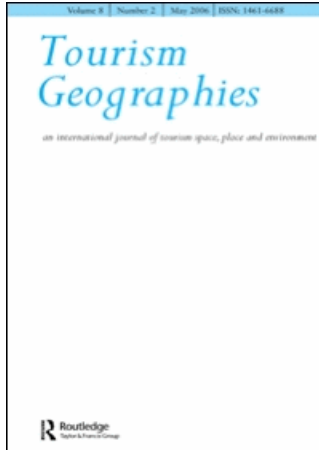


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Tourism Politics in Lijiang, China: An Analysis of State and Local Interactions in Tourism Development

Xiaobo Su ^a; Peggy Teo ^b

^a Department of Geography, University of Oregon, Eugene, USA

^b Independent Scholar,

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Tourism Politics in Lijiang, China: An Analysis of State and Local Interactions in Tourism Development

XIAOBO SU* & PEGGY TEO**

*Department of Geography, University of Oregon, Eugene, USA,

**Independent Scholar

ABSTRACT *Heritage as a tourism commodity has raised expectations about the profits that it can potentially bring. Lijiang Ancient Town, since acquiring World Heritage status in 1997, has become increasingly dependent on state support and private enterprise to maximize this potential. The implication of rapid tourism development is the marginalization of indigenous Naxi as their homes became converted into guesthouses, souvenir shops and other facilities for tourist consumption. State discourse on tourism development as the means to achieve economic development and growth is examined and Naxi reaction to the threat of touristic commodification discussed. Two important spaces, the town square and a food outlet at a major thoroughfare, are used to highlight Naxi efforts to reclaim touristic spaces for everyday activities and as a symbolic representational space of their own cultural identity. In the final analysis, Lijiang's landscape is the result of an interplay between the state, private enterprise and local forces wherein the heterogeneous discourses from each of these are integrated by the Naxi as they go about life in Lijiang Ancient Town.*

KEY WORDS: Heritage tourism, Lijiang, Naxi, hegemonic discourse, negotiation, space

Introduction

Nestled in the Yulong (or Jade Dragon) Mountain in north-west Yunnan province, Lijiang is an ancient town that has for centuries been the political, cultural and economic centre of the Naxi, one of 55 minority groups in China. Well known for its historic buildings linked by an elaborate network of waterways, Lijiang was given UNESCO World Heritage status in 1997. Since then, over four million tourists have passed through the town (Lijiang Bureau of Statistics 2006a) and wrought significant changes to its landscape. This paper examines the politics of tourism development, focusing on the reasons and motivations behind the state's promotion of tourism development and assessing the extent of acceptance by the local people of these transformations.

Correspondence Address: Xiaobo Su, Department of Geography, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1251, USA. Fax: (541) 346 2067; Tel.: (541) 346 4568; Email: xiaobo@uoregon.edu

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The paper draws on research which explains tourism impacts as reflections of asymmetrical power relations between locals and tourists, as well as between locals and those in dominant positions such as the government and global or private sector capital (see, for example, Britton 1991; Meethan 2001). In these works, locals are often portrayed as the weak who have to 'bear the burden of adjustment' in tourism development (Joseph and Kavoori 2001: 999). This structuralist approach creates a binary in which the dominance of global capital and bureaucracy is accentuated, while locals are portrayed as passive receivers of change. This paper proposes an alternate post-structuralist approach in which locals are included in the global interplay of tourism development and change (see for example, Ateljevic 2000; Aitchison 2001; Teo and Lim 2003):

[T]he local does not exist as an oppositional reality to the global, but rather constitutes a dynamic cultural negotiation with the changing structures of political economy, a negotiation in which dominant structures are mediated by individual agency (Oakes 1993: 47).

