China's Provincial Identities: Reviving Regionalism and Reinventing "Chineseness"

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IN HIS SCIENCE-FICTION NOVEL *The Diamond Age* (1995), Neal Stephenson envisions a post–nation-state world of the future, where countless fragmentations of cultural identity differentiate humanity into spatially discrete tribal zones. Identity has become entirely spatialized, rendering its historical basis—that is, the experiences that generate a "collective memory" for a community—into a decontextualized montage of nostalgia. Stephenson writes a world where modernist notions of progress and development through linear time have been replaced by cultural differentiation across space: history has been conquered by geography. History has become little more than a resource for borrowed cultural traits that are mapped onto discrete territories, and identity is self-consciously constructed by adopting the ready-made form of a particular cultural group. As Stephenson allows us to observe the excesses of this kind of postmodern tribalism, China comes to represent the ultimate form of spatialized cultural identity. In *The Diamond Age*, China is represented more as an organic cultural system than a historically progressing nation. But it is only China's interior that is represented as such. The People's Republic has been splintered into an extremely wealthy coastal strip—essentially one big export processing zone—and an increasingly impoverished interior, which, in a self-orientalizing twist, now calls itself the "Celestial Kingdom," and is ruled not by a Communist Party leader (Marxism having long since been denounced as a Western plot to undermine Chinese values) but by a self-proclaimed "Chamberlain to the Throneless King," that is, a minister representing Confucius himself. Whereas the coast has rich and cosmopolitan cities that are among the finest in the world, the interior claims a moral superiority that comes only from its assertion of cultural purity; the interior is the "true" organic China.

The remarkable thing about *The Diamond Age* is how it repackages recent trends in Chinese culturalist discourse by playing out a theme of China's "ultrastable" cultural identity and historical entrapment. In Stephenson's China, historical events have a habit of reappearing like apparitions that have not yet been laid to rest. History

appears trapped in a seemingly endless pattern of recycling—a recycling driven by the "deep structure" of China's timeless cultural geography. This idea mirrors those of prominent 1980s intellectuals such as Jin Guantao and Sun Longji, who, finding in cybernetics and systems theory alternatives to the orthodox historical materialism of Chinese Marxism, argued that China, as a cultural system, displayed an "internal resilience" and a "capacity for adjustment" so that revolutionary upheavals and disruptions were recurrently absorbed into an "ultrastable" system (see Barmé and Minford 1988, 131–36). Similarly, events in Stephenson's China unfold in a cyclic rather than diachronic pattern, forcing China to continuously relive the past. It is not simply that history repeats itself, but that "China" as a sociocultural phenomenon marks a more general condition of history trapped by geography. More specifically, China's history is trapped by a cultural geography, an ultrastable spatial identity of "Chineseness."[1]

The Diamond Age taps not only a vein of culturalist discourse within China, but a broader civilizational discourse in which cultural essentialisms are being trotted out to explain global problems of geopolitical tension (Huntington 1996) and economic unevenness (Landes 1998). Civilizational discourse owes the same debt to a determining cultural geography as do claims of "Chineseness." Thus, Huntington characterizes the difference between Western and non-Western civilizations as the unilinear progress of Enlightenment values vs. "a cyclical dynamic" of religious and cultural consciousness (Ong 1999, 189). Stephenson's portrayal of China expresses this sensibility, where a "superorganic" cultural weight represses liberal development and, indeed, historical progress itself. These civilizational discourses are, I would argue, ideologies of culture and geography in the service of what Ong (ibid.) refers to as a new geopolitics of global capitalism, where East and Southeast Asia have emerged—financial crisis notwithstanding—as a center of power challenging the dominance of the West.

That Stephenson chooses to differentiate a culturally authentic but technologically and economically impoverished Chinese interior from a corrupted and colonized coast offers a point of departure for an analysis of the relationships between the rising power of capitalism in Asia and cultural regionalism in China. In this essay, the argument advanced is that such regionalism in China's interior is often accompanied by claims of Chineseness that reflect the civilizational thinking and culturalist discourse captured in The Diamond Age. While the increasing importance of China's regions and provinces can be easily linked to economic reforms that have emphasized fiscal decentralization, commercial development, and local specialization in developing "comparative advantage," regionalism in China's interior involves much more than local promotion for the purposes of economic development. China's regions have been

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[1]Of China's ultrastable cultural identity, Sun Longji writes, "This tendency toward stagnation is also evident in the personality of every Chinese individual. A Chinese is programmed by his culture to be 'Chinese.' In other words, in-bred cultural predispositions make the Chinese what they are and prevent them from being full-blown individuals. Dynamic human growth is an alien concept to the Chinese" (Barmé and Minford 1988, 136). While Stephenson may not go to such culturalist lengths in his portrayal of Chinese identity (though he comes close in his 1993 Wired article), he is clearly drawing upon the same sentiments as have inspired Sun to reach such heights of self-flagellation. Of history's entrapment, Jin Guantao writes, "China has not yet freed itself from the control of history. Its only mode of existence is to relive the past. There is no accepted mechanism within the culture for the Chinese to confront the present without falling back on the inspiration and strength of tradition" (Barmé and Minford 1988, 133).

engaged in a broader project of cultural geography, whereby regions and provinces are being distinguished as coherent cultural units, and where the (re)constitution of a place-based identity at a provincial scale is perhaps an even greater goal than regional economic modernization.

For disadvantaged interior regions of China, I argue that cultural regionalism has resulted in a variety of discourses of Chineseness as a core feature of local cultural promotion and economic development. Promoting Chineseness as a unique feature of regional culture serves to connect localities to broader networks of power that include the national scale of the People's Republic of China, the supranational scale of "Greater China" (including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other sites of Chinese capitalism), and the global scale of transnational capital. Indeed, promoting Chineseness is part of a strategy whereby local elites attempt to promote a cultural identity attractive to the "flexible accumulation" of global capitalism. Thus, local political, economic, and intellectual elites see themselves actively engaged in a project of constructing regional culture that seeks to align itself with broader forms of political-economic power in very specific ways. While regionalism in China's interior illustrates the ways localities attempt to strengthen and distinguish themselves by displaying a unique cultural heritage and vitality, it also illustrates the ways they attempt to position themselves into the pathways of power that circulate throughout China, the Asian Pacific area, and the world. My concern, here, is to explore the discourses of Chineseness in interior regionalism as an ideology and a strategy of local elites, enabling them to log onto broader networks for the purposes of accessing resources of power such as capital, legitimacy, and authority. I do not attempt to account for the actual cultural content of such regionalisms in any systematic way, but rather to explore the way cultural symbols and meanings are manipulated by elites in ideological ways for very specific purposes.

But the essay's title also suggests an additional issue at stake with cultural regionalism in China's interior. The *province*, I argue, is becoming the focal scale of this regionalism, and this represents an important development in China's cultural geography. Provincial elites attempt to "scale-up" more local, place-based identities to match the discrete space within a provincial boundary, as well as rein in transprovincial regionalisms that detract from provincial coherence. This, I will argue, produces often tortuous constructions of "provincial culture" and "provincial identity," where diverse local practices are sometimes cobbled together in cumbersome ways, or erased altogether, in the interests of a "pan-local" identity.[2] Finally, my title suggests questions about the relationship between identity and scale, for while provinces express territoriality at a specific scale, cultural subjectivities cannot be reduced to particular scales but instead transcend scale. Thus, there is ultimately an instability to the project of capturing regionalism within the territorial confines of the province (or any other discrete space for that matter). Such instability, in fact, is also inherent in the broader culturalist and civilizational discourses called upon to legitimate provincial identities. They are unstable because they seek to confine subjectivity to a particular scale, a confinement the subject will always resist. This territorialization of identity not only reveals the state's attempt to spatially fix the boundary-hopping flows of capital, but reduces identity to a set of residual, and readily marketable, cultural markers. Ultimately, the province, as a container for identity,

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[2]See Wigen 1996 for an insightful analysis of similar efforts at establishing a "pan-local" regional identity in the Japanese province of Shinano.

offers less a space for a revived confidence and Chineseness to flourish, and more a space ripe for commodification and colonization by broader powers of capital.

