under the Qing in which Hui received harsher punishment for crimes than Han, due to their "fierce" natures. For eighteen

years Du Wenxui's Pingnan kingdom existed separately from the Qing, only to be overthrown in 1872. Du consumed poison and turned himself over to the waiting Qing army in hopes of lessening bloodshed. However, despite Du's sacrifice, reincorporation with the Qing began with the massacre of what government officials themselves declared to be roughly ten thousand lives (Atwill 2003).

Hu Jintao, president of the People's Republic of China between 2003 and 2013, began directing government policy with a "people first" agenda, in search of a "harmonious society." This 2005 policy transformation marked a shift from previous thinking, which had been largely directed at ensuring economic growth. This new direction in policy built on previous ideals of multi-ethnic unity in China, and bridging the urban-rural financial and cultural divide (Yeh 2014). However, despite this transition in official policy, and the promotion of "people first development," the historical traumas between various ethnic minority groups and the Han majority remain largely unacknowledged. The Panthay rebellion has been portrayed as a purely Hui instigated, religiously motivated event, seeded by irrational hatred of the Han (Atwill 2003). Recent policy movement towards a China of unified diversity is presented without any discussion of conflict, past or present, that does not position the Han majority as either a noble victim or savior.

The most official and visible demonstration of state endorsed Han occupation is the CCP's "Campaign to Open up the West" or alternatively "The Great Western Development Program," depending on translation from the original "*Xibu da kaifa*." David Goodman states that the campaign began in 1999 and marked a shift from the Eastern seaboard centric development plans (2004). Goodman argues that in many ways the campaign is neocolonialist. He notes one of the most apparent commonalities is a feeling amongst locals in targeted areas,

that the development campaign reaps greater benefits for the rest of China, than it does for the western areas targeted (Goodman 2004). Nyíri underlines the presence of Morganian thought in the Campaign to Open up the West, through repeated references to the campaign's ability to improve the population quality in ethnic autonomous areas. However, while state planning and funding has a broad effect on Han-minority interactions, Louisa Schein warns against placing all responsibility on the state. Schein argues while the state has considerable influence over the manufacturing of minority representations, it is only one producer of representation. Schein marks dominant Han intelligentsia, the minority elite, and local cultural practitioners as the other main influencers (Schein, 1997).

Creation of the "Other"

The process of "othering" groups now classified as ethnic minorities dates to the perception of them as barbarians during the Tang and Song dynasties (Li 2014; Atwill 2003). Schein refers to the contemporary "othering" of ethnic minorities in China as "internal orientalism." She highlights the feminization of ethnic minority representations as one of the ways in which this process occurs (1997). Women in traditional clothing are often used to represent ethnic minorities in the media. Images of minority women are often sexualized in their representations in ways Han Chinese women are not (Gladney 1994; Schein 1997). Ben Hillman and Lee-Anne Henfry contribute to and complicate this conclusion through their argument that while certain minorities are feminized, others such as Mongols and Tibetans, are masculinized. Henfry and Hillman conclude both feminization and hypermasculinization of these groups reinforce a subliminal assumption of Han superiority that is pervasive throughout Han-minority interactions. By placing minorities at the peripheries of gender, Han identity can be represented as the moderate ideal (Henfry and Hillman 2006; Schein 1997). While gendered representations

of ethnic minorities are a symptom of Han-minority relations in China, it is important to recognize that there are also more blatant and life threatening demonstrations of this relationship.

Yeh provides the example of a conference in which Han environmentalists had proposed an environmental protection plan that combined green activism with a revival of traditional culture. Yeh describes the inability of the Han environmentalists to understand the risks posed by such a plan in the eyes of the Tibetans, to whom the central government represented a threat the Hans had never encountered, and seemingly, could not comprehend (Yeh 2014). Yeh depicts this schism between Tibetan and Han Chinese through the example of the 2008 protests in Lhasa during the Olympics.

“Despite the fact that the vast majority of the protests were peaceful, official media focused on violent unrest in Lhasa, whipping up Han nationalism against Tibetans, to the detriment of actual interethnic relations.” (Yeh 2014: 201)

Yeh narrows the central government's reactions to the protest into two categories, continued “gifting” of development, and violent defense. The defense aspect of this reaction included fatal police shootings of unarmed demonstrators and mobility restrictions across Tibet. The second referred to attempts to develop Tibet, an unrequested “education” for which the media reeled at the Tibetans lack of gratitude. This outrage is closely linked to the common description of China as a family, in which “elder brother Han” must guide his younger minority siblings on the path to development. Any perceived assault to this image of the harmonious Chinese family is an attack on Chinese nationalism. This has created an environment in which ethnic tensions are not discussed or negotiated, as acknowledging their existence could be perceived as criminal. This sentiment is mirrored by Mueggler in his assertion that post-Mao China no longer excludes minority peoples from the nation, but instead welcomes them as “limited participants,” serving to demonstrate the generosity and diversity of China (Mueggler 2002).



Figure 3 Various ethnic groups painted on a wall in Xizhou, the caption: "(Like) a family, (ethnic) people are a (united) knot"

Official attitudes towards Yunnan's ethnic minorities have undergone, at least on the surface, a radical transformation. Throughout the Cultural Revolution ethnic minorities were often criticized, and punished, for their "traditional" practices (Chao 1996, Lu & Mitchell 2002). This demonization of ethnic culture during the Cultural Revolution, contrasts starkly to the tourism revival efforts of the 1980's, which pose ethnic culture as an important commodity in the modernization and development of western China (Litzinger 1998). Ashild Kolas speaks to this transition specifically in Shangri-La, arguing that the portrayal of a Tibetan autonomous county as the paradise of James Hilton's Lost Horizon marks a huge shift in representations of "Tibetan-ness" endorsed by the government (2004). Ethnic minorities additionally receive certain benefits under the CCP, such as extra points on the college entrance exam, and exemption from certain policies, such as the recently loosened "One Child Policy."

Redefinition of Ethnic Identity

Chao and Mueggler place this transformation of Chinese ethnic minorities from deplorable to commodifiable in the context of greater national trends. The re-creation of this more people-oriented China, and movement away from the functionalist methodologies of the 1950s, involved repatriation of many facets of society the Maoist era attempted to weed out (Chao 1996; Yeh 2014; Mueggler 2002). Nimrod Baranovitch argues that this trend ties into a larger global trend during the 1990s, in which ethnicity turned into an “exotic cultural commodity” (2003). Historical landmarks, imperial antiques, Confucian obedience, religious systems, as well as ethnic differences, are the variables Chao mentions as cultural rediscoveries specific to China (1996). However, repatriation of ethnic identity, involved a redefinition of those identities to optimize their potential as developers of the harmonious society and economic growth. While Hu Jintao’s harmonious society is relevant to this redefinition, it is also important to remember this ethnic repatriation began under Deng Xiaoping’s policies, in the context of transitioning to a market economy. Ethnic identities have been reshaped and commodified both through the lenses of creating a unified China, as well as through the earlier development model of the Deng Xiaoping era. In both examples tourism serves not as a result, but as a tool towards either economic or social objectives.

This redefinition of ethnic identity occurs on cultural, historical, geographic and economic levels. On the cultural level, ethnic identity is transformed to meet state goals through the commodification of culture. Mueggler describes the Yi ethnic group’s identity through commodifiable cultural items. He provides the example of a community dancing with the widow following a funeral. The purpose is to cement her in the community, to strengthen bonds and foster meaningful social support within the group. In this way the nature of the dance is entirely

changed as soon as it becomes performative for outsiders (2002). Chao argues local agency and state hegemony are inseparable in the creation of commodifiable cultural identity. Chao was encouraged to conduct her research of women and ritual in Naxi culture not amongst locals, but at the Dongba Cultural Research Institute, in Lijiang. These male scholars, she was told, could inform her better than countryside Naxi people who “lacked culture.” Chao describes the sterilization of religious texts at the institute, culminating in a representation of Dongba as a scholarly pursuit as opposed to a shamanistic religion. Commodification of cultural identity can be both a process of reshaping existing culture, and of culture creation, both results result in an erasure of local identity in favor of a more a representation that is more “convenient” for state objectives (Blum 1997, Chao 1996, Vasantkumar 2014).

Redefinition of historical events, such as portraying the Panthay rebellion as solely Hui instigated serves a similar role. In addition to changing historical narratives, rendering of a group as ahistorical remains an important action of redefining ethnic identity (Vasantkumar 2014). Tim Oakes describes the context that the attraction to ethnically Tunpu “themed” locations is due to their descent from Ming garrison soldiers. However, while rendering the Tunpu ahistorical, this image, like many produced by tourism, does not portray historical fact, but a modern commodification of reconfigured history. While technically classified as Tunpu, many Tunpu do not consider themselves Tunpu. Many are the descendants of later waves of merchant and farmer migrants (2012). Oakes describes this display of Tunpu heritage as a “process of contested governance,” in which cultural display serves to build “suzhi” and preserve culture among backwards populations (2012). Daoist Yao priests responded to a similar action of redefinition, the naming of a bridge after a traditional bridge building ceremony, by stating that it was an inappropriate usage of their cultural past. Rather than including their heritage in the national

image, it “emptied meaning out of the past” (Litzinger 1998) Baranovitch provides a example of this “emptying” of the past in his study of Uigher music in Beijing. He describes the naming of a mummified Uigher ancestor, Luolan Girl, after a song that eroticizes Uigher women, and is generally looked down upon by the Uigher population. Baranovitch concludes that through not only the application of a Mandarin name, but with one that “miniaturizes” Uighers through its narrow conceptions of their quaint culture and beautiful women, a “potent icon of a primordial and mythic ancestor” is turned into “a trivialized mundane object of male desire” (2003).

Geographic redefinition of ethnic identity occurs in two ways. The first is the actual physical change enacted upon a landscape, the second is the naming of said landscape. In their examination of Shangri-La Yeh and Coggins describe landscape as not only a physical construct, a but structure on which societal meanings are applied:

“For the purpose at hand, it should be kept in mind that while landscapes appear to be solid, natural, and in a sense incontrovertibly “real,” they are also both the products of visible and invisible sociocultural contexts and the media through which form and meaning are continually instantiated” (2014, 22).

