



EATING THE FOOD OF THE ANCESTORS : PLACE, TRADITION , AND TOURISM IN A CHINESE FRONTIER RIVER TOWN

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This essay explores the development of tourism as a local cultural production in a remote region of south-west China. It offers a case study in the contests over how landscapes are represented and reconstructed for tourist consumption. Two issues underlie the analysis: One is the relationship between broader cultural discourse and its local appropriation and manipulation. In this case, that broader cultural discourse is one dominated by ideals of Chinese tradition, civilization, and refinement. The other issue is the way tourism gets mixed up in this process of local appropriation, rendering its development as much a local cultural product as it is an external force linking specific localities to much broader circuits of exchange and capital accumulation. The goal is a more culturally complex rendering of tourism's 'consumption' of places, one that sees not merely a globalizing force bearing down upon a once-isolated community but also the dynamic ways local cultural meanings wrap the tourism experience in an envelope of local meaning.

Tourism eats the food prepared by our ancestors,' says Jun Mingyu, a restaurateur in a remote region of south-west China. A tireless advocate of tourism development in his small riverside town, Jun is also a fine cook and runs a successful inn patronized by local truckers and international tourists alike. His story ultimately forms the backbone of this essay, and we shall get to it in time. But his striking comment suggests an intriguing cultural lens through which to view the relationship between tourism development and representations of landscape and place. Jun's comment reveals an intimately local understanding of tourism, one in which the tourism experience is subsumed within a cultural framework that claims it as an indigenous, rather than external, product. This process of cultural appropriation can be marked or evoked in many different ways. In Jun's comment, it is marked by the metaphorical language of food and eating – and appropriately so, for food and eating have

a central role in much of Chinese culture and society, informing constructions of meaning in many ways.

This essay explores the development of tourism in Jun's home town as a local cultural production. It offers a case study in the contests over how landscapes are represented and reconstructed for tourist consumption. But my perhaps quirky devotion to the metaphorical role of food in this analysis should be read as an effort to view the case study through a cultural lens that reveals the ways people appropriate dominant constructions of meaning (in this case revealed, in part, by a language of food and eating) as they negotiate processes of development and modernization (illustrated here by tourism). The food metaphors thus allow us to see more clearly two interrelated issues that serve as foundations to the analysis that follows. One is the relationship between broader cultural discourse and its local appropriation and manipulation. In this case, that broader cultural discourse is one of dominant ideals of Chinese tradition, civilization, and refinement. The other issue is the way tourism gets mixed up in this process of local appropriation, rendering its development as much a local cultural product as it is an external force linking specific localities to much broader circuits of exchange and capital accumulation. Thus I hope to achieve a more culturally complex rendering of tourism's 'consumption' of places, one that sees not merely a globalizing force bearing down upon a once-isolated community, but also the dynamic ways local cultural meanings – which are themselves the product of a dialogue between local and extra-local cultural systems – wrap the tourism experience in an envelope of local meaning. Rather than an alien force, tourism in this essay is conceptualized as a phenomenon that must be rendered in the language of the people in whose places it develops. In China, that language is one in which food has long played a significant role.

The essay proceeds with a brief discussion of the language of food in China, and my suggestion that this language can also inform the ways we evaluate not just tourism in China, but much of the broader academic discussion on tourism (a discussion also curiously driven by metaphors of eating, consumption and so on). This will be followed by some historical geography of Jun Mingyu's home town, in which we again encounter the importance of food metaphors in accounting for ethnic and cultural relations in that part of China. This prepares us for an exploration of contemporary efforts to develop tourism in the area. Here, we finally arrive at Jun's inn, and hear – as I did over one of his elegantly prepared meals one evening – his own story about his efforts to develop tourism there. Situating Jun's vision of tourism development in the broader social and cultural context of the area reveals the inherent conflicts over landscape representation and reconstruction as different cultural groups see tourism development in different ways. In making sense of these conflicts, the language of food, again, plays an important role.

The cement of society

That food is a central feature of Chinese culture should not be too surprising, nor is it a condition particularly unique to China. But it seems that few regions of the world can match the extent to which food and eating pervade Chinese lifeways.¹ E.N. Anderson has called food China's 'social cement' and its primary means of social communication.² According to one Hong Kong scholar, China is the only country in the world where the proportion of income spent on food *increases* with wealth.³ Food is used to mark ethnicity, place of birth, social status, cultural change and all calendar and family events. It is the clearest means of articulating social relationships. Since ancient Zhou times, the *ting* or cooking-cauldron, has been a prime symbol of the Chinese state, while China's classical texts are all peppered with references to food and cuisine; to be a proper Chinese 'gentleman' was to possess a high degree of knowledge and skill pertaining to food and drink.

Little surprise, then, that the Chinese government should focus on banquets in its efforts to battle the escalating waste and corruption that have accompanied the recent economic reforms. Restaurants, after all, are where China's business and politics get done. According to one observer in the early 1990s, 'The annual expense of functional banquets on mainland China these days is reportedly 100 billion *yuan* (about \$12 billion). And that's only *official* feasts.'⁴ Whenever there is an official rectification or anti-corruption campaign, the restaurants suffer most. 'Since fancy business banquets are nearly always paid with public money, restaurant business fluctuates a good deal by the official thermometer.'⁵ That banquets should suffer officious Party austerity campaigns highlights the deeper role of food in Chinese culture. The Chinese meal table, Jianying Zha claims, is a 'prototypical Chinese public space', where a whole range of collective mores and conflicts are revealed, confronted and negotiated. One of the Party's first acts in constructing a revolutionary ideology, back in its infant years of the 1920s, was to lay out explicit rules for banquets. In Hunan, the Peasants' Association thus made the following rules:

Sumptuous feasts are generally forbidden . . . In Hengshan county it has been resolved that eight dishes and no more may be served at a banquet. Only five dishes are allowed in the East Three District in Li-ning county, and only meat and three vegetable dishes in the North Second District, while in the West Third District New Year feasts are forbidden entirely.⁶

The Party's linking of food austerity with the performing of rituals for achieving class consciousness sounds eerily similar to classic texts, such as the *Li Ji* or *Yi Li*, which spelled out clearly what kind and how many dishes were appropriate for what rituals.

Food is, therefore, central to the staging of ritual in China. All calendar ritual events are marked by the offering of food to the ancestors and to the gods, who are expected to eat better than those of us on earth. Only if they eat well can we expect their blessings of good fortune in return. This represents somewhat the opposite of the culinary asceticism of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Whereas angels in the heaven of the West are apparently content to live on air

alone, Chinese supernaturals are connoisseurs of the feast. A famine in China is a calamity not only for the living, but for the ancestors as well, and those who succumb to starvation in China are condemned to roam the land as 'hungry ghosts' until they can be properly fed by their descendants who remain. A few scholars have even commented on the Chinese preoccupation with cannibalism, as a phenomenon that occurred repeatedly during times of famine, but also as the ultimate metaphor for chaos and a world turned upside down.⁷ Cannibalism was a common theme in Ming novels, and, when Europeans became an increasing presence in China, popular anxiety about the 'foreign devils' was expressed through tales of Europeans chasing after Chinese babies and devouring them. It is still not uncommon to hear parents discipline their children with the threat: 'Be good or a foreign devil will come and eat you up!'