Global Capitalism and Local/Regional Culture

It has become a common observation that globalization is tearing the world apart even as it increasingly stitches it together (Featherstone 1990; Wilson and Dissanayake 1996; Jameson and Miyoshi 1998). The increasing mobility of capital and the ease with which mass media envelops the globe have been accompanied by a considerable amount of sociocultural and political fragmentation. It may be premature to dismiss the nation-state as an anachronism of modernity in this age of late capitalism's boundary-hopping subcontracting mode, but modern states clearly do not command the cultural allegiance that modernization theorists at one time thought they would (Smith 1988; Arnason 1990). Cultural expressions and articulations of identity have apparently shifted scale. "The local" and "the regional" are now regarded as more salient scales for asserting cultural identity than the nation-state, which for its part has been accused of marginalizing any local or regional cultural variation that did not fit with its agendas of integration, modernization, and development.[3]

The rise of the local, and the shift in scale it represents, has been interpreted in relation to the simultaneous rise of global capital (Harvey 1989; Swyngedouw 1989; Bird et al. 1993). One possible avenue of interpretation in this vein might be to claim that transnational capital's challenge to national sovereignty has, in effect, forced the retreat of cultural identity to more local enclaves. Inadequately equipped to face the onslaught of investors, speculators, and other agents of global capital, nation-states become irrelevant containers for identity-construction. Instead, they become fragmented by a host of social movements seeking to articulate a more localized identity and cultural practice. In these terms, the local is often regarded as a space of resistance to both the modernist abstractions of the nation-state and the placeless globalism of transnational capital (Rose 1994; May 1996).

Yet this approach to the local as a space of resistance to the forces of global capital ignores the continuing importance of the state in mediating transnational flows, as well as important changes in the nature of capitalism itself. On the one hand, states are capable of developing spatial strategies for channeling global capital towards specific areas of development and specific populations (Agnew and Corbridge 1995). Indeed, rather than becoming irrelevant, many states have proven remarkably adaptable to global capital's imperatives of neoliberalism and reterritorialization (Ong 1999, 214–25). On the other hand, capital has not just shifted scale, from national to global levels of production, distribution, and accumulation. Contemporary globalization is not just an expanded version of capitalism, but an altogether new form of capitalism. Capital can no longer be conceptualized simply as a colonizing force that steamrolls "traditional" cultural and economic landscapes into modern flatscapes of standardized mass production and consumption. The power of global capital is much more subtle than this crude modernist model of a juggernaut ruthlessly expanding from the core to the peripheries, colonizing and consuming

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[3]On the assumption of that identity would, with modernization, take on the territorial parameters of the nation-state, see the chapter, "Economic Development and Democracy," in Lipset 1960. Other valuable sources on nationalism and identity include Gellner 1983; Smith 1983; Anderson 1983; Gluck 1985; Nairn 1988; and James 1989.

everything in its path (see Lowe and Lloyd 1997). "What the new 'flexible production' has made possible is that it is no longer necessary to utilize explicit coercion against labor, at home or abroad (in colonies); those peoples or places that are not responsive to the needs (or demands) of capital, or are too far gone to respond 'efficiently,' simply find themselves out of its pathways" (Dirlik 1996, 32). Capital no longer needs to force the noncapitalist world to bend to its will; it simply waits for suitors to eagerly come to it. The technologies that have enabled capital's spatial divisions of labor to expand to a global scale, and that have enabled rapid adjustments in production, distribution, and marketing of goods, have also allowed transnational capital to, in effect, hold communities "hostage" with the threat of picking up and leaving (or not coming at all) unless the needs of accumulation can be satisfied. The local imperative, then, is not to resist the incursions of transnational capital, but to *align* with those flows.

The most obvious cases of this aspect of global capitalism are well known and documented (Storper and Walker 1989; Lipietz 1993; Johnston et al. 1995; Dicken 1998). Local states have become active promoters of a so-called "new international division of labor" in hopes of accruing some long-term development benefits, even as the great majority of short-term benefits (that is, profits) revert to the headquarters of transnational corporations. The result has been a rapidly expanding landscape of export processing zones and special economic zones where national laws guaranteeing the rights of labor are seemingly suspended in the interests of a state being considered an "emerging market" ripe for private investment. These zones have been encouraged by a steady process of deregulation in which much of the macroeconomic system of regulation established following the end of World War II has been dismantled (Agnew and Corbridge 1995). Liberalization of international currency markets and the assault on trade barriers of all kinds, combined with the relative decline in official multilateral aid as the primary source of development capital, have resulted in a world where the battle lines of development are no longer drawn between capitalism, socialism, or other political ideologies, but between different localities trying to trump each other's package of incentives designed to attract mobile capital. As the recent economic crisis throughout much of Asia has demonstrated, local states risk a great deal as they scramble to attract international investors. If anything, the crisis has made obvious how the power centers of transnational capital share very little of this risk and are able to keep "emerging markets" highly vulnerable to the high stakes of currency speculation and "flexible accumulation."[4]

Yet the proliferation of localities offering attractive landing pads for capital as it appears to soar indiscriminately around the world cannot by itself explain the rise of "the local" as an increasingly relevant scale of cultural and/or political identity. Localities not only struggle to offer an attractive package of political-economic incentives, including a disciplined labor force and a liberalized regulatory environment. They also struggle to package themselves as attractive and dynamic *cultures*. This is another significant way that contemporary global capitalism is different from capitalism's earlier forms. Local cultural diversity and difference are no longer regarded as obstacles to capitalist development, but rather have become core features of the expansion of the commodity form.[5] From the perspective of capital,

[4]On the Asian financial crisis, see Lim 1998 and Poon and Perry 1999. On China specifically, see Steinfeld 1998.
[5]By "commodity form" I refer to something that is produced for its exchange-value in the marketplace. The expansion of the commodity form, at its most basic level, is meant to capture the process whereby use-value is replaced by exchange-value as the primary goal of production. By extension, the commodification of cultural products entails a "production" of culture for the purpose of exchange.

there are at least two important reasons why local and regional culture are now regarded as a key component of its accumulation strategies.

First, as the commodity form expands into new cultural contexts around the world, capitalists have recognized the importance of appropriating local cultural practices and products into their repertoire of marketing images. This process has been termed "global localism" by transnational corporations who have themselves adopted the scaled-down language of "the local" as the heart of their market expansion strategies. These strategies are no longer based on an assumed "modern" mass-produced identity firmly situated within the space of the West or even the nation-state, but rather on local and regional identities that may retain cultural elements of the "traditional" and the "folk" that are often non-Western and subnational. Thus, Coca Cola seeks to insinuate itself into the local cultural consciousness of the non-Western world by insisting on being an integral part of local culture, as revealed by the company's own statement: "We are not multinational, we are multilocal." The corporate strategy of naturalizing company products within a local cultural context has been termed "guerrilla marketing" by at least one proponent of global capitalist development:

> The world market is now being computer micromapped into consumer zones according to residual cultural factors (i.e. idioms, local traditions, religious affiliations, political ideologies, folk mores, traditional sexual roles, etc.), dominant cultural factors (i.e. typologies of life-styles based on consumption patterns: television ratings, musical tastes, fashions, motion picture and concert attendance, home video rentals, magazine subscriptions, home computer software selection, shopping mall participation, etc.), and emergent cultural factors (i.e. interactive and participatory video, mobile micromalls equipped with holography and super conductivity, computer interfacing with consumers, robotic services, etc.)". Emergent marketing strategies must move further beyond the commodity itself and toward the commodity as image, following marketing contingencies all the way down. And here, precisely, is the task of guerrilla marketing: to go all the way with the images we create and strike where there is indecision" Like guerrilla fighters, we must win hearts and minds.
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> (Cited in Dirlik 1994, 70)