Li Hua Ying mirrors their description and connects it specifically to ethnic identity:

“Landscape, therefore, is not just a physical space; it is a complex entity, codified and inscribed with meanings. As a cultural and political production, landscape is used to tell stories, teach historical lessons, set the terms for a literary form, and most importantly, define self-identity and ethnic national identity.” (2014: 50)

Li’s emphasis on landscapes’ role on self-identity is crucial to the discussion of the reshaping geographic identity, a process for which tourism is a vital tool. Mueggler describes the renaming of Tibetan language locations, such as Shangri-La, and the renaming of the sacred mountain Kawagebo to the Mandarin “meili xue shan.” Similar to the process of cultural sanitization of Naxi ritual texts, the renaming of these locations serves as a sort of geographic sanitization. A sacred mountain becomes simply “beautiful snow mountain” as it is pitched to tourists in airplane brochures and travel websites (Mueggler 2002; Hillman and Henfry 2006). The Tibetan

context is effectively removed to make room for tourists, who are traveling not to see the Tibetan god Kawagebo, but the beautiful snowcapped mountain they saw online. The renaming of the mountain serves to validate one perspective, while subtly erasing the other. The second realm of geographic reshaping is physical. Yeh and Coggins describe the physical changes a Yubeng leader informed them of. He mentioned the increasingly unpredictable nature of the mountains brought by deforestation and road building, areas of focus for the Open Up the West Campaign. Similarly, Yeh has described what locals call “image engineering,” or the focus of development efforts, such as the creation of “modern” (Han) style housing exclusively in visible high population areas. These efforts do not go to needier rural locations, but to areas where the “gift” of the central government will be most visible. These examples illustrate how not only the names, but the physical structure of minority spaces can be redefined to fit state agendas.

The final category of ethnic identity redefinition I will analyze is economic. Mueggler’s argument of ethnic minorities in China as limited participants whose commodified cultural resources become their economic mainstay. While tourism began to spike with the state efforts of the 1980s and 1990s, Mueggler argues that it was the collapse of the tobacco industry in 1998 that coupled with these efforts to create the tourism industry on the scale it exists in Yunnan at present. Tobacco previously accounted for 70% of the province’s tax revenues, the collapse opened a void into which the commercialization of ethnic cultures rapidly dove. This transition led to the centering of many livelihoods on the maintenance of “ethnic brand names” (2002). Mueggler makes the argument that these forms of commodification disempower ethnic minority people. However, while Schein is critical of the damage created by commodification, she argues requiring payment changes this context to an extent. She views the required economic compensation for the performance of ethnic culture as an attempt to counter “colonialist cultural

plundering” by replacing it with a transaction in which minorities are able to charge, and therein benefit, from services rendered.

Relations between China’s ethnic minorities and the Han majority have been fraught with conflicts, culminating in the disparity in agency and influence that exists today. From the portrayal of Han Chinese as noble victims in the Panthay rebellion, to punishing Tibetan environmentalists for splitting the nation to the civilizational undertones of the Campaign to Open up the West, it is evident these conflicts are not solely historical but continue into the present. Yeh’s depiction of “image engineering,” Oakes “contested governance,” Baranovich’s “miniaturization,” and Litzinger’s “emptying meaning out of the past,” are unified in that they are all concepts used to depict the ways in which the center expends its influence over the periphery. Baranovitch describes the formation of ethnic identity as a “process of negotiation” between central authority figures and minority communities themselves. This power inequality is essential to understanding the context in which Han migrants are becoming the primary residents in Yunnan’s commercial tourism zones. This is especially relevant, when these communities are often “ethnically-themed,” in accordance with predominantly Han tourists’ expectation of “the exotic.” Tourism can bring many benefits, and yet it is often a vehicle for redefinition of ethnic identity to conform to the economic or social ideals set by the state, either through Deng Xiaoping’s push for commoditization of culture, or Hun Jintao’s efforts to create the “harmonious society.”

The Anthropology of Tourism

The anthropology of tourism analyzes the complex human interactions that occur across the divide of “hosts” and “guests,” and what implications these interactions carry for the larger study of human behavior. Postmodernist critiques have emphasized a concentration on detailing specific locations as opposed to pursuing broad truths about tourism. Despite this movement away from generalization, concepts such as the “tourist gaze,” the “existential traveler,” “authenticity” and “staged authenticity” lay an important foundation for any specific inquiry into tourism.

What is Tourism?

Gerrit Verhoeven describes tourists as people who “venture to unfamiliar countries or areas. Timing is also crucial, as tourism is bound to a relatively short duration.” (2013: 266). Verhoeven attributes early tourism to the development of convenient, comfortable and affordable transportation, such as tugboats and barges during the 17th century. He goes on to describe a similar expansion of tourism following the steamboats and trains of the 19th century. While Verhoeven focused on early Europe, generalizations as to the nature of tourism, and the study of tourism can be drawn from his portrayals. Tourism increases with innovations in transportation such as air travel, barges and railways. With more modes of travel available, tourists venture to unfamiliar locations for limited periods of time as the beneficiaries of these new developments. In these locations, they have diverse and complex interactions with the host populations.

Adrian Franklin comes to define tourism as a process of ordering, specifically regarding nationalism. Franklin takes a historical approach to describing tourism, starting, as Verhoeven did, with early European travelers. He describes the educational tours of the young and wealthy

to better their diplomatic capabilities, and the development of “The Grand Tour” as a marker of class.

“Only those whose trade involved travel itself were likely to be familiar with routes, but again, this was a spatial stretching of the everyday and involved no attempts to mantle travel with a touristic aesthetic. Place and the objects of place and travel did not interpellate them as travellers. This came with nationalism” (2004: 289).

Knowledge of geography was limited to those who traveled to trade and to elites who traveled to forge image and connections. Franklin describes later developments such as cycling travel in Sweden, and train travel in the U.S. and Britain. These developments opened travel, and therein tied tourists’ bodily experiences in different locations into larger concepts of identity and nationalism. Franklin describes this process as “ordering,” or “place-making.”

Bosangit et al. argue that the tourist industry is selling “experiences,” and everything occurring during tourism is an “experience.” Through analysis of travel bloggers, they argue that travel memoirs depict not only the location itself, but also the traveler: “Travel writing strives to understand the self as much as the foreign” (2015: 4). Tourists view destinations and locals through their personal lens of cultural assumptions. However, it is worth noting developments in social media and the Internet have changed the ways tourism is executed and understood. Anja Dinhopf, Ulrike Gretzel situate the “selfie” in the existing conversation of touristic looking. “The tourist gaze,” is an essential concept in the anthropology of tourism. Created by John Urry, in his discussion of tourism’s impact on locals, “the tourist gaze” depicts the influence of tourists’ presence on local communities. Touristic looking is described as not simply a means of consuming local productions, but a powerful agent in the transformation of local communities to suit tourists’ expectations (1990). Dinhopf and Gretzel place the “selfie” as a variation of the tourist gaze. Through the lens of appropriation and consumption, tourists capture their destinations through photography as a means of “owning” that location as their experience

(2016). Through taking a selfie with an attraction in the background, tourists are integrating their specific experience of place within the context of their broader identity. Through social media this process of identity construction is made both personal (capturing photos for memories), and public (sharing them with friends and family).

Independent travelers, in China specifically, have access to a wide range of networks from which to gather information about lodging, destinations, and restaurants; as well as a convenient means of broadcasting their journey to their social circles. This became uniquely evident to me, due to my lack of these resources. While I had some access to Chinese social media, I was notably less adept than my Chinese counterparts. I went to lunch with a young Chinese professional staying in the same hostel as me in Shangri-La. She wanted to have buttermilk tea and not only found a restaurant with good reviews, and directions to that restaurant, but then paid the shop owner through her phone, which seemed a typical means of exchanging currency. Social media is changing the superficial means through which tourists construct their personal identity in relation to their travels. However, studies of social media remain in line with concepts of “the tourist gaze,” as selfies and location reviews define not only the travelers themselves but also the areas they travel to. While the anthropology of tourism and tourism as a practice have not been fundamentally changed by the rise of Internet resources and social media, it continues to adapt to address these changes. From tugboats and barges in the 17th century, to selfies and social media today, the anthropology of tourism analyzes the motivations, impacts and expression of tourism.

Authenticity

The concept of authenticity is central to the anthropological discussion of tourism. Dean MacCannell addressed “staged authenticity” in 1973. MacCannell described travel as modern

religious pilgrimage, in that it serves a function of “ritual respect for society,” for travelers seeking the authenticity they found lacking in modern life. MacCannell, inspired by Goffman’s depiction of “front and back” areas to everyday life, argued there are six main stages of authenticity (Goffman 1959). The stages descend as decorations are added, simulations are rendered more convincing, access is restricted, and eventually the final stage is reached, Goffman’s authentic “back stage” in which locals live their daily lives unedited for outsiders. The concept of authenticity has a pervasive effect throughout tourism advertising and practice. The concept of “untouched paradise” arises. Antoni Serra Cantallops and Jose Ramon Cardona discuss the image of a “lost paradise” in tourism advertising. Concepts of hospitality and simplicity are mingled with the trope of the noble savage, to create an “authentic” environment, with all the trappings “modern” existence is perceived to have “lost” (2015:172). Colleen Ballerino Cohen describes the portrayal of local heritage and tradition as “pure,” while outsiders are viewed as “impure.” Local heritage and culture are depicted as needing to be “safeguarded” from outside influence (1995).

The main dilemma in the discussion of authenticity, is the expectation that locals remain a stagnant contrast to the developed world to be considered “authentic.” Noel B. Salazar critiques studies of tourism that rely on an “exclusionary vision of cultures and localities, this model does not fully address the complex interactions between people and with globalized environments” (2005: 631). Salazar provides the example of tour guides in Indonesia who purposefully do not disclose they have traveled to Europe, or speak European languages aside from English, for fear of damaging their appeal to foreign tourists. This example serves as the dark side to the concept of “authenticity,” in that to be perceived as “authentic” these guides must perpetuate concepts of Western superiority by appearing less worldly than their guests. Edward Bruner opens his book

Culture on Tour with the story of how he was fired as an anthropologist tour guide, describing the conflict between himself and his boss through the changes in anthropological discourse on tourism,

“Lisa wanted an anthropologist who was a 1930’s realist ethnographer, not one who was beginning a journey to postmodernism, not one who, from her point of view, was ruining her tour by deconstructing one tourist attraction after another. I saw Lisa, and tourism generally, as chasing anthropology’s discarded discourse, presenting cultures as functionally integrated homogenous entities outside of time, space, and history.” (Bruner 2005: 4)

Bruner goes on to claim that “performance is constitutive,” it is not just pristine cultural traditions that deserve anthropological analysis, but all cultural productions. Cultural productions constructed for tourists are still authentic cultural productions.