It should not be surprising, then, that Chinese language is pervaded by metaphors of food and eating. One of the most common greetings in Chinese is simply, '*Ni chile meiyou*' literally 'Have you eaten yet?' but roughly equivalent to 'How are you?' To have difficulty, or go through a difficult period of life, is to *chi ku* or 'eat bitterness'. To be jealous is to *chi cu* or 'eat vinegar'. In Hong Kong, to 'eat ice cream with the eyes' is to gaze longingly at a member of the opposite sex. To do something strenuous is to *chi zhuang* or 'eat heaviness', while *chi xiang* 'eating fragrance', is to be popular and well liked. In Beijing, to have a job is to have *jiao gu*, or 'grains to chew', while the greatest achievement under the Communists – for urban workers, at least – was perhaps the guaranteeing of 'the iron rice bowl', or secure employment for all.⁸

The centrality of food and eating leads me to suspect that food also offers an important way of looking at how landscapes in China are viewed, and how they are constructed in relation to tourism. Certainly, Jun's Mingyu's comment seems to suggest as much. Chinese cuisine is, first of all, characterized by distinctive regional forms that mark clear local patterns of ethnicity. Chinese travellers are customarily expected to return home with a gift of food from the places visited. Partaking of the local cuisine – made with locally produced foodstuffs which, even if they look the same, will always have a somewhat distinctive flavour by contrast to the familiar foods of home – is a necessary step to really experiencing a new place or landscape. Metaphorically, then, a place in China is a feast, exquisitely concocted by the ancestors, and savored by their lucky descendants. The strong place-based nature of Chinese identities has inspired a long history of elite tourists: poets, geographers and other scholar-officials who grazed their way through cultural landscapes – feasts of poetry and painting – left by the ancestors long before them. 'To travel was to experience different kinds of food'; and to describe the lands through which they passed, travellers often resorted to poetic accounts of the foods they ate, for food was in many ways a crystallization of the local environment and landscape.⁹ Eating the food of the ancestors nourished the soul, gave one an appreciation for beauty, for landscape and for the traditions which gave a place its flavour.

Consuming places

Whereas in China this idea of feasting on places and landscapes may indicate a strong tradition of place-based identity, the ‘consumption’ of places by the tourism industry is often regarded with considerable suspicion by social scientists critical of tourism development. Indeed, tourism is more often regarded as *robbing* places of meaning, turning them into standardized replicas of tourists’ own expectations. Tourism *consume* places, and that’s a problem. Tourists have been compared to swarms of locusts, descending upon a place and leaving nothing left for locals to eat.¹⁰ In the wake of this sort of a plague, locals are thought to become place-starved.

Arguments of this sort abound. Palmer, for example, suggests that the neo-colonial nature of tourism in the Bahamas ‘prevents the local people from defining a national identity of their own’.¹¹ Because of the tourist’s appetite for ‘British Colonial flavour’, she writes, Bahamians themselves are unable ‘to progress from, and out of, the myths and stereotypes propagated under colonial rule’. That is, tourism has apparently left the Bahamians with a famished placelessness. Similarly, Connell finds that for all the attractions in Bali, the place itself is ‘conspicuously missing’.¹² No doubt it has already been eaten up by the millions of tourists who swarm to the tiny island each year. Paraphrasing Jameson’s idea of the ‘waning effect’ that results from the voracious and increasingly aestheticized consumption patterns of late capitalism, Britton wrote that tourism’s consumption of commodified places generates a ‘“flatness” where depth of appreciation, understanding, and especially meaning, is replaced with a “new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense”’.¹³ In this sense, the consumption of tourism is merely part of a more general cultural phenomenon. As Urry has observed, the postmodern culture of post-industrial societies makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish tourism from other forms of behaviour; lately, ‘people are much of the time tourists whether they like it or not.’¹⁴ Culture, exoticism and aesthetic experience have come to occupy an increasingly central position in post-industrial commercial production. In our everyday patterns of consumption, we act more and more like tourists eating up cultural experiences, identities and aestheticized representations of reality.

With inspiration from Jun Mingyu’s comment, I would argue that the hungry tourist’s consumption of place cannot be completely understood without a more careful examination of how places and landscapes are prepared, by locals, for consumption by outsiders. It is in this act of concoction that a place-based sense of identity may be articulated as an ongoing *process* rather than as a set of ‘essential ingredients’ whose consumption is a zero-sum game for locals.¹⁵ Increasingly, scholars have been approaching the relationship between tourism and culture in these terms. As Urry’s ‘tourist gaze’ becomes incorporated into an ever wider range of social life, tourism scholars have begun recognizing that

tourism – whatever we may think of it – is not a universal juggernaut, flattening everything in its path in the intentional or unintentional service of global homogeneity and uniformity. Study after study has documented how individuals and groups have

responded actively to both the constraints and the opportunities brought by tourism development.¹⁶

Tourism is increasingly recognized as a force that gets appropriated in the local dynamic of social relations and cultural politics.¹⁷ As such, its role in conditioning local identities is anything but straightforward. Tourism can be an agent in promoting state-sanctioned regional ethnic, cultural, or national identities, but may also become a resource in the local resistance to or manipulation of these identities. It can be a vehicle through which new conceptions of culture and place may be conveyed to, imposed upon or even appropriated by locals. Tourism can be a resource for intergroup rivalries as well. Research by Stevens and Adams, for example, has found that tourism has intensified Sherpa ethnic identity in Nepal and provided a stage upon which to reconstruct Sherpa traditions and raise Sherpa status *vis-à-vis* dominant Hindu culture.¹⁸ On the other hand, Rodriguez's work in Taos, New Mexico, reveals the negative results of this process for Hispanics who must suffer the Anglo romanticization of Native American culture in their hometown.¹⁹ Tourism has the potential to both upset and reinforce local social relations, and its interloping role in this regard can be read into the construction of tourist landscapes. In China, these landscapes – the food of the ancestors – are subject to competing representations of place, competing modes of consumption, and, indeed, competing groups of ancestors. Contests over place representation in the tourist landscape reflect social cleavages that fracture local space along the fault-lines of ethnicity, class, gender and a host of other categories of social differentiation.²⁰

The following case study ultimately reveals how a particular form of social differentiation, marked by ethnicity, informs different local claims in directing the path of tourism development in an isolated town in south-west China. But the broader conceptual point is that tourism development must be viewed, in part, as a story told by locals about themselves. Telling that story, in this case, means drawing upon (among other things) metaphors of food and eating – and in these terms we see the marking of distinction between those who actively link themselves to dominant narratives of Chinese culture and those who do not. Jun Mingyu, as will be revealed below, is solidly in the former camp.