Global localism, thus, entails the "domestication" of transnational capital, such that the local is not displaced, or rendered irrelevant and obsolete, but is carefully manipulated to meet the conditions of capital accumulation via the mobilization of selected "residual," "dominant," and "emergent" cultural factors that merge and acquire meaning on a local scale (see Morely and Robins 1995, 117).[6]

The second reason local culture is regarded a key component of global capitalist accumulation strategies can be found in the growing literature on the importance of "regional culture" to the development of dynamic emerging economies (Ohmae 1993; Gertler 1997). A growing volume of work on Anglo-American "business culture," for example, has asserted that the ideology of competitive individualism has not been conducive to economic growth in the era of flexible accumulation. Rather, the success

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[6]As Poon and Perry (1999, 190) point out, global capital's articulation with "the local" is also evidence of the fact that globalization does not simply erase borders or make territorial geography obsolete, as Ohmae (1990) has claimed. Rather, "Capital's spatial mobility is constrained by territorially-based social relations, with national boundaries still demarcating the major cleavages between social experiences . . . Capital has responded, and often does respond, positively to spatial strategies."

of new economic regions such as Japan, Southeast Asia, the "Third Italy," and even Silicon Valley has been attributed to interfirm cooperation and collaboration. The increasing flexibility of production systems, involving the vertical disintegration of large firms and an increasing variety of forms of outsourcing, have made capitalist production more dependent on social relations. Outsourcing also requires a considerable degree of interdependence between firms. Thus, spatial proximity and cultural commonality help facilitate mutual trust between interdependent firms and between producers, distributors, and investors.[7] In many cases, such interactions, it is argued, are facilitated in places where a strong sense of cultural, racial, or religious identity prevails (see Kotkin 1993).

It is here that we encounter the link between broader civilizational discourse of "Asian values" and flexible accumulation of global capital. The terms "regional culture" and "business culture" inform a broad literature on Chinese capitalism that situates the success of overseas Chinese business within a discourse of time-honored "Confucian values" (Chan and Chiang 1994; Weidenbaum and Hughes 1996). Thus, a body of work on Chinese business networks has emphasized the kinship- and native-place–based practice of *guanxi* in explaining the regional distinctiveness of Chinese capitalism (Redding 1990; Hamilton 1991; Yang 1994). As Ong notes, "Chinese race, culture, and economic activities have become naturalized as inseparable or even the same phenomena" (1999, 68). Olds and Yeung have criticized much of this work for relying on culturalist essentialisms, and for explaining regional Chinese business networks according to "internalized factors associated with culture and identity" (1999, 541). They argue that ethnic Chinese business networks are instead increasingly conditioned by external forces of globalization, and are compelled to adopt increasingly "credible" and "transparent" management practices as defined by gatekeepers in the global financial system. It may be, however, that even as Chinese capitalism grows more integrated into the global economy, maintaining a regionalist *ideology* of internal factors of culture and identity could become even more important. While Olds and Yeung rightly point out that ethnic Chinese capitalism is increasingly a mythic construction—supported, as Ong argues, with elite ideologies of neo-Confucianism and "Asian values"—it may be a myth continuously reinvented for the purposes of Chinese regionalism. The point being that regionalism often cultivates a particularly conservative set of elite values that ostensibly serve to "protect" local culture from broader power, while simultaneously articulating with that power for the benefit of local elites.

Not only does capital increasingly look for localities where a "regional culture" seems to facilitate development and innovation, but localities themselves have realized that if a "regional culture" of dynamic entrepreneurialism does not exist in the eyes of the potential investor, then one must be created.[8] The point here, in other words, is not whether such "regional cultures" actually exist as causal factors in the economic growth of a particular region (it can be easily argued that they do not), but how global capitalism nevertheless has adopted the idea of "regional culture" as an important criteria for investment, and how localities now endeavor to represent themselves in

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[7]This approach, for example, has been used to explain the role of Hong Kong in the development of the Pearl River Delta (Chen 1989; Leung 1993; Eng 1997).

[8]For example, Britain's Prince Charles has suggested that a "new Renaissance for Britain" can be built "upon a new culture of enterprise; a new business ethos, characterised by responsibility and vision, can rebuild the historical sense of community and once again make Britain a world actor. What is called for, according to the Prince's 'personal vision', is the revival and re-enchantment of our rich national heritage" (Morely and Robins 1995, 105).

terms of cultural dynamism and uniqueness (Morely and Robins 1995, 115–21). Global localism is thus a two-way process: while transnational corporations seek to manipulate local culture to naturalize the consumption of a particular product, localities themselves seek to create a local culture that is attractive to global capital. There are important implications here for how we conceptualize "local culture"—for in facilitating global localism local elites produce dominant cultural representations that cannot simply be dismissed as "inauthentic." The "regional cultures" trafficked by global capitalism do not simply displace the noncapitalist cultural forms that precede them. Rather, invented regional cultures get picked up and used in the continuing process of place making. We will return to this issue at the end of the essay, for it reveals why place remains an important conceptual pivot for understanding the changing relationship between space and identity.

Provincial Identities in China

The promotion of provincial cultural identities is part of a more general trend in regionalism to emerge in China over the past decade. A number of intellectual and popular studies of regional cultural geography have been published, some of which offer a systematic accounting of regional material culture and cultural ecology (Li Qinde 1995; Chen 1996; Jiang and Li 1997), while others reflect a more distinct civilizational discourse (Xin et al. 1996; Chen 1998).[9] These texts serve to both repudiate the spatially homogenizing project of state socialism and recover ancient cultural continuities that are regionally distinct and place-specific. In this regard, they seek to convey a message about the "spirit" of Chineseness as distinct from the West, a spirit that is equally distant from China's own revolutionary Marxist heritage. There is little in these works about "revolutionary culture" or "peasant spirit."[10] Indeed, they eschew historical materialism generally as a method of analysis, focusing instead on a more humanist reading of ancient elite cultural traditions.

These regionalist texts seem to share at least three common features. First, they enclose regions, treating them as coherent cultures on their own terms with very little acknowledgment of interaction between regions. Second, and by extension, they seek to establish a sense of cultural purity and authenticity as an implicit antidote to the chaos of the recent past, as well as a ballast against China's increasing immersion in the global economy. Third, they offer a set of "residual" features of folk culture that are readily commodified, and that can be enlisted in a region's battery of comparative advantages in seeking to attract development capital and commercial opportunities. In other words, they help provide the regionally unique contents of Chineseness that serve elite ideologies and strategies of regional development and cultural identity. In addition, there is a tendency in these texts to define cultural regions as more or less

[9]Perhaps the most comprehensive series of texts on cultural regionalism is that published by Liaoning Education Press, launched in 1990 and aiming to cover a total of 24 cultural regions. Examples include Gao's *Huizhou Culture* (1998) and Feng's *Sanjin Culture* (1998).

[10]This is not to say that particular events of the communist revolution are ignored in these works. They have left their mark on the landscape of regionalism. But revolutionary events tend to be subsumed by regional culture and geography. In Chen's account (1998, 542–47) of the relationship between "Huxiang culture" (Hunan) and Mao Zedong, for example, the emphasis is on how Hunan's cultural geography shaped Mao, rather than on how Mao went on to shape China.

congruent with provincial boundaries.[11] The dominance of provincial boundaries as the template for cultural regionalism may be a legacy of state socialism's autarkic regional development plan, in which provinces became administratively and economically integrated as never before.