If, as Bruner claims, all cultural productions are authentic, what is the purpose of the term? Muchazondida Mkono argues in favor of the concept of authenticity, not for its intrinsic value, but for its pervasiveness. Mkono states authenticity is too deeply entrenched in the ways tourists perceive their experiences to be dismissed in academia. While I agree, authenticity is too central in tourism to be dismissed, acknowledging “authentic” and “inauthentic” as a false dichotomy is essential to understanding tourism locations as dynamic communities, susceptible to both beneficial and detrimental change. The quest for authenticity described by MacCannell necessitates the recreation of colonialist constructions of the noble savage in non-western destinations, whereas tourist locations such as London or New York can be “authentically” modern as their advanced technology is not seen as oppositional to their “true nature” (Salazar 2015). Erik Cohen contends if a musician may adapt to the needs of their audience, but if the work they produce is their own, their “authenticity” remains unquestioned. Cohen draws a clear parallel by pointing out while popular music is deeply commercialized, it is not deemed meaningless. He furthers his point by describing the three audiences of Balinese ritual

performances: divine, local and tourist. The last audience does not lessen the ritual for the first two (1988).

While “authenticity” places a complex set of expectations on locals, it also carries over to the travelers themselves. Boorstin paints two major characters in his depiction of tourism (2012 (1962 reprint)). The existential traveler, and the passive tourist. While the existential traveler is inspired by intellectual angst rooted in the inauthenticity of modern life, the tourist simply seeks pleasure. The existential traveler seeks the hidden “backstage,” while the tourist is content to consume the productions of tourism. MacCannell deepened “the quest for authenticity” as the main motivator for travel, but rejected Boorstin’s division between existential travelers and tourists as indicative of upper-class elitism (1973). Robert J. Shepard critiques the concept of the “existential” traveler in a similar manner, describing a class of “transnational elites” who consider themselves to live in a modern world that has somehow “lost culture.” He states: “Travelers are simply tourists who insist on not being called tourists, existential or otherwise” (2015: 69).

Avoiding Binaries: postmodernism, reflexivity and the mutual gaze

Yang et al. critique MacCannell’s “quest for authenticity” as a western preoccupation, arguing that Chinese tourists specifically, seek “difference” not authenticity (2016). Shepard proposes while authenticity is not meaningless in tourism, its applicability to non-western tourists’ motivations must be assessed, especially when viewed through different cultural, historical and philosophical contexts. Erik McGuckin suggests a postmodern approach to tourism studies. He concludes, “Tourism is always intertwined with political interests and discourse, and the opportunities and brutalities that tourism provides are structured along interpenetrating axes of ‘difference,’ of age, gender, ethnicity and nation” (2005: 73). McGuckin argues no “truth” or

“grand conclusions” can be drawn about tourism itself, it is a diverse practice that occurs in various contexts of difference and privilege. To resist static conceptions of culture and identity, and to be vigilant of exploitation, it is necessary to approach specific tourism practices as they occur within a location from a postmodernist perspective. Muchazondida Mkono describes tourism as “a social space where issues of “self” and “other” are constantly negotiated” (2016: 211).

Mkono proposes reflexivity in tourism as a means of improving tourism behavior. Mkono provides three main attributes of a “good reflexive tourist.” The first attribute is openness to self-transformation. The reflexive tourist admits to pre-held misconceptions and is open to addressing them. The second is the reflexive tourist embraces ambivalence and complexity. They do not feel threatened by the existence of multiple narratives of a location, nor do they try to enforce their own narrative as the most valid. The third attribute is a consideration of their own behavior in the location, and a commitment to improving behavior in the future (2016). Mkono’s fieldwork centered around slum tourism. Through encounters with various tourists she concluded that reflexivity was a better marker for conscious travel than strongly held conceptions of right and wrong. While some tourists felt slum tourism was unequivocally wrong, those who researched carefully and choose sustainable tour options were more reflexive and open to interrogating their own conceptions of difference, privilege and tourism. While this is not the case for all slum tourists, Mkono’s argument proposes a means for improving tourism experiences that considers hosts and guests as equal parties, and rejects the demonization of either group.

Darya Maoz introduces the concept of the “mutual gaze.” While the “tourist gaze” focuses on the effect tourists have on locals, the mutual gaze is the exchange that occurs between them. Maoz defines “disneyization,” as a process through which all products (cultural included)

become commercialized, as an outcome of tourism. She argues this does not, however, negate the ability of hosts to defend their interests as they gain expertise. She provides the example of her fieldwork in India, where the majority Israeli of tourists are hosted by Indian locals. She depicts how tourists are influenced by locals, and how locals manipulate tourists by feeding stereotypes back to them. Moaz specifically addresses the numerous fake Indian religious masters who make their livelihood selling spiritual guidance to outsiders. “Fake” in this case does not refer to the “inauthentic” taint of modernity, but to the fact that they acknowledged they themselves did not believe what they were teaching, but created their business solely in response to the tourists. Both tourists and locals are changed by their interaction with each other, and both have their own motivations for how they conduct those interactions. However, while Maoz emphasizes the agency locals employ when dealing with tourists, she is also careful to note that they are still responding to the desires of the tourists, and then adapting to fulfill their own desires: “The sophisticated techniques they develop win them power, but this is only a partial power. They are required to “preserve” and exhibit an authenticity whose existence is doubtful, and act on a stage they did not create and rarely like” (2006: 235).

The anthropological study of tourism seeks to understand the complex social interactions that constitute tourism practices and to evaluate their impacts on local communities as well as the tourists themselves. This discussion resists generalizing all tourism practices as the same, and works to acknowledge the locals’ agency and ability to create change within their own communities, without ignoring global and national disparities between locals and tourists that can disable this local agency. The anthropological discussion of tourism provides no objective truths for tourism practices; it instead sets a template for nuanced examination. Tourism is formed around a sense of “difference,” as is made evident in Yunnan’s ethnic tourism. In my

examination of commercial tourism zones in Yunnan, I aim to address the examples provided by my interviewees from a perspective that neither negates their personal experiences, nor ignores the historical and contemporary context in which the Han majority has limited the agency of minority peoples.

Situating the Interviews

The existing literature on tourism in China demonstrates the scale of tourism, and its potential as a means of producing economic profits. This has shown to be the case on a national level, which has led to increased state initiatives to harness tourism as a development tool. However, the literature on Chinese ethnic minorities reminds us of the consequences of tourism for communities that may have less agency and access to resources under the CCP than the predominantly Han tourists who visit them, and predominantly Han migrants who move to them. While not all migrants to commercial tourism zones in Yunnan are Han, the majority are of migrants are. This feeds into a larger historical pattern of Han domination of minority spaces. The anthropological study of tourism walks a line between acknowledging societal disparities, and attributing enough agency to local communities to shape their own responses to tourism. Anthropological analysis of tourism encourages a postmodern perspective, in which local culture will change, but whether that change is beneficial or detrimental to local communities is situationally dependent.

I contextualize my interviews with an understanding of tourism's potential to sustain, as well as damage communities. Through my interviews, I address the composition of the communities I visited, the main expectations tourists bring to these locations, and how these communities come to emulate those expectations. I propose a framework for community composition analysis to measure tourism's potential to act as an alleviation tool for areas in which it is cultivated, as it is framed to do in state discussion of tourism's role in western development (Honggen 2012, Feiner et al. 2002, Ap & Suosheng 2003, Wu 2010, Goodman 2004). For the purpose of describing individuals' abilities to profit from, and define, these commercial tourism zones I divide cultivators of tourism into artificial categories of "active"

and “passive.” While both categories imply an ability to benefit from commercial tourism zones, active cultivators are able to reap greater benefits, and directly influence the representation of commercial tourism zones in ways that passive cultivators are not.

While in some cases local residents may choose to leave as their communities as they become commercial tourism zones, it is important to acknowledge that this is not always a choice. The most obvious example of this is in situations where previously individually owned land is reposed by the county, and its inhabitants are compensated with land that may or may not live up to their previous arrangements, and certainly is not as profitable as their previous land would become in a commercial tourism zone. A subtler barrier is related to individuals’ ability to access the tourism industry. While I only interviewed one person who had left her home in a commercial tourism zone, it is important to note that my interviewees shared certain abilities that allowed them to engage with the tourism industry in a way that others may not be able to. All of my interviewees spoke mandarin, and out of those who owned businesses in commercial tourism zones, they were financially stable enough to have paid for their business startup costs, and possessed a degree of industry knowledge. Coffeeshops provide an example of industry knowledge: knowing that a coffeeshop would appeal to tourists, and then knowing where to buy an espresso machine, how to operate one and where to buy affordable coffee beans, are all challenges separate from simply having the finances to purchase one and rent a space. This aspect of accessibility is demonstrated in areas where local residents are represented in restaurants, selling local specialties, but not in other parts of the industry.

A critical active cultivator in the discussion of the areas I visited is the Chinese State. Tourism has been actively cultivated not only in Yunnan, but in China generally, through

state initiatives such as the “Golden Week” holiday system, and Deng Xiaoping’s emphasis on tourism as an economic opportunity during his “Southern Tour.” Additionally, migrants have been encouraged to make livings in western China through tourism as well as other occupations through the “Campaign to Open up the West” (Goodman 2004, Wu et al. 2010). Branches of government such as Provincial Tourism Bureaus, and The Chinese National Tourism Administration have a direct impact on the cultivation of tourism in China through initiatives such as the “year of leisure and vacation” declared by the CNTA in 1996 (Honggen 2012). Additionally, on a more local level, the Shaxi Rehabilitation Project is a joint venture between the People’s Government of Jianchuan County and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (Feiner et al. 2002). The decision to displace local residents of the Sideng marketplace in the process of “rehabilitation” and restoration of the historical village not only created barriers for local resident cultivation, but served as an act of active cultivation on the part of county officials.

Business models such as the Linden Center, an American owned hotel that operates with significant local participation, in Xizhou serve as active cultivators. International active cultivators include: The UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the World Monuments Fund, as well as media producers such as Lonely Planet. Local cultivators are local residents, migrants, and foreign expatriates whose areas of participation in the tourism industry include but are not limited to: travel agencies, restaurants, guest houses, tour guide services, dance or music performances and souvenir shops. “Passive” tourism cultivation can be described as a local renting out property that they either own or lease from the state to an active cultivator. Through this reasoning, one of my interviewees, Mama Naxi is both an active and passive cultivator of tourism. Mama Naxi actively cultivates tourism through the hostel she runs

outside of Lijiang Old Town, and passively cultivates it through the property she rents within the Old Town, to a Shanghainese businessman.