The raw and the cooked

Jun's home town is in Guizhou province, in south-west China (Figure 1). Guizhou's is a rugged and rocky landscape dominated by highly eroded karst limestone topography – a difficult place to be a farmer. Much of the mountainous and plateau landscape – which separates the fertile basin of Sichuan to the north and the alluvial plains of Guangxi to the south – is incised with deep river gorges, pockmarked by caves and sinkholes, and riddled with subterranean rivers. Only the region's persistent poverty and, perhaps, the rather dreary weather has kept it from becoming a major tourist attraction, for much of the landscape resembles that found in Guilin, China's famed landscape of fairy-tale stone pillars and placid rivers. Jun's home town is itself situated along the banks



Figure 1 ~ Map of Guizhou

of a beautiful river, as the latter emerges from a spectacular and uninhabited gorge. While the town itself is populated by Han Chinese, the mountain slopes above the gorge, and surrounding the town, are dominated by Miao people, an officially recognized 'minority nationality' of China.²¹ Historically, this region was an upland frontier which remained only indirectly administered by imperial China, in some cases well into the Republican era of the early 20th century. As the Han Chinese gradually spread southward, they established outposts along rivers that stretched deep into aboriginal territory. The term *miao* is in fact a Han Chinese term meaning 'sprouts' or 'weeds'. The Miao were the 'uncivilized' aboriginals encountered by Chinese as they penetrated further up the river valleys of this plateau region.

That Chinese settlers referred to those they encountered in the stony hills of the Yangtze highlands as *miao* suggests, in fact, a food-oriented way of making sense of the other. Like a young seedling, the aboriginals were regarded as a people who, after a sufficient dose of proper Chinese civilization, would grow mature and, in a way, become edible. Indeed, during the imperial government's campaigns to implement direct administration over the region, the Miao were officially referred to as either *sheng* ('raw') or *shu* ('cooked'). *Sheng* Miao were unassimilated, rebellious and primitive. *Shu* Miao were assimilated, and were regarded by officials as important propagandists in spreading the virtues of Chinese civilization throughout the area.²² The culinary nature of their classification captured the way Chinese anxieties about the other have been expressed

in terms of food and eating. A story which surfaced in Beijing, for instance, told of a Chinese official who brought back with him a Miao woman from Yunnan who, like the European foreign devils, preyed upon the raw flesh of Chinese babies.²³ Miao women were also portrayed as witches who cast their spells by contaminating one's food. Such a fear emerged perhaps out of an anxiety over intermarriage in frontier regions such as Guizhou, which was very common. With uncivilized women doing all the cooking, would this not be the undoing of Chinese civilization's foothold in the frontier?

Frontier settlement was indeed articulated as a Chinese civilizing mission, much as Manifest Destiny legitimated the expansion of the United States toward the Pacific coast.²⁴ Although the Chinese initially preferred to foster tributary relationships with local leaders and maintain a relatively stable buffer zone of indirect non-Chinese rule on the frontiers, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, this system of tributary fiefdoms known as *tusi* was seen as operating against the administrative interests of the empire. Those interests were increasingly defined by the acute pressure for migration and settlement into new lands in frontier regions such as Guizhou. Phasing out the *tusi* system, however, inspired stiff resistance; protracted rebellions were common throughout the Yangtze highlands of eastern Guizhou and western Hunan. Yet whereas much of the highlands became a militarized landscape of garrisons, walls, and watch-towers, portions of Guizhou remained largely beyond imperial control – particularly the region of Jun Mingyu's home town. While the imperial army was distracted by the Taiping Rebellions in central China during the mid-19th century, rebels under the leadership of Zhang Xiumei held most of this region for over 20 years, until the Qing court could marshal an alliance of Sichuan and Hunan armies to finally crush them.²⁵

But the battle to incorporate the 'Miao borderlands' (*miaojiang*) of Guizhou – that persistent knot of *sheng*Miao – into the Chinese empire was more profoundly waged on cultural rather than military fronts. The proper way to bring the frontier into the Chinese fold was not through forceful conquest, but through the moral example of Chinese civilization. For the frontier was not simply defined as a spatial zone of tenuous administrative control, but as a realm on the very edges of China's moral order (Figure 2). The expansion of the Chinese empire was regarded as an organic process whereby the barbarians along the edges would gradually appreciate the superior civilization of the center; the raw would, in effect, become cooked. Han Chinese outposts, therefore, were not so much established to control the natives as to provide a beacon of civilization to bring the aborigines out of wildness. At the grassroots level, the most common means of achieving this was through intermarriage. Chinese settlers were busy moving in from overpopulated regions to the east, and most of them were men. Many were officially sponsored 'soldier-settlers' (*tun tian*), who were often conscripted in overpopulated areas and sent to pacify the barbarians by taking their land, marrying their women, and teaching them to cook 'proper' Chinese meals and begin observing the necessary food rituals for the ancestors. Meanwhile, land alienation was chronic for those aborigines who found themselves pushed onto ever more marginal highlands.

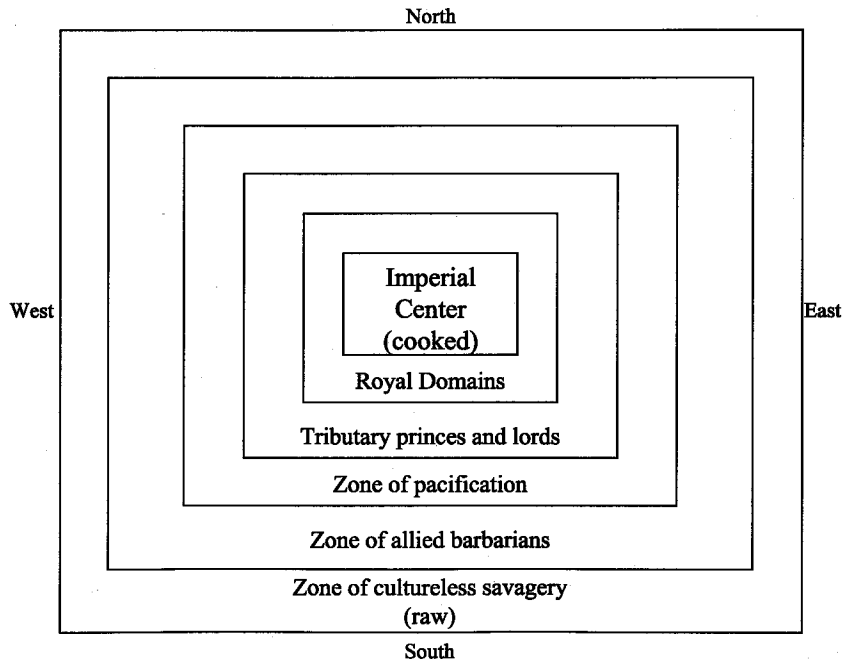


Figure 2 ~ The imperial continuum (based on Yi-fu Tuan, *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, values and attitudes* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1974))