The promotion of regional culture has rapidly become the standard practice of local and provincial-level officials as they formulate new approaches to achieving fiscal solvency and economic growth in China's increasingly deregulated and decentralized economic environment. In its efforts to introduce market mechanisms to solve the typical command-economy problems of bureaucratization, inefficiency, lack of innovation, and the insatiable investment-hunger of state enterprises, China's central government has sought to decentralize the fiscal system, promote regional specialization, and open certain parts of the economy to foreign trade and investment. The result has been rapid increase in developmentalism on the part of the local Chinese state, or what Yang (1997) has termed "competitive liberalization."[12] This has resulted in, among other things, an explosion of "zone fever" throughout China, as localities scramble to offer attractive sites for the subcontracting operations of transnational corporations.[13] Not surprisingly, the cultural representation of these localities becomes a key element of their strategic package of attractions used to lure mobile capital.

Three cases of provincial identity construction are offered below: Shanxi and Anhui provinces are briefly noted, and Guizhou province is explored in greater detail.[14] All three are located in China's interior, are relatively poor, with economies primarily dependent on agriculture and natural resource extraction. They seek to capitalize on the same kind of development that has propelled China's coastal region through two decades of unprecedented economic growth. The identity-constructions offered by elites in each of these provinces claim a foundation on ancient, unique, and attractive regional cultures that, at the same time, can be called upon to spur a dynamic, innovative entrepreneurialism and sense of self-confidence. Significantly, however, each province claims to be something more than simply a regional culture. Each also claims to be a traditional holdout of an essential Chineseness lost to the more developed coastal regions in their rush toward Western-oriented modernization. One could argue that in this way they distinguish themselves from the coast in order to directly link themselves with a "Greater China" investment market. Their cultural trump card in this effort would be representing themselves as regional cultures where "traditional Chinese values" still adhere—thus directly insinuating themselves into the neo-Confucian culturalist assumptions of the overseas Chinese capitalist elite. But I would also argue that claims of Chineseness are not simply promoted to attract

[11]For example, *Human China* (Xin et al 1996) regionalizes the country almost entirely according to specific provinces (with the exceptions of the "southwest" and the "northeast"). *Regional China* (Chen 1998), *China's Cultural Geography* (Jiang and Li 1997), and the Liaoning Education Press series use more traditional names (such as Sanjin 三晋), Wuyue 吳越 , and Jilu 齊魯), but tend to divide these regions according to contemporary provincial boundaries.

[12]On the developmentalism of local states in prosperous coastal regions of China, see Oi 1999 and Zweig 1995.

[13]For instance, Yang 1997 documents 422 state sanctioned special economic, technology, and trade zones throughout China by 1994. In addition to these, over 8,000 zones had also been created by local governments, comprising over 15,000 km^2 of land, only 2 percent of which was actually developed.

[14]The Shanxi and Anhui cases are based on secondary sources, while the Guizhou material represents my own fieldwork. For similar studies in additional regions, see Feng 1999a on Hainan and 1999b on Jiangxi, as well as Feng and Goodman 1997 on Hainan.

capital, but also reflect an effort to reconstitute local subjectivity at a provincial scale. In these terms, Chineseness counters a legacy of internal colonialism, marginalization, and dominant narratives of "backward culture." In political terms, then, regional appeals to Chineseness strive to negotiate a tension between provincial autonomy and central power. In so doing, however, they appeal to broader networks of economic power that may only leave them vulnerable to another kind of colonization.

Shanxi and Anhui

As noted by Goodman (1999a), the cause of an invigorated "Shanxi identity" is primarily attributable to the vision and efforts of provincial Party Secretary Hu Fuguo, who arrived in 1992. Hu's role in promoting Shanxi culture suggests the importance of elite involvement in promoting provincial identities.[15] After decades of fitful development, the provincial leadership under Hu introduced a fifteen-year "Overtaking Strategy" aimed at addressing Shanxi's interior isolation, its low market growth rate, and the perception of the province as a poor investment environment.[16] Hu's attempts to integrate the province by means of road-building and other improvements in internal transportation were coupled with an effort to promote a specifically provincial cultural identity. This would supersede the collection of more local identities felt by provincial elites to prevent the modern integration of the province as a whole.[17] Hu Fuguo's interest in creating a regional culture that was consciously "pan-local" (for instance, his advocacy of the "Shanxi cuisine" of Shanxi theme restaurants) for the purposes of aiding provincial economic integration and promoting Shanxi to the outside world marked the province's uniqueness as a regional culture in important ways. But it has perhaps been its claims to represent a true, almost mythical, essence of China that provide clues to how the construction of a regional cultural identity is articulated with the discourse of Chineseness. Shanxi is known for its conservatism and fiscal prudence generally, and Hu tried to selectively cultivate this image's positive attributes (Shanxi as a repository of Chinese traditions) while delinking it to perceptions of backwardness, lack of innovation or entrepreneurialism, and even communist revolution. Promotional materials developed since 1992 emphasize Shanxi as a hearth of ancient Han culture (see Feng 1998). Thus, the "Yellow River culture," so critically invoked in coastal metropolitan productions such as Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* and Su Xiaokang and Wang Luxiang's *Heshang*, is represented in more celebratory ways by Shanxi itself, focusing not simply on ancientness but on a modernity invigorated by the tradition of "pure Chinese"

[15]Feng (1999b, 263) makes a similar point about the promotion of Gan cultural regionalism in Jiangxi. He argues that it wasn't until provincial governor Wu Guanzheng got involved that the idea of Gan culture began to appear in expressions of provincial popular culture.

[16]This perception must seem ironic to those familiar with Shanxi's history as the virtual fiscal agent of the Qing Dynasty. Yet, as Skinner (1976, 345–47) points out, the well-known image of the "Shanxi banker" is almost entirely attributable to only three Shanxi counties. It is even more meaningful, then, that Shanxi's contemporary leaders would seek not only to resurrect an identity of fiscal trustworthiness (no Shanxi bank ever failed during the Qing) but, more importantly, apply it to the province as a whole.

[17]These local identities, according to Goodman, constitute four distinct regions of Shanxi: Hedong, Shangdang, Jinzhong, and Yanbei, each of which can be characterized by distinct cuisine, language, music, and drama traditions.

culture.[18] Similarly, Hongtong County is promoted as the mythical source of all Han Chinese. Such hyperbolic self-aggrandizement has not been unusual in 1990s China. In true self-orientalizing fashion, a county in Yunnan claims to be the actual site of "Shangri-La." But in Shanxi, Hongtong's claim is part of a province-wide effort to represent the region's ancientness as the key to its future. As one travel brochure claims, "Some people say that China's south represents the country's modernization while China's north features ancient Oriental civilization, but Shanxi combines the two perfectly. Anyone choosing to travel or invest in Shanxi will find he or she is killing two birds with one stone" (Information Office of the Shanxi Provincial People's Government 1995).

Combining "ancient Oriental civilization" with modernization is clearly a provincial strategy of grooming itself as an attractive landing pad for capital. Dirlik's (1994; 1996) perspective might also characterize it as a production of "residual" cultural markers ripe for manipulation by the guerrilla marketeers of global capitalism. Additionally, Shanxi culture is presented as a culture safe for capital accumulation because of the "traditional values" it represents, and perhaps because it evokes the opposite of radical political change. Indeed, Shanxi's Mao-era identity as the homeland of many of China's most important communist revolutionaries, the site of one of China's most significant revolutionary base areas and the home of Dazhai Brigade, all became rather marginalized in Hu Fuguo's vision.[19] According to Goodman (1999a), instead of looking to these important testaments to Shanxi as a cradle of China's revolution, Hu cast his gaze on Shanxi's culturally conservative but economically modernizing warlord Yan Xishan (who ruled the province from 1911 to 1937) for inspiration.