Cultivation of tourism implies some form of investment in the industry that will produce profits for the cultivator. I provide the distinction between passive and active cultivation, because while active cultivators are most visible, passive cultivators are still able to reap limited profits from tourism without being directly involved. While these individuals are not physically present within the commercial tourism zone, I was told in numerous interviews that they are able to live their lives outside these zones with the added economic stability provided by rent. This was the case for the abovementioned interviewee Mama Naxi, who preferred to conduct her business outside of the increasingly expensive and crowded Lijiang Old Town. However, I do not apply this category to individuals displaced from their homes by tourism initiatives, as they are not accumulating rent, and are therefore not profiting passively or otherwise.

Finally, while I argue that these commercial tourism zones are actively cultivated by the Chinese state, as well as local and distant actors, these communities also respond to the desires of the tourists who frequent them. The three characteristics that my interviewees cited tourists most expected from travel in Yunnan as well as in their specific communities were the exotic, nature, and freedom. These traits were described in different ways, sometimes freedom was attributed to the act of travel itself, sometimes simply to the absence of work. Similarly, the exotic was understood in ethnic terms as well as a general search for difference. Nature was both beautiful landscapes, and an absence of air pollution. However, these traits were described, commercial tourism zones are cultivated by various actors to respond to these desires. Activities, performances, and products are created to emphasize

these aspects of the commercial tourism zone for greater profits.

Dali

Along the train ride from Kunming, the terrain begins to turn mountainous and the cluster of urban life gives way to open space cut through with mountains. The first time I took this train I did not disembark at Dali city (in an area also known as Dali), but glimpsing Erhai Lake I knew I would be back. The city of Dali, is divided into the Old Town and the New Town (or Xiaguan). The New Town displays all the partially finished construction projects of rapid infrastructural development. However, the main tourist draw is Dali Old Town. If you can find the right vantage point, you can see Changshan mountain rising in rolling lumpy mounds up towards the sky to one side, and Erhai Lake to the other. Bright blue sky presses down through crisp clear air. The poetically straightforward phrase for such an atmospheric display is “lantian baiyun,” or blue sky



white clouds. In my first year of Chinese language instruction we learned another phrase, “you shan you shui,” to describe a beautiful place, meaning literally, “with mountains and water.” Dali Old Town, and the area surrounding Erhai in general, illustrate the

essence of these phrases. As a geographical setting, Dali is inseparable from its blue-green beauty.

Riding the bus from the train station, the Dali Old Town announced itself through the

shift from a typical Chinese cityscape, of tall grey-white buildings and wide roads, to the traditional architecture of the Bai ethnic minority group. Stark white houses drew the eye from the landscape. These buildings were detailed in a fashion typical to traditional Bai homes with deep blue designs, often flowers, lining the crease where the roof meets the wall. The unique yet uniform architecture was mandatory. The buildings were short, with an enforced height limit. While many non-Bai people lived and worked in these buildings, and even more Bai people lived outside them in various other arrangements, all the buildings in the Old Town had to adhere to this specific aesthetic. Off the main road, the Old Town buildings themselves were connected by small roads, often cobblestone. Tourists crowded these roads, especially during the Lunar New Year, and National Day “golden weeks.” Even during the off-season, considerable crowds gathered in the streets. A McDonald’s advertised its ice cream of the month, green tea flavored, while next door an open market was comprised almost entirely of “xiaokao,” Chinese style kabobs. The scent of kabobs mingled with the buttery smell of rose cakes from the seemingly identical pastry shopfronts that dotted down the street. One of the women played African drums in what felt like the 20th rendition of the same, misplaced, yet well received store that sold them. Over it all, the sound of human voices could be heard. They pointed and exclaimed. People gathered for photos and then mocked the results. They teased each other and bargained loudly for souvenirs.



Dali was a prominent area during the Nanzhao Kingdom of 737, which extended throughout nearly all of modern day Yunnan and down into South-East Asia. Dali was later the capital of the Dali kingdom from 937 to 1253 (Horton 2011). The Dali Kingdom fell to Mongol invaders and was incorporated into what is now China during the Yuan dynasty, effectively ending Yunnan's independent status, with the notable exception the comparatively brief Panthay Rebellion during the Qing Dynasty (Atwill 2003). In following years, Dali served as an important location along the Shu-Indian trade route and the Tea and Horse Caravan Trade Route. The Tea and Horse Caravan Trade Route specifically brought tea from South-East Asia and southern Yunnan, to trade for horses in Lhasa. Feiner et al describe why this route has had such a strong influence in Yunnan:

“The Tea and Horse Caravan Trail between Yunnan and Tibet led essentially to a kind of civilian exchange between all ethnic groups involved, including Bais, Chinese, Tibetans, Indians, Yis, Thais and Burmese, among others. This diversity of exchange stands in contrast to the Silk Road, which came under the strict military control of the dominating powers” (2002, 81)

Today, as a junction between Yunnan-Burma and Yunnan-Tibet transit, Dali carries on this

tradition as a transfer station between inland China and South-East Asia. Dali Old Town was one of the first cities marked as a historical and cultural landmark by the State Council in 1982.

Major attractions for tourists include the Chongsheng Temple, Three Pagodas, Butterfly Spring to the north, and the Island of Nanzhao customs (Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of Yunnan Province 2007). The rich history of the larger Dali prefecture, but specifically of Dali Old Town, combined with the natural beauty of the area poses it as an ideal travel destination. Accessible by train from Kunming, and along the same route as Lijiang and Shangri-La, Dali has transformed from an "off the beaten path" backpackers' destination to one of the most popular tourist destinations in Yunnan.

Gong Xu spoke to her experience as the temporary manager of a hostel on the outskirts of Dali Old Town. I met Gong while she was looking after the hostel for its owners, friends of hers, who had gone to Sichuan to have their baby. Gong had several years of experience working at a hostel in Kunming and was excited to be living in a new location. She avoided the crowds at the heart of old town, but loved the natural scenery of Dali. She expressed her love of the outdoors to me, specifically for running and aerial yoga. I met Gong during my study-abroad program, and in the time that I knew her she could always be found in running leggings, a dry fit T-shirt, and sneakers. Gong was part of a runner's club in Dali, and she represented one of many Han migrants to Dali Old Town. When I interviewed Gong for this thesis she confirmed my suspicion that few local residents lived in Dali Old Town when she said; "Everyone I know is from outside Dali." I asked her why there were so many foreign tourists staying in the hostel when most tourists to Dali were domestic. She responded that about fifty-percent of the hostels guests were foreign nationals, this was an audience they attracted through their choice of website advertising, posting English language advertisements through websites like Bookings and Hostelworld.

When I asked Gong why she thought there were few local residents in Dali Old Town she said most longtime residents of the area had rented out their homes and moved elsewhere. The rent for a property in Dali Old Town is higher than the cost of living in more peripheral areas, so this choice provided a financial benefit for locals who did not want to work in the tourism industry. Gong's opinion of tourism in Dali was similar to governmental and academic opinions in China. From her perspective, tourism's overall effect was positive. I asked Gong specifically what she perceived to be the impacts of tourism on the Bai ethnic minority community of local residents in Dali. She admitted she did not know many Bai minority people, but to her it seemed beneficial economically and culturally. When I followed up by asking what she considered a "cultural benefit," consisted of she paused to consider, before suggesting the ability of tourism to preserve culture by making it profitable, and that a cultural exchange becomes possible between outsiders and Bai minority people. While I had heard similar accounts of tourism's benefits before, it was the pause I found most interesting about Gong's response. Tourism is often portrayed as an alleviator for poverty, and a form of sustainable development. The inherent cultural and economic benefit of tourism is a value many accept without careful consideration. Cultural exchange also seemed a strange benefit, considering the predominantly Han migrant population of the Old Town. I asked Gong if she had observed changes brought by tourism within her temporary home of Dali. She responded that local Bai culture was changing significantly as Bai people became more "Hannified." Hannification, as Gong saw it, was primarily the result of local Bai people moving to cities for work or school and losing their traditions in the process. However, Gong also believes the cultural exchange brought by tourism could also be a source of this change.

The second individual I interviewed in Dali was Huang Jun. Huang also had experience

from a previous hostel before coming to work in Dali. At the time I interviewed him, he had been working in Dali for seven months. Huang also said most people doing business in Dali Old Town were from other parts of China, or foreign expatriates. When asked why he believed tourists visited Dali Old Town he said it was because they found the atmosphere of the Old Town different and exciting, and the weather was good. Activities like shopping for souvenirs and biking along Erhai were the biggest draws in Huang's opinion. Huang also said Bai ethnic culture was rapidly changing due to the desire for a higher standard of living that came with urban lifestyles. According to Huang, many Bai people do not return from the larger cities, and if they do, they return changed. Huang sees this transformation as a natural chain of events, as Yunnan is a poor province, raising the standard of living is the first priority of most residents. Huang ventured that tourism is one of the venues for this economic transformation.

Within the specific commercial tourism zone of Dali Old Town, the majority of business was being conducted by migrants from other parts of China. While my sample was not comprehensive enough to make claims as to the presence of passive cultivation on the part of local residents, although in the case of the hostel where Huang Jun and Gong Xu worked the building was not rented from local residents. The owners were a migrant and foreign expatriate couple. Bai ethnic culture, the beautiful scenery, and the ability to escape mundane life to explore Dali Old Town's exciting atmosphere, all stood out as expectations tourists were bringing to Dali Old Town. In turn, through its souvenirs and attractions, Dali Old Town oriented itself to meet these expectations through a consistent environment of difference, with specific ethnic features such as Bai dress and architecture, despite the lack of Bai people. Activities such as bike rentals encouraged tourists to engage with and consume the area's natural beauty.