Jun's home town occupies the upper end of a fertile floodplain, between the high rocky outcrops of two mountains (Figure 3). The river flows lazily past the town, shaded by bamboo groves, and over a weir, where its waters are diverted to power a number of stone mills. Farmers from miles around still bring grain to be milled here. As the steadily rotating stones scour their rice into the more 'civilized' food of fine white grains, the farmers visit the town to buy supplies or sell vegetables. Increasingly, however, they sell embroidered cloth and other handicrafts to the growing number of tourists passing the area, for the farmers are all Miao and Ge, rather than Han Chinese. And while it is the gorge and the serene setting of the town that primarily attracts tourists, its periodic market and the colourful villagers of the surrounding region have become an important component of the area's tourism potential. Nearly two-thirds of the people living in the administrative township (*zhen*) that surrounds the town are Miao, while most of the rest are Han and Ge.²⁶ Sixteen per cent of the population in 1990 were registered in non-agricultural households, most of them Han, making up the population of the town proper. Locals tend to view the area's mixed ethnicity in spatial terms: the Han live in the town, the Miao occupy the rest of the valley and nearby hillsides, and the Ge live in peripheral mountainside villages, tilling the township's most marginal land.

In late imperial times the town was one of Guizhou's most active river ports. It was one of the westernmost ports for traders travelling up the Qingshui River from Hunan, and became an important transshipment point for Guiyang- and



Figure 3 ~ Jun's home town

Yunnan-bound goods. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was one of Guizhou's two major opium ports. Opium was carried on foot from the province's chief growing regions in the west, and put on junks bound for Hunan and the Yangtze River corridor. As a merchant town, the Han Chinese population was composed of migrants from distant places. Entrepreneurs came from Jiangxi, Sichuan, Hunan, Hubei, Guangxi and Guangdong to set up shop, forming one of the largest concentrations of Han merchants in south-eastern Guizhou. They established elaborate regional guild halls, one of which, the Wanshou Gong, still stands in the town. Dating from 1755, this hall for Jiangxi merchants is now a protected yet deteriorating cultural relic. Vigorous trade also contributed to one of the most stable local political regimes in the region. The Yanmen *tusi*, just east of the town, was established in 1468 by a general from Chongqing and was not disbanded until 1935. The *tusi* for the town itself, also established in the 15th century, was not disbanded until 1928.²⁷

An outpost of proper Chinese cuisine

Jun Mingyu's hometown was historically regarded by its inhabitants as a foreign outpost in an indigenous wilderness of uncooked barbarians. Today's townspeople are descendants of traders all of whom came from down-river China. Although tourism development throughout most of this part of Guizhou actively reconstructs a tradition of ethnic exoticism and frontier mystery, the sense of tradition evoked in Jun's town is unambiguously Han Chinese. Much of the townscape still resembles a 19th-century river port, and such an

identity carries considerable cultural weight in China, where rivers and canals were historically the medium of nearly all interregional trade, communication and interaction.

The symbolic importance of rivers in Chinese culture resurfaced in the 1980s as ‘culture fever’ (*wenhua fei*) swept a country eager to reclaim some continuity with a past vilified during Mao’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.²⁸ This ‘search for roots’ (*xunge*) perhaps reached a crescendo in 1988, the Year of the Dragon. That year saw an explosion of studies, films, documentaries, magazines and other forms of public culture focusing on, among other things, the dragon cults of China’s rural folk.²⁹ Celebrations of *duanwujié*, the traditional ‘double fifth’ festival memorializing the scholar-official Qu Yuan, and celebrated with dragon-boat races, began to reappear on rivers throughout China. Dragons are folk symbols of water: temperamental bearers of rain, fickle gods of the rivers – the source of life and of catastrophe as well. Ritual offerings of food and drink to appease the dragons of the rivers have always been a practice of Chinese folk culture, but Confucian scholars in the imperial court appropriated these to celebrate a more worthy river spirit – that of Qu Yuan, who in 298 BC threw himself into a river upon finding his sage advice unheeded by his king.³⁰ The revival of dragon boat races in the 1980s signalled not only a renewed interest in folk culture, but perhaps even a re-evaluation of Confucian tradition and its notions of civility, refinement and culture.³¹

It was in this context that the townspeople began to initiate tourism development plans that sought to recreate the town’s historic role as a place where the raw become cooked. By 1994, this reconstructed vision of the town as a link of continuity with China’s ‘roots’ was just beginning to focus, aided significantly by the town’s elders association (*laonian xiehui*). This group was staunchly proud of the town’s past, and they seemed to draw their pride as much from a conservative and patriotic commitment to the ‘great tradition’ of downstream China as from the town as a distinctive place itself. The head of the association, for example, was a graduate of China’s prestigious Huangpu (Whampoa) Military Academy, the same Russian-built school that trained many Communist Party and KMT (Guomindang) revolutionaries, including Chiang Kai-shek himself. The head of the association was immensely proud of this background, and took pains to point it out to his numerous visitors.

The elders’ association supported a tourism development plan which included establishing an annual dragon-boat competition, memorializing a collection of three bridges that crossed the river just upstream from town and rebuilding a local temple. The overall objective of the plan was to develop the town’s link with history and, in particular, to reinforce its connection to the dominant civilizing traditions of China proper. The point of developing the bridges, for example, was to emphasize the different stages of history that the town had lived through (Figure 4). The first was a 19th-century iron-chain bridge, where pavilions were placed memorializing the history of the bridge and those who contributed financially to its restoration. The memorial also directed the attentions of visitors to a second bridge built in the 1930s, right next to its late imperial predecessor. This bridge served as a resting, one-lane reminder of the