Yan Xishan is a figure whose place in history is "just about due for revision" in Shanxi (Goodman 1999a, 216). This is because Yan sought not revolution but modernization, not a break from the West but a pragmatic blending of Western and Chinese cultures. These are qualities that speak to the province's contemporary situation more directly than the cult of Mao. Yan was also a proponent of a "Confucian revivalism" that—much as the current Confucian revival does—sought to reinvent Confucianism as a cultural resource for national identity as China pursued modernity on par with the West. Yan's efforts to introduce to Shanxi a "Good People"s

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[18] Claims regarding the "Yellow" culture (*huangse wenhua*) of Shanxi draw upon the same "Culture Fever" (*wenhua re*) and "Roots Searching" (*xungen*) trends that sparked the 1988 television production Heshang. The *Heshang* series was highly critical of looking toward China's "Yellow" roots for answers to the country's search for a modern identity. It advocated, instead, a confident and continued opening to the West, and a deepening of political reform in an effort to bring about transparency, democracy, and openness: qualities unknown to the builders of "Yellow River Culture." But Shanxi's insistence on promoting itself as "Yellow" only reinforces the fact that despite *Heshang*'s popularity, traditional folk culture is still regarded as the key to achieving a national identity that is both "modern" as well as unmistakably Chinese. See Su and Wang 1991.

[19] Feng (1999b, 266) makes a similar point regarding the promotion of Gan culture by Jiangxi provincial elites. In that case, too, the needs of commercialism called for a sustained attack on the idea of Jiangxi as harboring a revolutionary culture born at the Nanchang Uprising and raised on the slopes of Jinggangshan. One scholar from Nanchang University, for instance, "characterised the identification of 'Jiangxi culture' with 'revolutionary culture' as a false consciousness. Purportedly, this consciousness had severely affected leading cadres and educated people in Jiangxi and greatly hampered economic and cultural development in the province. In this view, the 'battles on Jinggangshan lasted less than two years and the Nanchang Uprising only several days. Furthermore, most of the leaders of these events were Marxist youth from other provinces.'"

Movement"—stressing the importance of cleanliness, diligence, honesty, modesty, obedience, and thrift—sound rather similar to the pronouncements of Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew extolling the virtues of Chinese capitalism based in Confucian values. Such values, ironically similar to the "Protestant work ethic" that Weber attributed to the rise of European capitalism, offer an essential set of "residual" attributes for any self-respecting regional culture that seeks to become a player in the new order of global capitalism.

As with Shanxi, Anhui's provincial leaders have sought to reconstruct "Anhui identity" based on a regional culture that meets the needs of capital accumulation. And like Shanxi, the constitution of Anhui provincial culture draws significantly on reinvented folk myths that suggest both "traditional values" and dynamic entrepreneurialism, while at the same time claiming Anhui as yet another true home of Chineseness (Sun Wanning 1998). This is all the more pressing for Anhui in that it must suffer a well-established stigma of poverty—symbolized by the well-known Anhui beggars and nannies—in the eyes of its more well-off neighbors.[20] One development in the construction of an Anhui regional culture, then, has been the growing interest in the representation of Confucian "merchant culture" (儒商). This oxymoron refers to the prosperous traders from the Huizhou and Anqing regions of southern Anhui who came to dominate interregional trade throughout the Lower Yangtze region (see Skinner 1976, 343–45; Xin et al. 1996, 218–23; Gao 1998). In 1994, a film titled *Stories of Hui Merchants* (徽商勤員) represented the merchant from Huizhou as bestowed with moral integrity and commercial instincts, Confucian manners and business styles; a clear precursor to the Asian "merchant princes" now extolled in popular business periodicals such as *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Ong 1999, 145). According to Sun Wanning (1998), Anhui's provincial government directed much praise and media attention toward the film and its implicit message, seemingly in an effort to resurrect the Huizhou merchant as the ideal image to replace the Anhui beggar/nanny in China's dominant channels of cultural representation. The affinity between the film's image of the Huizhou merchant and the ideological neo-Confucianism of Chinese capitalism suggests the strategic quality of Anhui's attempts to capitalize on the film's popularity.

Interest in Confucian merchant culture has been accompanied, as in many other provinces (see, for instance, Feng 1999b), by considerable scholarly effort toward defining Anhui as a coherent cultural entity (as opposed to a collection of distinct cultures—such as Huizhou—that happen to exist within the borders of a territory called Anhui). This is, not surprisingly, an activity fraught with difficulties, for Anhui's history is replete with massive population displacements, wars, famines, and forced ethnic assimilations that have made Anhui a region of striking cultural

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[20]According to Sun Wanning 1998, begging was not simply an act of desperation in the face of unruly nature (particularly the Huai River's propensity to flooding), but an established cultural practice, literally a "culture of poverty": "It is true that beggars were living proof of Anhui's poverty up to the 1970s, but less known is the fact that begging during the winter season used to be more of a way of life than an absolute necessity' [I]t was the custom in some parts of Anhui for the entire family to leave the village and set out on their 'regular' begging journey. It may even be suggested that Anhui's peasants consider begging itself as one of their side-line activities. This is not to deny the reality of poverty: it is simply that for these poor peasants . . . begging proved to be more 'cost effective' than staying home and doing nothing. In this sense, Anhui peasants, especially in northern Anhui, the 'gypsies of China,' were the only community that literally turned begging into an art form."

diversity. Nevertheless, there has been an effort to represent Anhui as a quintessentially Chinese province, and this requires a relatively uncomplicated depiction of Anhui culture itself. The result is an Anhui identity reduced to, among other things, "philosophy culture." Within Anhui's borders are the native-places of many of China's most famous philosophers and intellectuals. It is the birthplace of Zhuang Zi and Lao Zi, and most of the Li Xue scholars lived there, including Zhu Xi, as well as more contemporary figures such as Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu. In addition, as Xin et al. (1996, 212–18 and 238–42) point out, that Anhui straddles the traditional north-south divide in China means that Anhui culture is a "microcosm" (縮影) of the "stew" in the great Chinese cookpot. A tour through Anhui, they claim, is like traversing the whole of China in all its linguistic diversity. This, then, becomes another awkward appeal to Chineseness and legitimacy.

The promotion of an Anhui regional culture should also be seen in the context of the province's 1990s modernization and development efforts. These efforts have been characterized by a desire to overcome Anhui's interior position by tapping directly into the global capitalist marketplace, rather than waiting for the elusive "trickle-down" of development from the booming coastal region next door. As with Shanxi, Anhui's development strategy focuses on provincial integration, particularly uniting the northern and southern sides of the Yangtze, and developing the river corridor itself as a major growth region. According to Sun Wanning (1998), one of the most significant challenges the province faces in this regard is an overwhelming sense of displacement and instability felt by much of Anhui's rural population. Rural poverty and the proximity of the wealthy coastal region have combined to result in considerable out-migration of peasants. The attraction of wealthy regions nearby, the absence of talented youth at home, and rural incomes being sustained not by local production but by remittances from distant family members have all contributed to a lack of commitment of building cultural institutions at the local scale. Such a situation perhaps leaves Anhui particularly vulnerable to loosing its "hearts and minds" to the guerrilla marketeers of global capitalism as they rush in to fill with ready-made images of Huizhou merchants the void that an absence of local place making has left.

Guizhou

Like Anhui, Guizhou has long suffered a stigmatized identity associated with abject poverty. Its history as an "internal colony" has been commented upon by a number of scholars (Spencer 1940; Goodman 1983; see also Hosie 1890; Chen 1993, 40–47; He 1988, 40–53). Even today, locals often refer to Guizhou as men (悶), enclosed, covered with a tight lid, sealed off, depressed. Even the climate seems to evoke this feeling, with a heavy blanket of clouds perpetually hiding away each isolated valley and basin. Guizhou straddles the rugged, eastern end of the Yun-Gui Plateau of southwestern China. It was established, in 1413, as a military and administrative convenience in a region of extreme geographical and cultural diversity. Unlike Shanxi and Anhui, Guizhou's historical cultural geography has been of a frontier, hinterland nature.[21] While Shanxi and Anhui can both claim an historical

[21]Prior to the large-scale centralization projects of the state socialism, Guizhou's commercial economy displayed little "provincial" coherence. Regions of the province were, instead, oriented in trade with wealthier regions across the border. This was true no matter which direction one turned. The west was oriented toward Yunnan, the north toward the Sichuan basin, the East toward Hunan, and the south toward Guangxi. See Chen 1993, 364–67.

association with China's ancient geographical core, Guizhou—site of the ancient "barbarian" kingdom of Yelang (夜郎)—was a peripheral region languishing on the edges of "civilization" itself.[22] Even Guizhou's late-imperial history is marked by numerous major rebellions, with significant parts of the province often dropping out of the empire's orbit altogether until outside forces could be mustered to recapture them (Jenks 1994).