Roof eaves light up from behind, drawing the eye to the historically themed brick and wood architecture. Jade Dragon Snow Mountain rises to the North-West. The mountain serves as the origin of the springs and rivers that feed into Black Dragon pool, one of the Old Town's most famous attractions (UNESCO). The water then feeds into a series of small canals, winding throughout the village. These waterways are a distinctive feature of Lijiang, framed by the many walkways alongside them. The pathways are carefully accented with various trees, and romantic willows sway above numerous flower boxes. Storefronts and guesthouses place flowers in windows, around doors, and hanging from eaves. Bridges arch gracefully across canals, and Chinese lanterns miraculously seem to outnumber even the flower boxes. Entrance during the day requires a hefty fee, therefore, most of my experiences in Lijiang Old Town took place during nighttime when they open the town for free. The lanterns are one of many lighting effects carefully arranged to feature the architecture. The result draws my mind less to the area's heritage, and more to thoughts of Disneyland. The buildings climb a hill, providing the distant viewer with a cascade of glowing roofs and lanterns, a phantasmal display grounded solidly by rapid human activity.



At night, every corner of Lijiang was glowing and full of tourists. The daytime crowds are on the scale of typical crowds in Dali. You may have to modify your path, but you can easily walk through them. A nighttime walk through Lijiang required many pauses as the people in front of me stopped to vault their selfie-sticks overhead for the perfect shot, or stopped at one of the storefronts to examine jewelry, or rose cakes, or tea. Restaurants and bars filled with travelers eager to pay outlandish prices for a fun and relaxing Lijiang Old Town experience. The Old Town was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997, and while I was occasionally reminded of this through the marketing of “traditional” objects, the overall atmosphere was of a beautiful theme park. When the crowd thickened, the continuous pushing of hands, elbows and shoulders against my back and sides reminded me more of a Beijing subway station at rush hour than of a group of leisurely vacationers. As a traveler I bunked with in Dali aptly described,

Lijiang is exciting. Tourists were not pausing to look for historical placards, they were hoping they could get to the performance they just heard about before the bar fills up, taking an ironic honeymoon picture next to a stuffed yak, or drunkenly purchasing Big Macs at a McDonald's outfitted to match the architecture: "Mai dang lao" written in golden script across a tastefully aged signboard.

Old Town can be split into three areas: Dayan, Baisha and Shuhe. The Dayan area dates to the Ming dynasty, and the architecture is a mix of styles, emblematic of the village's location along the Tea and Horse Caravan trade route. The Baisha and Shuhe areas date back to the Song and Yuan dynasties. While many buildings are new, or extensively renovated, they are in the same style as the remaining historical buildings. Often thought of as specific to Naxi people, as implied through the Museum of Dongba Naxi culture and the Dongba Research Institute, Lijiang was a crossroads and cultural melting pot of Tibetan, Han, Bai and Naxi culture (Chao 1996; UNESCO). Despite numerous earthquakes the overall layout of the town is close to the layout during both the Qing and Ming dynasties. This was one of many of the features UNESCO cited as deserving of recognition and preservation. However, it seemed in Lijiang this designation had been both a benefit and a detriment to preservation. While certain historical aspects remained intact, the intensity and nature of tourism in Lijiang Old Town has in many ways superseded its historical nature in defining the identity of the destination.

I interviewed a woman known as Mama Naxi on the outskirts of Lijiang. Often called "Mama" by her guests, Mama Naxi has made her work in the tourism industry her life's passion. Mama Naxi has owned and operated guest houses in Lijiang for 17 years. During the peak of foreign tourism, Mama Naxi owned three guest houses in Lijiang Old Town, housing over 100 guests a night. Guests would need to book ahead of time to reserve a spot. Mama Naxi's

prosperity was partly due to early regulations that required specific permissions for any establishment that housed foreigners. Her original hostel was the first in Lijiang Old Town where foreigners could stay. When I interviewed her, Mama Naxi still ran a guest house with the help of her family. However, she no longer operated a guest house within the Old Town, instead operating one outside it and renting another within to a Shanghaiese businessman. Mama was a local Naxi ethnic minority person who saw Lijiang undergo a series of transformations in the wake of tourism interest and cultivation. The first transformation came with opening to foreign tourists. Locals had lived there for generations and had few amenities. Tourists mainly from Europe and sometimes the U.S., began to visit Mama's original hostel after visa policies were loosened in the 1980s. They would stay for several weeks, up to six months. Describing these early tourists Mama says: "The guests who lived here took their time, read books, went out to eat and sight-see. There aren't any more of those." Mama missed the way she felt she was able to get to know her guests over longer durations. Today her guests tended to stay between two to ten nights, often as a stop-off along the way to Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Mama said while there has been a steady increase in domestic tourists, foreign tourists have decreased throughout the years. She believed foreign economies were at fault. This drop in tourism matches a nationwide dip in foreign tourism after the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 (Ap & Suosheng 2003). The atmosphere in Old Town has also changed significantly, as domestic tourism booms, foreign tourists have become increasingly disinterested in Lijiang Old Town. To accommodate foreign tourists, and to save money on the expensive rent within Lijiang Old Town Mama rented out her last hostel within the Old Town, and opened another about a 15-minute walk from the Old Town, within Lijiang city. Moving outside allowed Mama Naxi to maintain her approach to hostel management. There has been a shift in the Old Town from

budget hostels to expensive boutique hotels. Mama explained domestic tourists visit Old Town partly for the status symbol; they prefer to stay in boutiques with luxury honeymoon suites rather than in a backpackers' hostel.

Mama offered private suites, and doubles, but most her guests stayed in three large dorm style rooms. A dorm bed at Mama Naxi's was 40 RMB (roughly 6 USD, at the time), while honeymoon suites within the old town could be over 1000 RMB (145 USD). She has traveled to eleven different countries in Europe and prided herself on her ability to make anyone feel at home. Moving to the outside of Lijiang allowed her to continue offering options for budget travelers, and to escape the daily crowds of the Old Town. This outlook on tourism as "home-making" extended not only to the pricing of Mama's rooms, but to the overall structure of her hostel. The hostel itself was the permanent residence of Mama Naxi, her husband, her daughter, son-in-law and grandson. There were two patio sections and two main living rooms. There was a washing machine, computers for guests to use, a treadmill, and every night, for a fee, guests can join the family dinner. Breakfast and coffee were also available in the morning if requested.

I visited Mama Naxi's a total of six times while I was in Yunnan. Each time she remembered me. The hostel was situated at the crossroads of multiple tourist destinations such as Dali, Shaxi, Shangri-La and Tiger Leaping Gorge, making Lijiang a common stop-over along the way to other locations. According to Mama Naxi, the majority of individuals actively cultivating tourism within the Old Town were migrants and many were renting from local residents. When I spent time in Lijiang Old Town I asked shopkeepers where they were from. It seemed most people I asked were from Harbin to the far north. Lijiang, like Dali, emulated the desires of the tourists. Shopping was one of the main activities, with a multitude of Naxi themed items for purchase. As depicted through the specific emphasis on Naxi culture, Lijiang Old Town was

cultivated to fit the tourists' desire to be free of their mundane lives, in search of something "exciting." While the specific exoticism of Naxi culture and history is played up in Lijiang Old Town through ancient Naxi script and dress, it also strove to simply make itself "different," from the everyday lives of tourists in a more general sense. This could be seen from elaborate performances in carefully decorated bars and restaurants, to the shops selling African drums. The natural scenery was also emphasized through parks and gondola rides, providing venues of engagement with Lijiang's natural environment.

Shangri-La

With an average altitude of 3,500 meters, the air in Shangri-La is thin and clear. I was comfortable in jeans and a sweater even though it was early August. I could pull out my neglected winter jacket for cool evenings. The plateau's beauty had a starkness to it that set it apart from Lijiang and Dali. The typical tour of Yunnan brings the traveler up through the bright greens of Dali, to the more alpine Lijiang, culminating in Shangri-La, within the Diqing Tibetan autonomous prefecture. The streets of Shangri-La Old Town were similar to Lijiang and Dali's Old Towns in that both sides of the street were lined with shops and restaurants. While Lijiang and Dali were not lacking in coffee shops, it seems Shangri-La Old Town offered more selections. Tibetan knife shops were featured prominently and silver jewelry was also considered a specialty of the area. Tourists ambled around, and maybe it was due to the altitude, or the location farther along the well-worn tourist path, but the atmosphere was of a sleepy mountain town. The streets were occupied by tourists, but the mainly pedestrian streets never felt crowded. Individual voices carried as they spoke to each other and to shopkeepers.

Cobblestone roads stretched throughout the town, connecting Tibetan style buildings made of sturdy logs with elaborate eaves. Naxi architecture was present but less noticeable since

the buildings were mostly Tibetan. Construction was common due to a devastating fire in 2014. While many buildings were rebuilt in a traditional style, much of the original infrastructure was destroyed in the fire. Sun-bleached prayer flags fell in pastels from the eaves above, cascading towards the street and then climbing again to grip the opposite building. A large prayer wheel was positioned in one of the Old Town's main junctions. Shops for jewelry, postcards and coffee surrounded the wheel. Large sections of cobblestone, as well as many buildings were still being rebuilt at the time of my visit. A walk through the Old Town was likely to involve careful maneuvering through muddy unfinished pathways. A short walk from the town center revealed grassy hills, I was fortunate to visit during the season when wildflowers sprung resiliently from unoccupied spaces. Light green knolls lit up in yellows, purples, pinks and oranges.



Shangri-La was intentionally renamed from Zhongdian to attract tourists based on the area's claim to be the Shangri-La of James Hilton's Lost Horizon. Some Han and many Naxi, make up most of the non-Tibetan population to arrive in dynastic times (J. Goodman 2009). Today Han migrants are the largest segment of the population, with Yi and Bai migrants making up a smaller population than the Tibetans and Naxi. Shangri-La County offers many tourist attractions. These attractions are more geographically dispersed making it expensive to visit

them all. Tourists had to rent cars or take taxis to more remote locations because of limited public transportation. The owner of the hostel I stayed in proposed this as one of the reasons fewer tourists come to Shangri-La Old Town than to the Dali or Lijiang Old Towns along the same train line. Farther out from the Old Town were several popular destinations including but not limited to the Guihua Monastery and the Pudacuo National Park. While these locations were more difficult to access, the sheer abundance and richness of this area, both culturally and environmentally has a direct impact on tourism in Shangri-La Old Town.

Xiao Yu was one of the first people I met after arriving in Shangri-La. We talked about school and travel. Xiao Yu was twenty years old at the time and preparing to move to Jiangsu for university. Her parents had chosen Shangri-La to open their guest house because there is less competition there than in Lijiang or Dali. Xiao Yu was a member of the Bai ethnic minority, originally from Dali. She said most of her family members worked in the Dali, Lijiang or Shangri-La Old Towns. Most of the hostel's guests were from Sichuan, Beijing or other parts of Yunnan. While there were some foreign tourists, Shangri-La mostly attracted domestic tourists. Summer was the busiest tourist season in Shangri-La due to cold winters. Few locals lived in Shangri-La Old Town. When I asked about changes local people had experienced, Xiao Yu said she was uncertain as she did not know any local Tibetan or Naxi people well. She suspected their way of life was relatively unchanged since they tended to live outside the more popular tourist areas, and instead lived in rural areas raising animals.