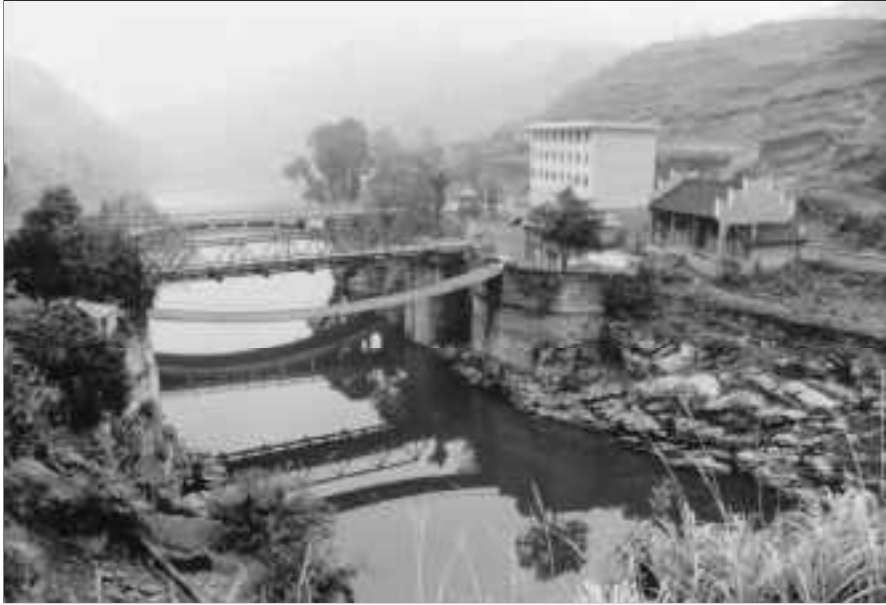


Figure 4 ~ The three bridges

town's KMT period of history. And next to it, a third highway bridge had also been built. As the memorial tablet pointed out, this newest of the three bridges symbolized China's era of 'socialist modernity'. The three dominant phases of history over the past century were thus neatly laid out next to each other in the form of three different bridges, each crossing the timeless river as it emerged from the untrampled wilderness of the gorge. The symbolic value of the site was truly astonishing, and townspeople had grasped the importance of exploiting it to its full potential.

1994 also marked the first year of the return of dragon-boat races to Jun's town (Figure 5). Prior to the communist revolution, dragon-boat races had been held on *duanwujie* at all the Han river towns in south-eastern Guizhou. Riverside communities of Miao had also staged elaborate ritual offerings to the river dragons, including boat races. But only in a nearby Miao town had the dragon-boat races managed to continue, albeit fitfully, throughout the Maoist era. There had been no place for river spirits among the trappings of socialist modernity in the Han towns of the region. And, ostensibly, the return of dragon-boat festivals was only sanctioned by the post-Mao state in order to promote popular sporting events. Indeed, the boat races draw well-trained teams from throughout the region. But for the elders' association in Jun's town, the dragon-boat festival was a link to the past, a past ironically 'preserved' by the nearby Miao. As one member of the association told me, 'The Miao have kept the link to the past, but the dragon boats originally came from the Han, not the Miao.' Reclaiming *duanwujie* for the Han towns perhaps signalled something of a repositioning of the festival, in realignment with its downstream origins. In the Nationalities Museum at the prefectural capital of Kaili, for example, the large



Figure 5 ~ Dragon-boat races

display devoted to the dragon boat tradition stresses that dragon-boat festivals ‘express the patriotic feelings of the people of southeast Guizhou’.

But while the elders’ association made use of the town’s river-oriented heritage as a potential tourist attraction, the centrepiece around which tourism was in fact developing in the area was the riverside inn and restaurant owned by Jun Mingyu. His inn was called *Xiaojiangnan* literally the ‘little *Jiangnan*’, in reference to that region of wealth, scholarship, and good food, the Yangtze River delta, far downstream from Jun’s home town. The *Xiaojiangnan* had been featured in two *People’s Daily* articles, which were proudly framed on the restaurant’s wall, and Jun himself was featured in a recently published book on leading figures in Guizhou’s tourism development.³² The newspaper articles played up what Jun himself likes to emphasize about his inn: its good food that recalls the flavours of the downstream world of civilized China. The *Xiaojiangnan* formed the cornerstone for Jun’s broader vision of tourism development in the area, and as head of the town’s wealthiest household, he had considerable leeway to promote this vision among town leaders. He regarded himself as the visionary founder of tourism development in the area. His story – indeed, his inn itself – offers a succinct illustration of how tourism is marshalled by locals in their efforts to construct a sense of place that is simultaneously distinct from and integrated with a broader cultural and society. But Jun’s vision also marks a sharp contrast to the place-based identities of the township’s Miao villagers, who devised their own tourism development scheme for the area. Their differences, as we shall see, illustrate the ways in which contesting versions of tradition get worked into the place identities being expressed through the local appropriation of the tourism industry.

Eating the food of the ancestors

In August 1984, Jun Mingyu opened the *Xiaojiangnan*. The start-up capital came from several local shareholding investors, and a big loan from the construction bank. Jun expanded the business rapidly, expecting an onslaught of tourists as China and Guizhou modernized and opened to the world. Jun had always been fond of travel. When he graduated from middle school in the late 1950s, he left his home town to roam all over China, supporting himself haphazardly by selling rat poison and carrying tourists' luggage up and down China's sacred mountain sites. It was at one such site, Sichuan's Emei mountain, he claims, that he had something of a tourist epiphany. In one week he carried luggage up and down the mountain five times. In a state of exhausted delirium, he became convinced that the Buddha did not distinguish between the rich and poor, that all could benefit from the mystical experience of travel. Tourism, in other words, was not simply a bourgeois pursuit of idle leisure, as Maoist ideologues would have claimed. In a country where the ideals of socialist egalitarianism had only yielded collective impoverishment and, at times, widespread famine, China's tourists could at least nourish their souls with the food of their ancestors. In Jun's mind, his town's river-trading ancestors, in particular, had bestowed a rich heritage upon a place whose landscape was at once forbidding and spectacular. Promoting the landscape of his native place, then, became what Jun remains fond of calling his 'mad love' (*fengkuang de ailian*) his obsession.

Returning to home from Emei mountain, Jun found a job in the township enterprise bureau. With the end of the Cultural Revolution and its vigilant campaigns against pre-revolutionary traditions, Jun began to establish the foundations of a diversified tourist economy. He began producing touristic crafts, establishing a local batik factory in 1978. The factory – a small workshop, really – employed several Ge women to produce traditional batik cloth for shops in China's infant tourist centres of Guilin, Xi'an and of course, Beijing. He was also involved in promoting numerous recreational and sporting events on the river. Even at this early date, Jun claims he was already convinced that the area's hopes for true modernization depended on tourism development. As he watched downstream China break out in 'culture fever' in the mid-1980s, he expected armies of delirious tourists searching for roots. He felt that the Guizhou frontier was an ideal place for this. The Japanese, for example, had begun to notice that the Miao of Guizhou displayed similar dress, hairstyle and customs to those found in ancient Japan; a steady stream of Japanese tourists began arriving in the early 1980s, searching for their own 'roots' among the Miao. Surely masses of coastal Chinese would soon be following these Japanese pioneers.