Guizhou's contemporary leadership faces a challenge similar to Hu Fuguo's in Shanxi: that of integrating a socially and economically fragmented space, and of establishing a "pan-local" culture at a provincial scale. Several decades of command socialism made considerable progress toward this goal with a number of large-scale infrastructure projects, but much of the province remains a collection of isolated, relatively impoverished rural communities. Nevertheless, there have been scholarly efforts to represent Guizhou as a coherent culture coinciding with its provincial boundaries (for instance, Huang 1998). Unlike the populations of Shanxi, or Anhui, however, one-third of Guizhou's population is made up of officially recognized "minority nationalities" (少數民族). This has not only added complexity to the challenge of constructing a cohesive provincial identity, but also offers a very different set of "residual" cultural markers from which a provincial identity might be created. The results are particularly compelling in relation to Guizhou's claims of representing, in its own way, yet another version of Chineseness.

Even more than Shanxi or Anhui, perhaps, Guizhou has turned to promoting tourism development as a key component in its drive to both forge a new provincial identity and attract the attention of mobile capital from within and beyond China. Tourism is slated to become one of the province's "pillar industries," earning, it is hoped, 20 percent of Guizhou's income by 2010 (Sun 1994). The job of laying the foundation for Guizhou's anticipated integration with external capital has largely been delegated to visitors coming to view the province's rugged scenery and experience its exotic ethnic minority cultures (see also Wang and Bai 1986). This role is conveyed in the slogan, "trade performing on a stage built by tourism" (旅游搭台, 經貿唱戲). "Building the stage" has meant, in turn, creating cultural attractions that are simultaneously unique, exotic, and—paradoxically—essentially Chinese. One such creation, for example, that has sought to capitalize on the high concentration of distilleries in the province, has been Guizhou's "liquor culture" (酒文化). While liquor has been one of Guizhou's better known products for decades (maotai, one is often reminded in the province, was the liquor used when President Nixon and Mao Zedong toasted Chinese-American rapprochement in 1972), only in the 1990s has Guizhou's liquor production been represented as part of a distinct regional culture. As museum displays and tour guides point out, Guizhou's liquor culture has, in its long isolation from China's rapidly changing core regions, maintained the rituals of drinking long forgotten in the rest of China. In the town of Maotai itself, an 800-meter "liquor culture street" has been built for tourists, with replicas of old wine shops and other markers of Chinese tradition. Here, one can taste the "essence of Oriental culture" and study the "foundations" of China's unique liquor heritage (Li 1997, 6). In Guizhou, not only does liquor culture welcome tourists back to a world gone by (Chen and Tan 1997, 5), but it also provides the residual cultural elements felt necessary for attracting the capital of overseas Chinese business elites. For Guizhou,

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[22]For a treatment of "Yelang culture" and its relationship to contemporary Guizhou identity, see Zhu 1990.

liquor culture also evidences an entrenched traditional entrepreneurialism that is promoted to attract external investment.

Ethnic minorities are also represented in Guizhou as preserving ancient drinking and distilling traditions. Indeed, minority groups are often charged with preserving many other elements of Chinese tradition as well, including hair styles, clothing styles, language, and festivals. In all these, minority groups are represented (and often represent themselves) as the "living fossils" (活化石) of ancient China.[23] At one Miao ethnic tourist village in Southeast Guizhou, villagers were told by a visiting delegation from the state cultural bureau in Beijing that they are the "Chinese of the Tang Dynasty." In a speech to villagers who perform welcoming ceremonies for tour groups, the bureau chief told them that as China develops it will naturally lose its cultural traditions. He sought to impress upon them their responsibility for preserving their traditions (which, he believed, are those of ancient China anyway) as a duty to China. This is a common theme among representations of Miao culture in Guizhou.[24] At the Nationalities Museum in Southeast Guizhou's prefectural capital, a display on the Miao Dragon Boat Races notes how the region's Miao have preserved an ancient Chinese tradition in all its ritualistic richness. While the Han of the region also practice this tradition, the display points out how dragon boat races for the Han have essentially become sports meets; they have been "modernized" into sporting events. But among Guizhou's Miao—the display goes on—one can witness a dragon boat celebration much as it may have been practiced in China proper many centuries ago.

Another cultural attraction that has been erected as part of the stage on which economic development will perform is western Guizhou's *tunbao* culture (屯堡文化). *Tunbao* emerged from the intermarriage between locals and soldiers of Zhu Yuanzhang's southern expedition sent to Guizhou in the late fourteenth century to secure the highlands between Sichuan to the north and Guangxi to the south (Li Yecheng 1995; see also Gui 1999). In terms of its representation in tourism promotions, *tunbao* culture's most conspicuous element is the so-called "ground opera" (地戲), which itself has been proclaimed a "living fossil" of China's theater tradition as it was practiced in China proper up to the Ming Dynasty.[25] Ground opera is said to have been handed down by the descendants of Zhu's troops and mixed with local performance traditions. Today the form is unique, with themes, styles, and stories representing ancient Chinese legends and mythology. One report claims ground opera has its roots in exorcisms and sorcerers' dances that were performed in China's Central Plains four thousand years ago. Having long since "fallen into oblivion" in China's heartland, "this ancient drama form" has not only "managed to survive" in Guizhou, but "it has kept its original spirit intact" (Hua 1989, 8). As with the Miao, the *tunbao* people (who are officially Han, but often refer to themselves as "old Han" 老漢族)

[23]Representations of non-Han peoples as bearers of a vital tradition forgotten by the more cosmopolitan Han is a theme that has been around for much of the twentieth century as China has attempted to negotiate its relationships with modernity and the West. It was articulated, for instance, by Wen Yidou while he was exiled in Kunming during the war with Japan, and it was a dominant theme in the literature of Shen Congwen. See Spence 1981, 317, and Oakes 1995.

[24]For a sustained discussion of representing the Miao in China, see Schein 2000.

[25]The term "living fossil" was initially coined by François Mitterand's wife at the *Festival D'Automne à Paris* in 1986, when a *dixi* troupe from Guizhou was invited to perform there. The Anshun Tourism Bureau has since used the term in all of its promotions of *dixi* and *tunbao* culture. See Anshun Tourism Bureau 1993, 3.

are said to have preserved, by means of their relative isolation, an essential Chineseness (Zhu 1994).[26]

In these ways, Guizhou is represented for touristic consumption and investment potential as a pristine environment and a conservative refuge of China's forgotten traditions. A passage by one of Guizhou's boosters sums it up thus:

> Guizhou is both new and ancient. Development has started late here. Guizhou has been little affected by the pollution of modern industry, nor has it been assaulted (沖擊) by modern civilization. Nature is still pristine here, and people still preserve their traditional cultures. There has been very little change here, little cultural corruption (文化熏染) from the outside. The mountains are green, the water clear. And because they're spread out all over, one can see nationality customs just about anywhere. Guizhou's environment gives people a sense of returning to nature (回歸大自然). This is something the people of the developed countries long for (夢寐以求). And Guizhou's minorities inspire people to value the preservation of living culture (活文化). In some parts of the world, all people have is staged culture (舞臺文化). But in Guizhou, tourists can enter the village and houses of the minorities, share their lives, understand them.
>
> (Deng 1993, 10–11)