Hence, it is argued that locals play an active role in tourism development and will mediate politically and economically powerful forces, especially when tourism spaces begin to infringe on vernacular spaces for everyday activities. For this reason, rather than a top-down approach wherein only the production of tourism landscapes is emphasized (Ateljevic 2000), this paper offers a more holistic analysis that expands the networks of interactions that account for Lijiang's tourism development. It is argued that tourism change is not completely state driven nor are locals always disenfranchised. In addition, locals do not always repudiate tourism development nor do they view heritage tourism as negative for local society. Instead, the interactions between the many social groups in Lijiang have led to an appreciation of the benefits that tourism brings and some, in fact, participate actively in tourism development. None the less, where tourism development discourse is deemed inappropriate, locals will act to counteract negative impacts. In sum, this paper emphasizes the 'interrelatedness' of the many actors in tourism development in the hope that the dynamism of such interactions will contribute towards a challenge of the static and binary thinking that permeates the structuralist perspective about tourism development in Third World countries.

Ideally, the analysis should cover all the important players in tourism development. It is acknowledged that this paper has a limitation because it chooses to deal only with state discourses, private sector support of this discourse and the views of the indigenous Naxi. Tourists have been intentionally left out because there is sufficient literature that addresses tourist-local interactions (see, for example, Kearns and Philo 1993; Kahn 1997; Teo and Lim 2003) but more can be said about the interactions between the state and local people, especially in emerging economies like China where the priority of economic growth takes precedence.

Tourism Development and Heritage

According to Zeppel and Hall (1992: 47), heritage tourism evinces 'nostalgia for the past and the desire to experience diverse cultural landscapes and forms'. Yale (1991: 21) defined heritage tourism as 'centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings to art works'. Given the nature of its emphasis, heritage tourism inevitably raises issues concerning what is heritage and whose heritage? Alsayyad (2001), Corner and Harvey (1991), Kearns and Philo (1993) and Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) have discussed in some detail the cultural politics involved in these debates. They stressed that the selection and (re)presentation of heritage and its development for tourism are embroiled in an entangled net of power relations that asks, 'whose past is being preserved, how [is] it . . . represented, and whose interests are served by such unavoidable selective readings' (Jackson 1991: 225).

For Lowe (1993), heritage is an economic resource that can help development, hence the state will play a key role in determining what is heritage and what will be preserved and represented to the tourists. Likewise, Yeoh and Kong (1999: 134) agreed that heritage sites are 'repositor[ies] of elite or state power'; however, they are also sites 'of individual and collective struggle and resistance.' For instance, Teo and Huang (1995) found that the Civic and Cultural District in Singapore underwent extensive urban conservation under the state but the effort did not reinforce Singaporeans' sense of pride and belonging to this cluster of heritage sites, which are now deemed to be tourist orientated. None the less, even as tourist income gained ground, specific interest groups and alliances were emerging to give the powerful a serious challenge. Some examples of social struggle are reflected in the work of Chang *et al.* (1996) in the Singapore context, Jones and Shaw (1997), Kahn (1997) and Oakes and Schein (2005) in other countries. In these papers, the authors demonstrated that ordinary people's ability to subvert and transform meanings in the cultural production of landscapes ought not to be underestimated. Scott (1990: xii) described this resistance as 'a hidden transcript . . . spoken behind the back[s] of the dominant' (see also Scott 1985). The use of the adjectives 'hidden' and 'behind' is unfortunate. While the powerful can impinge their ideology and affect the public and private spaces of the weak, resulting in an intensification of marginality (de Certeau 1984), it can also be argued that the weak *can* and *do* resist or even influence the existing power structure: 'the margins [do] have potential to become nodes in a more decentered, less binary, and less hierarchical spatial organization of society and configuration of representational power' (Duncan and Sharp 1993: 478). LeFebvre's (1991) 'representational spaces' are manifestations of 'sphere[s] of autonomous action and self-determination [in spite of] the constraints placed . . . by the "strong"' (Kong and Yeoh 1997: 216–17). This paper explores some of 'the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong' (de Certeau 1984: xvii) within the Lijiang World Heritage Site. Even as the state imposes its own tourism development plans on Lijiang, the (re)appropriation of public space from tourism commodification and the tourist gaze help us to understand the dynamic nature of spatial outcomes.