But for most Chinese, Guizhou was just an impoverished backwater without culture; the hordes of tourists did not come. Jun had over-extended himself. At one point he had over 60 people working for him. He had built several guest-houses, in addition to the restaurant. In 1986 everything fell apart. Impatient investors forced him to buy back their shares, the bank demanded repayment on its loan, and to top it off, Jun's wife died, leaving him with three children

to support and a restaurant to run. He sold off almost the entire business: buildings, beds, tables, chairs, everything except the restaurant itself. ‘This is another reason it’s a “mad love,”’ he told me. ‘It was crazy to keep the restaurant. I had no money, the children had to go to school. But I would never sell it. Without the *Xiaojiangnan* there is no tourism here.’ The *Xiaojiangnan* was, understandably, the culinary heart of his dream, the place where the food of the ancestors – that is, a particular set of downstream ancestors, representing, for Jun, the best of Chinese culture – was prepared, where tourists could enjoy a brief repose of genteel Chinese tradition in the midst of the Guizhou wilds.

Gradually, Jun rebuilt the business. In 1988 he remarried, expanding his family to seven children. He attached a guest-house to the restaurant, overlooking the river, and then added a new set of buildings – a kind of local conference centre – including a batik exhibition hall. In 1990 he diversified into ethnic tourist services. He contracted with three nearby villages to provide receptions for tourists who wanted a guided, day-long hike to an isolated Miao or Ge village. Jun became an astute packager of place. He was quick to recognize, for example, the need to promote local Ge batik as something unique and special in Guizhou’s batik-saturated crafts market. Guests at the *Xiaojiangnan* were shown a video, produced in Shanghai with Jun as local adviser, that confirmed the authenticity of Ge batik as ‘Guizhou’s finest’, ‘most ancient’ and ‘primitive’.³³

But while Jun was happy to include ethnic diversity as part of his overall, packaged version of the place’s attractions, his primary vision of local tourism development drew on the town’s Han ancestors and their efforts to tame the wilderness, to cook the rawness out of the people in the hills, the people ‘without culture’. In this goal, Jun turned his attention to that most obvious marker of primevalness: the deep and scenic gorge just upriver from the town (Figure 6). Jun’s vision for developing the narrow chasm as a tourist attraction was inspired by the 15th-century landscape paintings of a *Jiangnan* ancestor, Tang Yin (Figures 7 and 8).³⁴ Here, in these 500-year-old paintings of gnarled cliffs, twisted trees, waterfalls, quiet pools, contemplative thatched cottages, pavilions and bridges, was Jun’s vision of his town’s future. He wanted to create a ‘return-to-the-past’ (*fangu lüyo*) resort in the gorge.

Using the paintings as inspiration, Jun was to build a small lodge in the gorge, serving food as it was prepared for the elite of traditional China, and a number of rest stations along the river, where tea and wine would be served. At the lodge, everything – the rooms, the decor and especially the food – would be, as he put it, ‘authentically traditional’. A teahouse would offer evening concerts of traditional Chinese music. There would also be pleasant trails along the cliffs, up side-canyons, all inspiring the kind of feeling one gets from Tang Yin’s paintings. Guests and workers alike would wear traditional robes (the guests would put them on before boarding the boats which would take them into this dream world). Jun would recreate a completely ancient landscape. ‘The gorge would be perfect for it,’ he exclaimed. ‘It has never been lived in, a completely untouched landscape.’ Unlike the ‘fake’ Tang and Song dynasty tourist villages popping up around China, Jun’s venture would be completely separated from the contemporary world, a separation reinforced by entering a primeval



Figure 6 ~ The gorge

landscape within the gorge, cut off from the outside by steep cliffs and dense jungle. Leaving the gorge, guests would re-enter the modern world by passing beneath the three bridges, first the late imperial iron-chain bridge, then the 1930s KMT bridge, followed by the modern highway bridge.

Jun's sense of touristic history, borrowed from places far downstream, was meant to reinforce his town's own legacy as an outpost of migrants. The town was inhabited by the descendants of people who had brought their traditions from somewhere else. Tang Yin, after all, was from Suzhou not Guizhou; but he left a feast of the imagination for people like Jun Mingyu to gobble up. 'Tourism eats the food prepared by our ancestors,' he said, referring specifically to Tang Yin, and his plans for the gorge. This link to the ancestors, via tourism, also expressed a kind of folk populism in which development and modernization – seen here in terms of tourism – were claimed as local products, rather than alien projects. The town's tourist resources – the temple, bridges, dragon-boat races and a fantasy land within the gorge – was solely the work of the people and their ancestors. Jun Mingyu put it in these terms:

All the temples, all the ancient culture, all of it comes from our ancestors; they have laid the foundation for me to build on. The state (*guojia*) has never given me a single cent for tourism. I pay taxes, I help develop the economy, and they've never given me anything. It is the ancestors who will help me succeed, not the state. The state only gives money to places like Huangguoshu and Longgong; it builds big, expensive hotels.³⁵ But [here] it will be different. Our tourism will depend on the ancestors, not the government. The ancestors will see us through.

Significantly, there was no real place for ethnic tourism in all of this. Certainly Jun had plans for developing the area's ethnic tourism resources, but they were



Figure 7 ~ Tang Yin (1470–1524), 'Snow-clearing on the Han Pass'



Figure 8 ~ Tang Yin (1470–1524), 'Serving tea'

of only secondary concern. Minority culture, for Jun, was primitive and uncivilized: 'They hold bull fights; they used to hang the heads of their enemies on their walls. They have a barbaric tradition. They have no culture [*Tamen meiyou wenhuā*].' Jun was less interested in serving up for tourists these realities of the town, located as it is in the midst of Miao and Ge villages. Instead, his ideas were anchored by the civilizing influence of the *Xiaojiangnan* where the historic role invested in frontier river towns such as his continued, in his mind, to be realized, where the raw became cooked. As such, the restaurant incorporated features which reminded the visitor not of the borderlands, but of the traditional cultural centres of Suzhou, Hangzhou and Wuxi, including a moon gate, traditional lamps and traditional calligraphy, produced by Jun himself, adorning the sides of doorways. Indeed, one of these reminds visitors of a state official's inspired exclamation to Jun upon lunching at *Xiaojiangnan* 'A *Jiangnan* native, missing the food of his native land, comes to *Xiaojiangnan* and finds the flavors of his home.'