While her family were hosts to tourists in Shangri-La, Xiao Yu had also been a tourist herself, with her classmates and her family. She had visited Beijing to see the Forbidden City, Xi'an to see the Terracotta Warriors and Horses, as well as Chongqing City, and Daocheng County, Sichuan. When I asked Xiao Yu what she liked most about travel, she said it was seeing

how other people lived. I asked her to describe the relationship between tourists and people living in the old town.

“I think locals are very welcoming to tourists, we are enthusiastic to explain anything they don’t understand. As far as how tourists act towards locals, they generally follow the saying “when in Rome, do as the Romans do.” When entering a new place, we must respect the culture of others. In Shangri-La the majority is Tibetan. Boys and girls are called Zhaxi, and Zhuoma. Careful tourists will respect this habit, mimicking local people. Both sides should be mutually respectful in the relationship between tourists and locals.”²

I asked Xiao Yu what she thought the purpose of travel was for tourists. She responded, “I think, travel is a very tiring thing. It takes time and energy, but you also get to meet different people, and to understand cultures that are different from your own.”³ Xiao Yu’s overall opinion of tourism as an active cultivator in Shangri-La was that it is a positive force. Sometimes guests were rude, but that occurred rarely. I asked her how she would describe the relationship between tourism and development in Yunnan, “The two are inseparable. Tourism brings people economic development, and economic development has also created a better tourism environment and conditions.”⁴ I asked Xiao Yu if she thought she would continue working in the tourism industry after university. She responded that she would like to open a small shop with flower boxes. Xiao Yu wanted to be free from the confines of an office job in a city, but also didn’t see herself running a hostel like her parents. Overall, if she could be with the people she loved and do things that she liked she would be content.

² 本地人对游客吧，我觉得我我们都是挺热心的，有什么不懂的地方我们也会热心解答。游客对本地人话，一般也是会入乡随俗，来到一个地方，就要尊重人家的文化。比如香格里拉是多数是藏族，少男少女叫扎西、卓玛，细心的游客也会尊重这个习惯，和当地人一样称呼别人。两者应该是一种互相尊重的关系

³ 我觉得得，旅游是一件很累的事情，要花费时间，也要花费精力，但是也能遇见不同的人，了解到不同于自己生活的文化。

⁴ 两者是密不可分的。旅游给人们带来了经济发展，经济发展也给人们创造了更好的旅游环境和条件。

I interviewed Nathan, the American owner of a trekking company in Shangri-La Old Town. Nathan said the trekking company, Turtle Mountain Gear, had been in business for five years. The hardest part was getting approval from the government, but the locals had been accepting of the business. Nathan came to Shangri-La to work on a linguistic project, and ended up staying. He still studied linguistics in his free time, but also ran trekking tours and rented equipment to tourists. Most of Shangri-La's tourists were domestic but Nathan's customers were mostly foreigners, typically from Europe, North America, or South East Asia. When I asked about the lack of locals within the Old Town Nathan said that many of the buildings in Shangri-La Old Town were rented. Moving outside and renting the properties guarantees an income, without disrupting local residents' lifestyles. Nathan said there were some environmental degradation issues related to tourism, due to lack of proper trash processing facilities or garbage pickup. Nathan suggested the most popular reason tourists come to Shangri-La was for Tibetan culture, as traveling to Tibet could be extremely expensive for Chinese tourists, and bureaucratically difficult for foreign nationals. According to Nathan, the typical tourist route through Yunnan went from Dali to Lijiang to Shangri-La, with potential offshoots to Shaxi, Nujiang, Honghe, Xishuangbana and Pu-er, depending on the interest of the travelers.

A different sort of migrant, Kamran moved from Hunan province and founded Dragon Cloud International Youth Hostel in Shangri-La's Old Town sixteen years ago. Kamran is Han. He recalled how much Shangri-La has changed during this time. Dragon Cloud was the first guest hostel to open in Shangri-La Old Town. The old Tibetan style building where Dragon Cloud is located was a bank in 1953. Kamran described how newspapers used to be pinned to walls to add decoration and the top layer of newspapers when he purchased the building were from 1996. He peeled them off, revealing papers from 1963. Kamran said he was fortunate the

building did not sustain more damage in the fire of 2014 that burned most of Shangri-La Old Town down. The government had provided funds for repairs and for new water systems that would make putting out future fires possible. Trucks had to carry water from Lijiang because of insufficient access to water. So much damage had been done by the time the fire was put out, because water had to be transported in to save the city. When Kamran moved to the area sixteen years ago, it was mostly inhabited by local residents. Today, he said the Old Town is 10-20% local residents, and 5% foreigners, the rest were migrants. Locals had either moved to the “New city” the modernized, less tourist-focused part of the city, or lived remotely. Kamran said rent was still comparable between the two parts of the city. However, the more recent part was much more convenient, with wider roads, and more everyday businesses such as grocery stores, while the Old Town was more historical and very tourist-centric in its business models. Including both the Old Town and the New City, Kamran estimated the overall population was 65% local Tibetans. He agreed with previous interviewees, tourists were now mostly domestic, and they were coming for the natural beauty and the Tibetan culture. Kamran said his primary concern was for the environment. He associated shorter winters, and more overcast days with increased human activity in the area.

Shangri-La Old Town was considerably less densely touristic than the Lijiang or Dali old towns. However, it still served as a commercial tourism zone because its structure, the types of business within it, and the Tibetan “theme” of the location all oriented to the desires of tourists. This was demonstrated through the Yak burger, among other examples. Activities for engaging with the areas exoticism, and natural beauty were sold to tourists, while a Tibetan-Western fusion marked the location as “out of the ordinary.” The Old Town itself also seemed to consist mainly of migrants, as seemed to be the trend in old towns throughout Yunnan.

Xizhou

20 kilometers north from Dali Old Town lies the less populated yet increasingly well-known Xizhou. Near Dali, Xizhou is nestled between Chang Mountain and Erhai. Tourists were carted past in donkey carts, taking in the small town from elevated carriages. The village center featured a roundabout with numerous restaurants along its periphery. The aged white buildings mingled with the beige dirt that either marked or formed the pathways. These pathways struck out from the village center, winding around buildings and geography, rather than cutting through directly as in Dali Old Town. Locals still worked in fields within the town, and agriculture remained a prominent feature in the townscape. Tourists paused to snap photos of locals working in fields, and buy Xizhou baba, a flatbread-like food often described to tourists as “like pizza.” The sweet scent of rose cakes mixed with the earthy scent of mud, a leftover from a recent rain. Vendors set up scarf and jewelry shops along the narrow roads, Bai style tie died goods featured prominently. The overall atmosphere was peaceful, while there were numerous travelers meandering through the town, it was still possible to imagine Xizhou without them.

Dali Old Town is a popular destination for overnight stays of several days. Xizhou, however, is generally perceived as a “day-trip” from the old town. The architecture of Xizhou is one of its strongest draws for tourists. While Dali Old Town maintained some ancient buildings, and the overall historical style, Xizhou consisted almost entirely of original historical Bai buildings. Xizhou had roughly 2,500 residents, most of whom were Bai, a small percentage were Hui. Many of the town’s features were like Dali Old Town. One of the more notable differences was while most shopkeepers I spoke with in Dali Old Town were from areas outside of Dali, the shopkeepers in Xizhou consisted almost entirely of not only Dali residents, but specifically longtime Xizhou residents. These conversations were largely part of my SIT capstone paper, and

while not a comprehensive sample, the impressions of interviewees in the area, were in line with this assessment.

While in Xizhou I interviewed Kathryn Miles, an American intern at The Linden Center working on her master's thesis. The Linden Center is a hotel and research center built as a model of sustainable tourism. Individuals conducting research in the area utilized the center's connections and resources, in return they presented their findings for tourists staying at the center. The Linden Center worked with locals to schedule lectures, crafts and tours for their guests. The Linden Center proposes a sustainable tourism model that profits from tourism without the "destruction and commercialization that epitomizes the tourist experience throughout most of China" (Welcome to the Linden Center). Kathryn Miles was part-way through her seven-month case-study when I met her. The Linden Center catered to upper-class Chinese and westerners, as its prices were in line with luxury hotels. Tourists stayed at the Linden center to experience "authentic" rural China, and Bai architecture over 100 years old. Miles estimated roughly 90% of active tourism cultivation was by local Bai or Hui people, with a small percentage of foreign expatriates and migrant contribution. While migrants were present, their cost of living with rent was higher than locals.

Growth in Xizhou was partially protected against, as geographic space was limited by proximity to Erhai Lake, and many of the buildings were protected. Miles attested that locals seem content with the tourists, whose presence is neither degrading nor exaggerating local culture. Although, that is not to say all tourists were respectful and well behaved. Miles told me a story of a Han family on vacation. She took them to a local market, and the man said "Bai people are very dark and fat" to her while they stood surrounded by Bai people. The man remained disinterested and aloof for the rest of the tour. Miles suggested some tourists feel they are

entitled to act poorly when touring with the Linden Center, as it is an experience they paid a lot of money for. She suggested conflicts between Han and ethnic minorities were historical, and could not be easily overturned by tourism alone. Despite these conflicts, tourism was preserving the architecture of Xizhou, as well as raising the standard of living for local residents involved in the industry.



My second interview on Xizhou was conducted in Kunming. I interviewed a woman who asked I call her Nainai, Grandma, in this thesis. She is ethnically Bai, and grew up in Xizhou, although she lived in Kunming with her Han husband at the time I interviewed her. Nainai still had a lot of family in Xizhou, and liked to visit often, however she preferred the convenience and the abundance of activities offered by the city. Retired, Nainai kept a tight schedule, she regularly attended singing, tennis, swimming and dancing clubs with her friends. She was an enthusiastic photographer, outside of her scheduled activities she liked to take pictures and spend time with her nine-year-old granddaughter. She walked quickly and carried a variety of hats with her for unplanned encounters with sunlight. Xizhou's tourism development had been rapid, and Nainai cited the rising standard of living in Xizhou as the main benefit. She believes tourists visited Xizhou mainly for Bai culture, and for the beautiful natural scenery of the Dali area.