So far, the marginalized have been emphasized. The article now turns to the work of Gramsci (1971) to elucidate the role of the dominant in this interaction. Gramsci argued that hegemony is not as simple as ideas and meanings imposed from above. Instead, there is consensus building in which 'the . . . dominant class . . . persuade[s] the] subordinate classes to accept its moral, political, and cultural values as the "natural" order' (Jackson 1989: 53). By correspondingly winning consent from allies while coercively pruning or weakening opposing forces, a consensus emerges which becomes a part of the social fabric (Ateljevic 2000). In order to secure agreement from the masses, 'account [has to] be taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised' (Gramsci 1971: 161). As such, hegemony is not a single-dimensional act of power. Cultural politics incorporating the interplay of economy and culture, production and consumption, the global and the local will help arrive at what Ateljevic and Doorne (2002: 651) call the 'common-sense' inherent in the contestations within many heritage tourism sites today.

Methodology

Several methods were employed to gather data for this study. A Questionnaire survey was used to ascertain local perceptions on heritage tourism and the state. Over 300 mail-back questionnaire surveys were given out to children aged 7–12 who were studying at a school on the border between Lijiang Ancient Town and the new city (Figure 1). They were requested to take the questionnaires to family members or to adult friends. The questionnaires were distributed in mid-November 2004 and most were returned half a month later. The return rate was 86.6 percent but, in the end, only 200 were usable. The sample generally reflected Lijiang's population except for age. The 30–39 group was slightly over-represented as the pupils naturally sought their own parents (Table 1).

In addition, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 29 Naxi living in Lijiang. These were conducted between September and December 2004 and again in July 2005 (Table 2). The interviews focused on the impacts of tourism on their lives and on the town, especially the social and cultural transformation of Naxi community after tourism development. All names are pseudonyms in this paper. In addition, interviews were conducted with seven officials who worked in various Lijiang offices in charge of heritage tourism and conservation. The main focus was on the roles that local government played in heritage tourism. A cultural consultant affiliated with UNESCO was also interviewed. No further details are provided on these respondents so as to protect their identities.

Lijiang's Immersion into Heritage Tourism

The history of Lijiang Ancient Town can be traced back some 800 years to the Song Dynasty (AD 960–1279). Located on the tea trading route between Tibet and Yunnan, Lijiang was a major meeting point in South-west China. Spanning 800 years as a

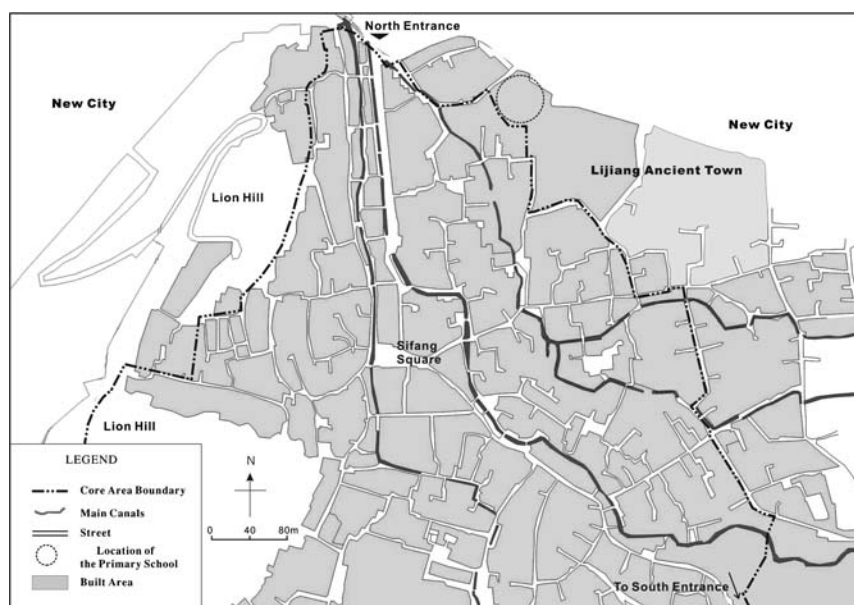


Figure 1. Lijiang Ancient Town. *Source:* adapted from Shao *et al.* (2004).

functioning city, there are now approximately 62,600 inhabitants (in 1996) and most are indigenous Naxi (Yang 2002). However, within the core of the ancient town which is subject to strict heritage conservation rules, it is estimated that only a few thousand Naxi are left since most of the residential houses have been appropriated for tourism or have been bought over by the majority Han people who have come to Lijiang to start businesses or for habitation.