Making the ancestors' food taste better

The irony is that while the 'return to the past' resort represents the climax of Jun's vision, the gorge runs through land controlled by Miao and Ge villagers. The town remains an outpost in this corner of Guizhou where Miao and Ge outnumber Han by more than two to one. With his tourist vision, Jun reinforced the town's link with dominant China, essentially ignoring the 'undeveloped' culture of the minorities; they became a temporary side-show. Jun's plan, for example, did nothing to remind visitors that the iron-chain bridge under which they would pass in boats, dressed like *Jiangnan* poets and scholars, was built by the Hunan army after it brutally crushed Zhang Xiumei's rebellion, took land from indigenous villagers, and gave it to militarists from Sichuan and Hunan. The area's local Miao and Ge villagers are not unaware of the gorge's potential as a tourist resource, but in *their* vision of its development they would be loath to construct a fantasy of what has for so long been an oppressive downstream culture. Rather, they see developing the gorge as a straightforward path toward economic self-reliance.

By 1994, a plan for the development of the gorge had already been mapped out by Pan Guanru, the head of one village in which a large portion of the gorge was located, with the cooperation of the county government's tourism bureau. Jun Mingyu had not even been consulted, and was understandably upset by this. Villagers had already constructed a path from the iron-chain bridge upstream to a waterfall, and planned to start charging tourists to use the path. By 1994, they had already spent RMB¥ 30 000 of village collective funds. According to Jun, this was a complete waste of money. 'Tourists won't be interested in hiking along a path,' he said; 'they'll want to take boats into the gorge, just like the boatmen of ancient China.' Tourists, he claimed, wanted to be entertained and well fed. What the villagers should have done, he said, was simply develop the area around the waterfall itself and then charge boats a small fee

for docking there. It was just another example of villagers blindly investing their money. 'They're Miao; they don't understand business and they don't understand tourism.'

When I spoke with Pan Guanru, however, it became clear that exploiting the gorge was simply part of a general development plan for the village. He said they planned to complete a path all the way through the gorge, and to hold ethnic-style receptions for tourists hiking through. He expected the village to invest an additional RMB¥ 100,000 in the project. His village had actually accumulated a substantial amount of cash during the 1980s by specializing in tobacco production. Intensive cash-cropping had earned them a great deal of money in a short time. But the continuous planting of tobacco had rapidly depleted their soil of nutrients, and now they were forced to return to a traditional rotation of staple crops. Tourism was the first of a three-part economic development plan drawn up by Pan and the village collective to supplement agricultural income. Tourism, it was hoped, would increase the number of outsiders coming to the area, and increase village incomes. This would enable the second part of the plan to be implemented: an open market in which local agricultural products and crafts would be sold wholesale or retail to outsiders. Pan would locate the market near the iron-chain bridge, at the beginning of the path. As income increased, villagers would then build a food-processing plant, so they themselves could receive the value added on their own agricultural products. Pan said that the rural economy in the area had been getting worse over the past decade. It was getting harder and harder to earn a decent livelihood based on grain income alone.³⁶ Farmers, he said, would have to take the initiative themselves if they wanted to get out of this rut, and the only way was to take control of commercializing their own economy.

Whether or not the villagers' plan was feasible or was simply, as Jun asserted, a waste of capital, it clearly represented a different vision of the relationship between landscape, local culture and the broader culture and political economy of China. Whereas Jun sought to invest the landscape with the symbolic markers of an imagined downstream tradition of civility, Pan Guanru was simply concerned with achieving economic self-determination in an increasingly marketized economy which threatened to be only the latest version of a history of marginalization for Miao and Ge farmers. The only symbolism the villagers' plan invested in the gorge was a walking path toward modernization. Representing the landscape in terms of an imagined downstream tradition only served to remind Pan and other villagers of their marginal status; it defined a place where they themselves were the outsiders, the barbarians on the edges of civilization. The importance of developing the gorge thus lay in 'improving' it with cement paths, charging tourists fees to see it and encouraging them to buy village products. The development of the gorge would reinforce the village's independence and control of landscape over which, historically, the Miao and Ge had always maintained only tenuous control. Indeed, the plan was largely focused on developing greater food security for villagers, many of whom still found it difficult to feed themselves adequately throughout the year. The food Jun's ancestors left for villagers to eat was bitter. It was their goal not to simply

reheat this ancient broth, but to make it taste better. A tourism-funded food-processing plant was, symbolically, an appropriate response.

Conclusion

This final wry observation – the irony of a tourism-funded food-processing plant – alerts us to the question of just where the food metaphors in this essay are coming from. Clearly, the Miao villagers are not consciously choosing to subvert the ‘raw’ and ‘cooked’ signifiers with which their own ancestors were marked by building a modern food-processing plant. They are familiar with the terms, but equate them with the ‘old society’, with a time long since past. Jun Mingyu himself would perhaps balk at the suggestion that his restaurant, as well as his plans for the gorge, represented a project of ‘cooking’ the ‘rawness’ out of the ‘cultural wilderness’ that is Guizhou. I do not mean to suggest that these metaphors consciously inform the actions of the people in this essay. Nor am I trying to argue that food and eating form some sort of superorganic cultural essence that drives people to fashion their cultural landscapes in certain ways.

But these metaphors *can* be interpreted as a language used for articulating one’s relationship to more dominant forces. My goal has been to evoke the subtlety of that articulation by drawing on the centrality of food as a dominant cultural language subject to varying interpretations and meanings. The language of food, then, serves as a marker in this essay for the symbolic appropriation of dominant discourses at the local level. There are, of course, other metaphors from which I could have also drawn. One that does creep into the analysis is that of rivers, water and dragons. The point is not that food is the only language that matters, but that it serves to illustrate a more general process of cultural appropriation. Jun Mingyu, I would argue, actively appropriates a dominant Chinese discourse of civilization and culture as he situates himself – as an agent of modernization and change – within the spatial and temporal context of his home town. It is not so much that he seeks to reproduce a legacy of imperial subjugation on the frontier, but that such a legacy has left behind a symbolic language that informs the way he articulates his relationship to ‘downstream’ China. At the same time, the relative absence of this language in the approach of the Miao villagers to the tourism project is also indicative of their own relationship with ‘downstream’ China. It helps us see more clearly the different way they view themselves as agents of modernization and change. Tradition, the ‘food of the ancestors’, is thus a highly selective construction.

This is not, then, a study of tourism development *per se*. The reader already realizes that tourism is more a dream in this place than a reality, a dream that may never be realized on the scale that its local proponents – regardless of their particular vision of its development – might hope. The idea of tourism, rather, is a vehicle for illustrating how people regard the process of modernization in relation to ideas of tradition and cultural difference. The dreams of tourism – for Jun and the villagers alike – are dreams of achieving modernity, security and wealth. But these processes – modernization, tourism, development, whatever

you want to call them – do not occur in a sociocultural vacuum, but can only emerge out of deeply embedded systems of meaning that are, in fact, the product of complex cultural articulations across scale and across time.