Nainai saw Xizhou's transformation as part of a larger trend towards globalization. When she was growing up, few people in Xizhou spoke Mandarin, now most locals can speak Mandarin. Some local residents have even learned English. Xizhou was becoming international, and because business was conducted by locals, they were the direct beneficiaries of this. Nainai described Xizhou locals as crafty; she said: "Bai people are the Jews of China." While I don't think she fully understood the implications of declaring "Bai" were like "Jews" for their craftiness, Nainai's point was clear, while outsiders did business in Xizhou, it is local residents who have learned to turn tourists' interests to their advantage.

When I asked Nainai what she thought the main expectation tourists had for Yunnan were, she said it was probably the variety of ethnic cultures present in the province. She said some traditions were lost in response to outside influence, but this was not necessarily a bad thing. Nainai thought these traditions would change over time anyway, and in some cases, she would not miss them. Nainai described how Bai women used to sit on the floor while the men ate, after the men left they could have the leftovers. Traditions people cared about would remain, but losing traditions in general did not concern Nainai. Growing up her parents had been fairly well off, they were involved with trading in Malaysia, before Xizhou had become a tourist destination. Nainai's family was evidence change would come to rural areas with or without tourism, her interest was not in how to stop it, but how to make sure it was beneficial for local communities.

Xizhou was a unique location among the commercial tourism zones I visited because most of the active cultivators within the town were local residents. While tourism was changing the nature of the town, locals were benefiting along with this change. The example of the Han man Miles took on tour who insulted Bai people demonstrated that the relationship between

locals and tourists was not always an easy one. However, local resident cultivators were not only benefiting from tourism in Xizhou, they were physically present. This presence of local residents within the town sets Xizhou aside from my other destinations, instead of filling in blanks where local residents may or may not be passively benefiting from tourists, an economic benefit was made evident on-location.

Shaxi

The town of Shaxi can be found among the Himalayan foothills in Jainchuan county, Dali prefecture. Shaxi is accessible by bus from either Lijiang or Dali Old Town. An hour or so into the bus ride, from either direction, evidence of humans starts to fade. The terrain turned more mountainous as the road climbed mountainsides in a series of sharp switchbacks, only to descend again into open valleys. On my journey the bus traversed a road with agricultural fields on one side, and a Bai village on the other. The local inhabitants of the area were primarily Bai, or Hui, while the touristic center that had been “rehabilitated” for tourists was populated largely by Han migrants. Along the way locals got off the bus at their respective locations, a handful of other tourists remained with me as we pulled into the final parking lot of the route. Noodle stands lined up along the outskirts of the parking lot, providing a late breakfast for travelers. Moving into the town, Shaxi reveals a combination of seemingly ancient and fairly modern infrastructure. Within these buildings various restaurants and shops selling local crafts nestle alongside cafes and hostels. I asked around for a cheap dorm style hostel, and after a few tries I was directed down a winding alleyway past several fancier hotels. While the town is small it offers numerous options to accommodate tourists with different budgets and expectations.



Deep green forested mountain slopes rose to either side of the valley, contrasted by bright green fields that filled the gap between them. Shaxi was the type of travel destination that appears fake in photographs reviewed later. Bai architecture was prominent, and while the cobblestone pathways had clearly been placed

to create the “ambiance” tourists were seeking, the snippets of unrestored paintings along village walls, or the wilting eaves of a particularly old building, hinted at the historical depth of this location. The most popular tourist attraction outside the Sideng town itself was Shibao mountain, on which a complex temple structure was built. The historical influences of the Tea and Horse Caravan Trade Route were made evident in the diversity of architectural styles and religious symbolism demonstrated in the Shibao temple. During the Nanzhao and Dali periods the Sideng marketplace, at the heart of the town, was a vital hotspot for traders along the Tea and Horse Caravan Trade Route. Sideng Marketplace was declared one of the 100 most endangered historical sites by the World Monuments Fund in 2001.



Apart from its historical relevance and apparent beauty, another important aspect of the Shaxi area was its poverty. The average yearly income in Shaxi was around \$120 USD, a figure that is low even for rural China. Seventy percent of economically active residents worked in agriculture, construction, and a select few in the wood and stone working for which the area was famous. Population growth had combined with poverty, to begin putting stress on environmental resources, deforestation was increasingly straining local ecosystems (Feiner et al. 2002). Tourism has been proposed as a means of poverty alleviation in Shaxi, and was formally cultivated through the Shaxi Rehabilitation and Development Project. The project focused on “the sustainable development of a rural commune by generating a framework for ecological, economic, and social issues which balance development and conservation in the long run” (Feiner et al 2002: 79). The plan includes improved and restored infrastructure, zoning, transportation, tourism development, investment, and protection for historical sites (2002). The stated intent of the project is: “...to develop tourism and other industries in the valley, while preserving and rehabilitating its cultural heritage, its ecological qualities, and its social structure” (Feiner et al. 2002: 80). The project has carried out a major renovation of the Sideng market square and surrounding area, tourists could be seen throughout the town moving between

souvenir shops and trendy cafes. Sideng was the old town of Shaxi, although I did not hear it called an “old town” or “*gu cheng*” as I did for Lijiang, Dali and Shangri-La. The market square is restored to emphasize historical features. The buildings within it, and the people who work there, all oriented themselves around tourism.

Chao Biyu helped me think about the tourism industry in Shaxi. Chao was in her late twenties, and had been operating her hostel for three years. She said she received foreigners, but more often her guests were domestic tourists. However, compared to Lijiang or Dali, the percent of foreigners was much higher. Chao believed this was because independent tourism is still new in China, the bus ride from Lijiang or Dali was an extra step Chao felt many domestic tourists did not want to take. Chao rarely received Americans; most of her guests were either European or Chinese. When I asked what expectations she believed tourists had for Shaxi, she said people came to experience “small-town” China, but with plumbing. The difference from mundane urban living was the main draw for East-Coast city dwellers. The natural scenery was also a major motivator for tourists. Chao stated that while tourists like the atmosphere of the ancient town, they often knew little about it. Tourists were less interested in learning about it than they were in experiencing it.

Shaxi’s tourism had increased quickly, and yet it remained relatively contained to the Sideng town. Guest houses and shopfronts were often occupied by migrants as the buildings were bought by the county, displacing local residents, when the restorations began. Restaurants were a notable exception, Chao stated that most restaurants in the town were locally owned and sold regional specialties. Most residents however, left the town and remained farmers, they were either uninterested in tourism, or lacked the skills or experience to compete in the tourism industry. For those uninvolved in tourism, moving away from the town became a necessity as the

cost of living rose. While tourism has benefited some locals in Sideng, Chao's interview seems to indicate the main beneficiaries of tourism investment in the area have been migrants.

Outsiders

In the course of this study I conducted four interviews with people who were not, and had never been, residents of the locations I visited. These interviews serve as a glimpse into the representation of these places, and of tourism in China generally. The first three interviews are with people I met in Xianghe, Hebei, near Beijing. Xue Xiuzhen, Shi wenqian and Zhu Hao Yuan were all working as teachers at a summer camp where I interned. The fourth interview is with Yeye, whose wife Nainai I interviewed for the section on Xizhou.

Xue Xiuzhen was 23 years old at the time I met her, she majored in English at university and aspired to one day be a translator. Xue viewed tourism positively, as it provided economic opportunities in areas that may otherwise be geographically isolated. Tourism was still developing in China, especially independent tourism. Xue did not know many people who went traveling for vacation. While travel was becoming increasingly trendy among the wealthy, most recent college graduates were unable to afford it. Many young people working in cities were sending money back to more rural family members, if they had time or money for travel it was often used to visit family. While Xue believed tourism could change local cultures, it seems to her popular media, including foreign media, was a stronger influence. Young people living remotely often still had access to popular advertisements and music, this creates an environment of change regardless of tourism. Xue hoped that tourism could serve as a cultural exchange in China. She has heard of ethnic minorities refusing to learn Mandarin to save their culture, but she did not know if this was true. While Xue reported she had seen advertising for tourism, most advertisements she has seen are for real estate. It seemed to her minorities and Han have a

relationship of friendship, and there are rules that require respect for minority traditions. Xue has never met an ethnic minority person, but would like to learn more about them.

Shi Wenqian was 24 years old at the time I interviewed her, she and Xue had been classmates in Henan province. They both came to Xianghe to teach English at the summer camp. There are not a lot of tourists to Henan, it was mostly countryside and many children left school early to work in the fields, or to migrate to the cities. Over half of the young people leave to find work. In Shi and Xue's cases it was to teach, but more often it was to work in factories. There was, however, a lake where an Ancient Emperor died. The palace by the lake and the lilies drew tourists from surrounding areas. Shi has been to Shanghai, Guangdong, and Zhengzhou for work and study. Traveling was not yet common for everyday people, although more students were traveling with their parents' help. When I asked Shi what her impressions of Yunnan were, she replied that it had a good climate, Lijiang Old Town, and many ethnic minorities. She said she finds minority culture interesting, each group of people had distinct histories and values, she suggests: "Maybe that is why we have different views about things."

I also met Zhu Hao Yuan in Xianghe, however we never found a time to conduct an interview while I was there, so I conducted an interview over WeChat after I had returned to the U.S. Zhu was working as a teaching assistant. She had hoped to be a teaching assistant in Tibet but her parents were worried it was too politically unstable. She had been accepted into a German university for the following year, so at the time I knew her she was looking for a job to fill the gap between finishing her bachelor's degree and her enrollment in a master's program in Germany. The most important ideals to her were freedom, companionship and love. I asked her what she meant when she used the word freedom: "Freedom, is being able to live according to your own wishes, not work or money, to be able to freely arrange your own time, to decide

where you want to live.”⁵ Zhu hoped to one day be a writer. She attended university in Tangshan, and although her parents recently moved to Xianghe, they were originally from Hangzhou. She hoped to travel, but eventually wanted to settle down in Hangzhou. When I asked her what her impressions of ethnic minorities were, she said she didn’t know many, only some friends at school who were Hui. When I asked her about the impacts of tourism she said for tourists she thought tourism was for relieving stress and learning new things. For locals, it provided economic opportunities.