Implicit here is another message about what Guizhou has to offer China and the world. Preserved in isolation, Guizhou's cultural residues may also be represented as the ideal foundation for an invigorated Chinese modernity. This message is conveyed with particular clarity among minority elites. At a nationalities cultural studies conference held in 1990, for instance, papers were delivered on the theme of articulating the traditions held by Guizhou's nationality groups with the needs of China's modernization. One paper argued that Guizhou's folk culture provided China with distinctiveness in the face of "Westernization" and could stave off assimilation as China entered the global economy (*Guizhou Minzu Wenhua Xuehui* 1990; see also Oakes 1998, 136–40). In many ways, then, Guizhou culture is represented as a "refreshing wind" blowing the invigorating values of the plateau folk down to the corrupted core regions of China.[27]

Guizhou's culture is a "refreshing wind" that is also readily for sale. That is, in the end, the point of building the stage of provincial cultural attractions for the purpose of tourist consumption. In the stepped-up environment of commercialism following Deng Xiaoping's 1992 "southern tour," Guizhou staged a series of extravagant commodity festivals, with the goal of presenting its folk vitality to the world and attracting the mobile capital that Deng's tour unleashed. These festivals sought to promote those cultural elements that had been constructed as harboring vital traditions that could invigorate China as well as provide readily marketable commodities that could lure outside investment. They included a "batik festival" (蠟染節) and "liquor culture festival" in 1992, followed by 'Huangguoshu sightseeing and internationally famous Chinese wine festival' (黃果樹山水風光游暨中國國際名酒節) in 1993. The latter festival featured, for example, a opening-day parade of huge liquor-bottle floats, each representing a different Guizhou distillery. They passed under an enormous "Famous Liquor Gate" made of two giant maotai bottles. It was also during

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[26]It should also be noted that the Miao and Bouyei of this region also practice *dixi*; in all, some 300 villages in west-central Guizhou have been identified as supporting a dixi performance troupe.

[27]This was the message conveyed, for instance, during a nationally televised ethnic variety show that was staged in Guiyang on 22 February 1994.

this festival that the province sealed a $10 million deal to build the "China International Liquor Exhibition Center" (funded mostly by Hong Kong investors) (*Guizhou Ribao* 1993). These festivals were selling more than liquor, however. They were also selling the idea of Guizhou as a complete whole, a culturally coherent space that all provincial residents could identify with. Each festival featured the relatively standardized versions of ethnic folk culture that have become typical of the province's cultural tourism industry more generally. These include various drinking ceremonies (most conspicuously "road block wine" (攔路酒) in which young women offer bowls of rice wine to their guests before allowing them to continue into the village), standard dances and songs, and a few arts and crafts demonstrations. Combined into a standardized amalgam of "Guizhou folk culture" (貴州民族文化), the region's ethnic diversity and cultural vitality is represented as a coherent provincial identity that may not only appear attractive to outsiders (bringing investment capital), but to locals as well. Indeed, the ceremonious opening day of the Huangguoshu festival was identified by students of mine in Guiyang as one of the most exciting days of their lives; like a big coming-out party, it made them proud of Guizhou—the province, to them, could no longer be dismissed as an impoverished backwater.[28]

Yet if provincial efforts to establish a regional identity offered some dignity to residents historically burdened with a complex of backwardness, they also offered them a paradoxical and potentially conflict-ridden path to development and modernity. In particular, Miao and "old Han" villagers who must play the role of "living fossils" have little choice but to embrace this dubious distinction if they wish to pursue the outside connections that will bring prosperity. Their response has been to appropriate the dominant constructions of regional culture in an effort to establish control over their own touristic development.[29] While they do not actively subvert or otherwise resist their prescribed role in elite versions of Guizhou identity, they do actively seek to manipulate that identity for their own, more locally specific, interests. These interests include ethnic pride and place-based identity.

Trading in Places[30]—Scaling Identity in China

The title for this section is meant to capture a double meaning that seems to characterize provincial identities in China. On the one hand, it suggest the business of buying and selling places, where place-based culture is ideologically reconstituted as a regional comparative advantage, a shop front in a broader marketplace of China's development and modernization. On the other hand, it suggests that places are being "traded in" for something else. In this case, place-based cultural traditions being traded in and replaced with provincially defined regions. In both senses of the phrase, an ideology of provincial culture is a necessary enabling device for the trade.

[28]This is not to say that the festivals were successful in attracting investment capital, or even putting Guizhou on the radar screen of capital. By 1996, provincial officials privately acknowledged the cost of the festival was not justified by the investment they generated. The point, however, is not whether they were successful, but the ways Guizhou culture and identity were packaged in the attempt to succeed. For details, see Oakes 1998, 128–30; 1999.

[29]See Oakes 1998 for a complete account of local efforts to take tourism development into their own hands. For one particular case study in this regard, see Oakes 1997.

[30] Many thanks to Louisa Schein for suggesting this phrase.

China has a tradition of place-based identities that have seldom, if ever, corresponded with provincial-administrative boundaries.[31] The efforts described above can, in part, be seen as the "scaling-up" to provincial boundaries of a tradition whereby localities have sought to export their specialty goods and skills (Skinner 1976). Shanxi and Anhui, indeed, have rich histories to draw upon in this regard. Guizhou's attempts to cultivate a provincial specialty in liquor production can also be seen in this light, for China's liquor trade was traditionally dominated by regional specialists such as Shaoxing. Of course, regionalism in China has had many dimensions other than commercial specialization. Yet it is this aspect—this trade in places—that is perhaps most appealing to provincial elites in their efforts to co-opt China's native-place tradition, an appropriation that also signals important manipulations of this tradition. There are at least two such manipulations: First, as implied above, is the attempt to repackage what are essentially place-based traditions and sell them as a 'provincial culture' that is pan-local. This also signifies, I would argue, the important place that civilizational discourses of purity and authenticity have gained in the development strategies of provincial governments. Second is the accompanying claim that such locally derived "provincial culture" is not a form of modernity-impeding parochialism at all, but a cultural element of something quite the opposite of localism: Chineseness.[32]

Provincial identities in China, then, are not contemporary manifestations of China's native-place tradition geared up for a new global presence. Rather, they are ideological appropriations and reinventions of that tradition, with a number of specific goals in mind. Most recognizable among these is economic development through attracting mobile external capital. "Competitive liberalization" compels regional elites to develop whatever resources are necessary to put themselves in the pathways of capital. As Feng (1999b, 249) points out, these resources include natural endowment, relations with the central state (and, I would add, relations beyond the central state), and 'economic culture.' This latter resource, I am suggesting here, involves a combination of received practices and collective memories, on the one hand, and ideological invention, on the other. Each of the regions discussed above is an interior province that has faced developmental disadvantages during the reform era. The ideological invention of various forms of entrpreneurial culture represent efforts on the part of elites to replace a socialist-era stigma of subsidy dependency and net-loss resource extraction, with a reform-era commercial vigor. As such, the ideology of regionalism is directed as much, if not more, toward people *within* the region, as toward those outsiders who might be potential sources of investment. Provincial identities in China's interior are very much a form of confidence-building, and an effort to inscribe a new subjectivity on locals who have grown up inured to the epithet of backwardness. Thus, while the above expressions of regionalism in Shanxi, Anhui, and Guizhou may reveal an incipient effort to tap into the broader circuits of exchange that characterize global capitalism, they need also to be understood from a more local frame of reference. Globalization does open up new spaces of identity, as Morely and Robins (1995) have argued. But the conditions by which these spaces are occupied by new ideologies, discourses, and strategies, are profoundly local in nature.

[31]David S. G. Goodman 1999b, however, does argue that, in China's core regions, county boundaries do tend to correlate with native-place identity. This claim, though, does not hold for provincial boundaries.

[32]This is not to argue, however, that economic development in China was historically impeded by local parochialism. Indeed, Ho Pingti (1966) argued that, in the case of native place associations (*huiguan*), quite the opposite was true.