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Notes

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- ² E. N. Anderson, *The food of China* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1988), p. 200; see also Chang, 'Introduction', p. 12.
- ³ Anderson, *Food of China* p. 200.
- ⁴ Zha, *China pop* p. 122.
- ⁵ *Ibid* p. 126.
- ⁶ Cited in Chang, 'Introduction', p. 15.
- ⁷ Anderson, *Food of China* p. 85; J. Becker, *Hungry ghost* (New York, Free Press, 1996), pp. 10, 20–1.
- ⁸ For a lengthy account of how the food and eating pervade Chinese language, see A. Zee, *Swallowing clouds* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1990).
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- ¹⁰ See L. Turner and J. Ash, *The golden hordes: international tourism and the pleasure periphery* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1976).
- ¹¹ C. Palmer, 'Tourism and colonialism: the experience of the Bahamas', *Annals of Tourism Research* **21** (1994), pp. 792–811.
- ¹² J. Connell, 'Bali revisited: death, rejuvenation, and the tourist cycle', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* **11** (1993), pp. 641–61.
- ¹³ S. Britton, 'Tourism, capital, and place: towards a critical geography of tourism', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* **10** (1991), p. 465.
- ¹⁴ J. Urry, *The tourist gaze* (London, Sage, 1990), p. 82.
- ¹⁵ The concept of place underlying this paper is derived largely from the work of geographers, such as Pred and Massey, for whom place is a *process* whereby local layers of history articulate with social, political and economic processes operating at much larger scales. Place is the site where the different levels of abstraction between the

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- ¹⁶ R. Wood, 'Tourism and the state: ethnic options and constructions of otherness', in M. Picard and R. Wood, eds, *Tourism, ethnicity, and the state in Asian and Pacific societies* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 5.
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- ²⁰ See e.g. contests over place representation in tourism developments documented in M. Hertzfeld, *A place in history: social and monumental time in a Cretan village* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1991); M. Johnson, 'Making time: historic preservation and the space of nationality', *position* 2 (1994), pp. 177-249; G. J. Ashworth and P. J. Larkham, eds, *Building a new heritage: tourism, culture, and identity in the new Europe* (London, Routledge, 1994); J. Urry, *Consuming places* (London, Routledge, 1995).
- ²¹ China officially recognizes 55 minority nationalities (*shaoshu minzu*). With a population of nearly 6 million, the Miao are the 5th most populous minority group in China, and the largest minority group in Guizhou province.
- ²² See N. Diamond, 'Defining the Miao: Ming, Qing, and contemporary views', in S. Harrell, ed, *Cultural encounters on China's ethnic frontiers* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 92-116; W. Eberhard, *China's minorities: yesterday and today* (Belmont, CA, Wadsworth, 1982); R. Jenks, *Insurgency and social disorder in Guizhou: the 'Miao' rebellion, 1854-1877* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1994).
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- ²⁴ S. Harrell, 'Civilizing projects and reactions to them', in Harrell, *Cultural encounters* pp. 3-36.
- ²⁵ On the 19th century 'Miao rebellions' in Guizhou, see Jenks, *Insurgency and social disorder*.
- ²⁶ The Ge are a group whose official classification status remains 'undetermined', yet who staunchly insist on an identity separate from the Miao, with whom the state's official ethnic identification (*minzu shibie*) project has been inclined to lump them. See S.W. Cheung, 'Representing and negotiating Ge identities in Southeast Guizhou', in M. Brown, ed, *Negotiating ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Berkeley, University of California Institute for East Asian Studies, 1996).
- ²⁷ Material on the population and history of Jun's town is found in the *Huangping Xianzhi* [Huangping County Gazetteer] 1992.
- ²⁸ For an overview, see J. Wang, *High culture fever: politics, aesthetics, and ideology in Deng's China* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996); X. D. Zhang, *Chinese modernism*

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- ³⁰ D. Hawkes, ‘General introduction’, in D. Hawkes, trans., *Songs of the south: an anthology of ancient Chinese poems by Qu Yuan and others* (London, Penguin, 1985), pp. 15–66.
- ³¹ A number of recent discussions of intellectuals and artists in post-Mao China, for example, have raised the issue of a ‘Confucian revival’ among cultural elites struggling to redefine their role in the vacuum of Maoist ideology. See W. M. Tu, ed, *China in Transformation* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1994).
- ³² See X. L. Liu, *Guizhou Luyou Pulu Reji* [Pioneers of Guizhou Tourism] (Beijing, China Tourism Press, 1993), pp. 145–55.
- ³³ This video is in fact quite revealing in terms of the ideals of the ‘civilizing mission’ which had long been part of the heritage of Jun’s hometown. The film follows a trajectory of country–woman–ancient–traditional to city–man–contemporary–modern. Village women are first shown performing their ‘timeless’ craft, but later the video’s perspective broadens to the whole world by including all the places and forms to which batik had implicitly diffused from Guizhou. The last half of the video is instructional, featuring a very modern man in a shirt and tie giving step-by-step in-your-own-home instructions for making batik. The video ends with the comment that, even though modern life is not the same as traditional life, we can still learn from this ancient craft and apply it to our lives in new and different ways.
- ³⁴ Tang Yin (1470-1524) was a Suzhou (*Jiangnan*) native and a leader in the Wu School of Chinese landscape painting. A hard-drinking eccentric, Tang had been educated for an official career and had even been placed first in the Jiangsu provincial exam in 1498. But when a cheating scandal prevented him from sitting for the highest exam in Beijing, he returned to Suzhou and took up painting as a means of re-establishing respect and social status in society. See J. Cahill, *Parting at the shore: Chinese painting of the early and middle Ming dynasty, 1368–1580* (New York, Weatherhill, 1978), pp. 193–200; A. Clapp, *The painting of Tang Yin* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- ³⁵ ‘Huangguoshu’ and ‘Longgong’ refer to Guizhou’s two most popular tourist attractions: China’s largest waterfall, and a spectacular subterranean river. Both are located in the central part of the province, near the provincial capital of Guiyang.
- ³⁶ On the continuing condition of rural poverty in Guizhou and other marginal areas, see R. D. Hill, ‘People, land, and an equilibrium trap: Guizhou, China’, *Pacific Viewpoint* 34 (1993), pp. 1–24; T. Oakes, ‘Selling Guizhou’, in H. Hendrichke and C.Y. Feng, eds, *The political economy of China’s provinces* (London, Routledge, forthcoming); J. Unger, ‘“Rich man, poor man”: the making of new classes in the countryside’, in D. Goodman and B. Hooper, eds, *China’s quiet revolution: new interactions between state and society* (Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1994), pp. 43–63; J. Unger and J. Xiong, ‘Life in the Chinese hinterlands under the rural economic reforms’, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 22 (1990), pp. 4–17; X.Q. Wang and N.F. Bai, *The poverty of plenty* (trans. A. Knox) (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1991).