Yeye was like Xue, Shi and Zhu, in that he has never lived in one of the commercial tourism zones I am addressing in this thesis. However, Yeye has lived his whole life in Kunming. When I asked Yeye what he thought tourists expected from Yunnan he said natural beauty and ethnic minority culture. In his memory, tourism exploded alongside transportation, he described that when he was young he did not see much of Yunnan, because “you had to walk everywhere.” Yeye and Nainai now own a car and have explored most Yunnan in a way that would have been impossible at the time they were growing up. Yunnan is not a rich province, if tourism is managed well Yeye saw no draw backs. However, in his opinion it was not always managed well. According to Yeye, more regulations should be enforced to protect locals and the environment from damage by large amounts of tourists. Yeye believed the commercial tourism zones I visited in Yunnan were just the beginning. Most of the province was still untouched by tourism, largely due to lack of accessibility. Yeye believed tourism would expand naturally as transportation continued to improve.

These four outsider interviews demonstrate the potential tourism in China still has for growth, and thus the importance of nuanced examination of tourism practices. While tourism has

⁵ 自由，是能按照自己的意愿生活，不被工作和金钱束缚，能够自由地安排自己的时间，自己的住处。

rapidly become a common practice among China's middle and upper classes, the wide economic disparities of the nation mean travel is still unattainable for most of the population. If China is successful in lessening this divide, Shi and Xue represent a portion of the population that currently does not travel, but may be able to in the future. This potential is highlighted by Yeye's description of Yunnan's many untouched destinations, and by the expansion of the railways that will make these areas more accessible in the future. Additionally, Shi, Xue and Zhu represent the perspective of many Han Chinese on ethnic minority people, characterized by a general lack of knowledge. These interviews indicate that state censorship of ethnic minority discourse in China leaves Han in non-minority areas with general notions of friendship and diversity. They may have a vague concept of conflict, but they are uncertain where it stems from. While my interviewees viewed ethnic minorities favorably, it is easy to see how this non-knowledge of other groups provides ample room for damaging stereotypes to take hold.

Conclusion

These diverse examples from Yunnan inform my argument throughout this thesis that tourists' expectations directly influence how receiving communities shift towards a tourism economy. I call these responses a form of cultivation, which I artificially classify as either active or passive. I have divided on-location actors into four categories for analysis: the local resident, the migrant, the foreign expatriate, and the tourist. Tourists' interest in a destination, as described by Urry's "tourist gaze," have a direct impact on that area (1990). In Yunnan's tourism destinations, this is most notable in the formation of commercial tourism zones. In cases such as Xizhou, local residents remain within these areas. Those who leave commercial tourism zones either choose to move outside the area as Mama Naxi did, or are displaced as many were in Shaxi. Locals' ability to engage with tourism is also potentially limited by several factors. While I did not interview many people who had left these areas, there are certain commonalities between my interviewees, whether local resident, expatriate, or migrant, that have positioned them to benefit more easily from tourism. Factors such as an ability to speak Mandarin, industry knowledge, and initial money for startup costs affected their access to tourism cultivation. In between being displaced by the government or choosing to leave, I suggest there is also grey area where local residents may desire to cultivate tourism in their hometowns but lack the financial or cultural resources to do so.

I was drawn to this project because I was interested in the impact of tourism in Yunnan on local communities. My positive memories of people and the landscape animate my affection for the area. Fortunately, the question of whether tourism is beneficial or destructive for receiving communities has received considerable academic analysis, which has helped me situate my experiences in a broader intellectual and geographical context. The Chinese state has

aggressively promoted tourism as a form of sustainable development in rural, often impoverished areas. This has been made evident through the campaigns, incentives and projects aimed to further tourism development by the Chinese National Tourism Administration, the Provincial Tourism Bureaus, and country governments such as Jianchuan (Ap & Suosheng 2003, Feiner et al. 2002, Goodman 2004, Honggen 2012, Wu 2010,). This state investment in tourism is evidence of a deeper official assumption that tourism automatically raises the standard of living for areas in which it is cultivated. Many Chinese tourists and migrants brought to my attention that the standard of living in locations such as Lijiang Old Town has risen due to tourism. Amenities such as indoor plumbing and electricity have improved life in the Old Town. Infrastructural improvements are material and obvious. However, it is difficult to argue that tourism alleviates poverty if it benefits a new set of inhabitants, rather than the local residents who originally occupied the area and whose lives the investment was intended to improve. Local residents such as Mama Naxi have been able profit from tourism in Lijiang. However, I reject the conclusion that encouraging tourism development in poor regions, such as Shaxi, inherently generates prosperity for those locals.

Tourism is not the only means of poverty alleviation, and Yunnan locals may also benefit from tourism in locations other than their familial birthplace. Xiao Yu's family is an example of this mobility. While they do not profit from tourism in Dali, they do profit from it in Shangri-La. Yet even though Xiao Yu and other migrants to Shangri-La are benefitting from tourism, that does not mean that local residents are also benefitting equally. Those same local residents may also benefit from leaving the Old Town to find new opportunities outside of tourism, or through tourism in other areas, but this does not necessarily correlate with tourism development in the Old Town. They may also leave for reasons that feel involuntary, suggesting their absence from

Shangri-La Old Town can only be understood as displacement. While tourism may provide benefits on a provincial or national scale, I suggest it does not always work as a development tool to combat poverty in specific locations. This is demonstrated in Shaxi, where locals were moved outside the commercial tourism zone, which then became a bubble of migrants. While some benefits may be drawn from locals working in restaurants, Shaxi seems to raise the question as to whether tourism is the most appropriate tool for providing poor regions with economic opportunities. Especially when the resulting commercial tourism zone is direct a result of investment from the county and its partners. I suggest that local residents' cultivation of tourism in these areas can serve as a condition for whether or not tourism is effectively serving locals as a development tool.

A comparison of Xizhou and Shaxi provides an illustration of how commercial tourism zones operating under the same market pressures, can provide dramatically different results for local communities. Both are small towns with historical features that attract tourists. Both are geographically positioned to receive tourists visiting from larger destinations. Both have architecture that demonstrates Bai ethnic culture, favorable climates, and beautiful natural landscapes. Both advertise themselves as sustainable tourism sites. Sustainable tourism and local culture preservation are formally encouraged through the Linden center in Xizhou and the Shaxi Rehabilitation Project in Shaxi. However, these commercial tourism zones are different in one notable aspect. While the vast majority of locals participating in the tourism industry in Xizhou are local residents, Shaxi locals seem to be represented only in restaurants. I draw this conclusion from the lack of local active cultivators of tourism within the commercial tourism zone surrounding the Sideng Market square, and the insights of my interviewees. Thus, Shaxi locals are less likely to receive the wealth generated by tourism, wealth will instead flow towards

outside entrepreneurs. While this direction of wealth does not negate tourism's ability to provide economic opportunity on a larger scale, it also does not benefit the community that the county indicated was the intended beneficiary of this investment.

This contrast leads me to feel skeptical about the promises for local poverty alleviation made in the name of sustainable or mainstream tourism. I suggest tourism can only deliver on these promises if local residents are engaged actively or passively in cultivation of tourism, so that they can directly benefit from the inflow of wealth. My findings suggest migrants and foreign expatriates do not inherently hinder tourism as a development tool, but they also may be better positioned to pursue income from tourism. A more comprehensive study of commercial tourism zones in Yunnan would ideally consider both passive and active tourism cultivation by local residents to assess the efficacy of tourism as a development tool. While I argue local resident cultivation of tourism can serve as a measure for tourism's efficacy in poverty alleviation for a specific region, the ability of locals to act with agency within the tourism industry is a "partial power," as the commercial tourism zone adapts to meet tourists' desires (Maoz 2006). Mkono's concept of tourist reflexivity is helpful here, noting that the dynamic among tourists and hosts influences the distribution of benefits (2016). Through Mkono's argument tourism can be viewed as both collaboration and commodity by placing partial responsibility for tourist experiences, and impacts, on the tourists themselves. In other words, if tourism fails or succeeds at delivering positive effects for host communities, along with positive memories for tourists, that is in part because of the tourists themselves.

However, while reflectivity could ideally play a larger role in tourism to Yunnan, it is necessary to acknowledge the unique challenges to this in China today. The CCP censorship of discussion about ethnicity adds an additional challenge to encouraging reflexivity in tourists. On

the ground organizations that serve as active cultivators can assess the effects of tourism in their areas reflexively, and guide tourists through a more reflexive model. This is evident in the different approaches to local engagement, and is demonstrated in commercial tourism zones such as The Shaxi Rehabilitation Project and The Linden Center in Xizhou. However, censorship creates an environment in which it is difficult to foster reflexive discussion of tourism, especially of tourism as a development tool, in Chinese mainstream media without fear of appearing threatening to national unity. This means that while ideally tourists themselves should take on a degree of responsibility for sustainable tourism, the political environment today makes it very difficult for urban tourists to encounter perspectives that call for greater reflexivity. The portrayal of tourism as an inherently beneficial practice in China does not provide cause for tourists to analyze the ways in which their tourism actions may impact the inhabitants of the destinations they visit, or the ways in which state cultivation of tourism may or may not be living up to its promises of sustainability and development.

The repeated emphasis in my interviews on travel in Yunnan as a quest for personal freedom, natural beauty and the exotic, demonstrates the tourists' desires that are influencing the commercial tourism zones that I visited. From ethnic architecture and dress, to African drum shops, to trekking tours and bike shops, to the Yak Burger, these desires manifest materially within these communities. If tourism is to be cultivated by the state and other actors as a form of rural development and poverty alleviation, distribution of benefits within commercial tourism zones must be assessed with regard to equity among local residents, migrants and foreign expatriates, especially when local ethnic culture is one of the commodities sought by tourists. When local residents are underrepresented in both passive and active cultivation, we must ask why. This underrepresentation of local residents does not necessarily mean that tourism is

negative, however it also does not indicate that tourism is an appropriate development tool for poor areas if local residents are not included. It seems that tourism in China will continue to expand, as more Chinese citizens find they have the disposable income for travel, and transportation networks continue to expand into previously isolated areas. As the industry grows and railways extend into Yunnan's South, it becomes increasingly important to highlight the ways commercial tourism zones are being cultivated. In what ways, can reflexivity under the CCP be encouraged within tourist groups as they explore new areas? Is tourism inherently an industry that provides benefit on a larger scale, to which possessors of various resources such as Mandarin language skills, wealth, and industry knowledge are provided greater accessibility? If not, under what conditions can tourism be used to provide economic opportunities for specific communities in need? While I suggest that local resident cultivation of tourism is a measure for assessing the efficacy of tourism as a development tool, this is a single piece to a large and complex discussion. These are questions for a later, more long-term research project.

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