The difficulties regional elites face in developing regional cultural identities involve more than simply attracting development capital. They must also overcome internal heterogeneity, centrifugal forces, and geographical constraints. The first problem has already been alluded to above: the need to appropriate native-place identities and scale them up to the level of the province, without sacrificing their organic appeal in local popular culture. In this regard, elites are 'trading in places,' replacing them with provinces. But, as all three cases suggest (particularly Anhui and Guizhou), the realities of place-based cultural diversity found within provincial boundaries are subject to scholarly and political strategies of erasure. As Feng (1999b) also notes with the case of Jiangxi's efforts to promote 'Gan culture,' a sustained elite campaign is often required to get a new pan-local identity to begin showing up in expressions of popular culture. More significantly, Feng argues, it requires the support and enthusiasm of officials at the highest levels of provincial government (such as Hu Fuguo in Shanxi, and Wu Guanzheng in Jiangxi). In each case, a dominant cultural precedent (for example, Sanjin in Shanxi, Huizhou in Anhui, Gan in Jiangxi) is needed as a basis for the provincial state's strategies of erasure. Lacking this, Guizhou's project of inventing 'Guizhou folk culture' offers instead a more decentered embracing of heterogeneity in *minzu* traditions, and yet still seeks to erase the actual differences between these traditions and celebrate their (invented) commonalities (singing and dancing, drinking liquor, and so on).

The second problem—centrifugal forces—troubles interior elites who find their provinces increasingly splintered as people orient their opportunities for improving their lives toward other more prosperous regions. As was mentioned above, this is recognized as a serious problem in Anhui—but all interior provinces face it to some degree, with many people counting more on income from migrating kin rather than opportunities at home. Elites see this not only as a problem of economic development, but also as an inhibiting factor in constructing a new regional subjectivity and self-confidence.

The third problem—geographical constraints—refers more specifically to the geographical determinism inherent in much of the literature on Chinese regionalism. Regional elites and scholars invariably call on geography to explain the difficulties— as well as the potentials—they face in achieving a new regional culture and identity. On one level, this is simply the geography of interiority and remoteness from the coast. On another level, it is the topography and climate of the region itself. Shanxi is arid, subject to drought, and to devastating floods during summer downpours. Anhui is also a region traditionally prone to such flooding that, historically, flood season simply became the time of year that Anhui peasants headed for the coast to go begging. Guizhou is a crumpled maze of mountains, canyons, and caves that inhibit internal integration; the climate is mild, but wet and muddy, with the land often covered with a thick blanket of clouds. These and other factors are said to influence people's behavior and psyche, for example deterring risk-taking ventures in Shanxi and Anhui, and promoting insularity and suspicion of outsiders in Guizhou. These are said to be timeless behavioral patterns that can only be changed with a great deal of sustained work. At the same time, though, geography is called upon to account for the uniqueness and even Chineseness of these regions. In Shanxi, of course, it is the "Yellow River" culture. In Guizhou, it is the landscape that has preserved unique traditions that have survived through the ages so that, climbing over a mountain ridge, one can find people who live as Chinese did hundreds of years ago.

In striving to overcome these difficulties and construct new regional cultures, provincial elites seek to link their localities to broader networks of power. Not only

does this mean attracting external investment capital, but it also means achieving *legitimacy* and *prestige*. That is, in the end, one of the key aspects of Chineseness. Regional ideologies of Chineseness may be more about asserting cultural prestige than attracting development capital. John Shepherd (1989, 3) has argued that "those asserting their Chineseness define Chineseness by whatever positive traits will allow them to claim prestige for their group in its particular cultural and political situation." Again, this highlights the ideological quality of such constructions, and focuses our attention on 'translocal processes' that link regions to broader networks of power.

Thus, by choosing to read Chineseness into the cultural ideologies and spatial strategies of regional elites in cases such as Shanxi, Anhui, and Guizhou, I am attempting to highlight some intriguing problems of regionalism in China's interior. First, Chineseness negotiates a political tension between provincial autonomy and central authority. Provincial elites once again find themselves in the delicate position of being expected to support central policy directives in the overall planning strategies of China's development (plans that continue to define interior provinces as net providers of low priced natural resources, particularly energy), while being expected to take advantage of commercial market development to modernize their provinces.[33] Cultural regionalism can be a powerful tool toward this latter end. But if provincial autonomy becomes too apparent, central leaders may intervene, as happened in Shanxi with Jiang Zemin's removal of Hu Fuguo in 1999. Goodman (1999b) notes a 'distinct recentralization' that has been occurring as evidence of the center's discomfort with the power of regionalism as a provincial development strategy. Chineseness may be invoked, however awkwardly, in an effort to ameliorate these central-provincial tensions.

There is, however, an additional problem with regionalism in interior China. By appealing to a civilizational discourse of Chineseness, provincial elites are narrating a subjectivity that, despite their intentions, derives not from a place-based identity of historical cultural continuity but rather from the needs of commercial development and capital accumulation.[34] In this respect, provincial identity represents an alignment with ideologies of diasporic Chinese capitalism (Ong 1999, 55–83). This essay has not attempted to account for the degree to which provincial identities are actually expressed at the local scale of popular culture within each of the provinces concerned. That project requires additional research (but see Hendrischke and Feng 1999).[35] I have instead approached provincial identities at the scale of elite ideology. Thus, this "problem" of regionalism—that a "pan-local" culture is being reconstituted to meet

[33]For example, in central state development planning Guizhou continues to be slated as a key energy-providing province (see, for instance, Sun Shangwu 1998 and Wang 1998), as Shanxi always has been in terms of coal production.

[34]A number of scholars have made a similar argument regarding the recent cultural nationalism of elite intellectual groups, such as Beijing's "national learning" (國學) scholars. Liu (1998, 175–76), for instance, argues that *guo xue* scholars "self-consciously position themselves as the guardians of a national cultural essence and values vis-à-vis social and cultural crisis. . . . National learning's advocacy of a nonsocialist, liberal national tradition serves as an effective interface with the ideological network of global corporations, which promotes multicultural alternatives (or foster illusions of such alternatives) as long as they are allied with, rather than opposed to, capitalism." It may be noted that metropolitan intellectuals are, in fact, more concerned with a Chineseness that resists subordination to overseas capital. Yet, like provincial elites, by appealing to civilizational discourse, the subjectivities they envision may indeed be vulnerable to commodification. See also Xu 1998 and Zhang 1997.

[35]On-going projects and workshops sponsored by the Center for Research on Provincial China are engaging in fieldwork of this kind.

the needs of a neoliberal model of commercial market development (accompanied by state authoritarianism) that has dominated East and Southeast Asia—indicates more a *potential* for interior exploitation at the hands of broader capitalist accumulation strategies. As elite cultural ideologies, provincial identities are problematic as strategies for an invigorated local subjectivity. For they are spatial strategies to fix identity in terms of scale and territory, a strategy that place-based subjectivity tends to resist (Lefebvre 1991; see also Brenner 1997; Dirlik 1999).

Chineseness, then, suggests more than a political negotiation between the center and province. It also suggests a tension between a place-based subjectivity that does not confine itself to administrative or other territorial boundaries, and a "scaled-up" provincial identity that attempts to fix subjectivity spatially. Appeals to Chineseness are deployed as part of this "scaling-up," and in an effort to attract externally financed development and modernization in disadvantaged interior provinces. But the growing presence of mobile capital has the potential to disrupt the local state's spatial strategies by commodifying the residuals of place-based culture, introducing "translocal" commercial networks that render the territorial basis of provincial identity increasingly meaningless. Guizhou's "living fossils" of ancient China, Anhui's "Confucian merchants," Shanxi's "Yellow River folk"—as these residuals are enlisted into the commercial flows of broader market forces, interior China's provincial identities will find themselves increasingly aligned with global patterns of uneven development, making ideologies of territorially based cultural continuity more difficult to sustain.

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