In order to analyse the development of Lijiang Ancient Town into a major tourism site, the actors who play a dominant role need to be identified. At the top of Lijiang's hierarchy of decision making is the secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) branch of Lijiang who is directly supervised by the CCP Central Committee in Beijing. This administrator oversees tourism planning and urban conservation in Lijiang and directs the many statutory boards responsible for the drawing up and operationalization of policies that bring to fruition Beijing's recommendations for the city. Of the many statutory boards, the Committee for World Heritage Management and Conservation of Lijiang Ancient Town (CWHMC) and the Lijiang Tourism Bureau (LTB) should be singled out for analysis as they each play a crucial role in the enactment and implementation of various tourism development and heritage conservation plans.

The story of remaking Lijiang Ancient Town began when a key organ of the CCP, the State Council, moved to award the town National Historic and Cultural City status in 1986. This title was granted to the city because of the important historic value of its

Table 1. Profile of local survey respondents

Respondents	No.	%	Lijiang in 2000	%
Gender				
Male	108	54.0		51.3
Female	92	46.0		48.7
Age (years)				
19 and below	16	8.0	14 and below	26.2
20–29	11	5.5	15–64	67.9
30–39	138	69.0	65 and above	5.9
40–49	26	13.0		
50 and above	9	4.5		
Ethnicity				
Han	78	39.0	Han	42.3
Naxi	106	53.0	Non-Han	57.7
Other minority	16	8.0		
Location of residence				
Ancient town	107	53.5		
New city	93	46.5		
Length of residence (years)				
Less than 1	11	5.5		
1–5	74	37.0		
6–10	29	14.5		
About 10	86	43.0		

Source: Authors' data and Lijiang Bureau of Statistics (2006b).

buildings and its success in the preservation of its culture. The title propelled Lijiang into 'national star' status in that the city through its tourism development potential will significantly contribute to the 'reinforcement of socialist ideological and ethical progress' (The State Council 1986: 1). During his visit to Lijiang as the Vice Premier

Table 2. Profile of local interview respondents

Profile	Number
Gender	
Male	21
Female	8
Age (years)	
29 and below	4
30–39	6
40–49	3
50–59	4
60 and above	12

Source: Authors' data.

in 1995, Zhu Rong-ji gave further endorsement to Lijiang's contribution: 'Lijiang does not only own natural landscape and historic relics, but also minority culture. It is very unique. . . . Lijiang has great potential of becoming an important international destination in the future' (LTB n.d.: 2). It seems conceivable that through tourism development, Lijiang can provide a role model where the economic gap between the developed coastal areas of China and the peripheral inland undeveloped areas can be reduced.

In 1997, UNESCO granted Lijiang Ancient Town World Heritage Site status. According to UNESCO (1999: 7),

It [Lijiang Ancient Town] is perfectly adapted to the uneven topography of this key commercial and strategic site and has retained a historic townscape of high quality and authenticity. Its architecture is noteworthy for the blending of elements from several cultures that have come together over many centuries. Lijiang also possesses an ancient water-supply system of great complexity and ingenuity that still functions effectively today.

In sum, two authorial bodies gave credence to Lijiang's legitimacy as a unique gem in the Chinese tourism landscape: the Chinese central government and UNESCO. While UNESCO gave prominence to the authenticity of Lijiang's historic townscape, it had limited influence on the progress of tourism development. The UNESCO cultural consultant pointed out:

There is also [the] other agenda which [includes developing local] . . . leadership concerning for [sic] development and modernization which may conflict with some UNESCO's issues. But we can't do more anyway because, after all, it is their town, it is their country . . . It is not for us to tell China what to do. The role of UNESCO is to offer advice. [If p]eople take it, that's great; [if] they don't want it, that's their decision.

UNESCO is spot on because World Heritage Site status triggered many expectations about the economic gains that can be brought about by tourism (see also Lew *et al.* 2003). The destination's visibility improved world-wide; the title effectively made Lijiang Ancient Town 'a highly sought-after prize' (Drost 1996: 481). A report from the *Asian Wall Street Journal* (2001) described the outcome, 'few cities have tried to capitalize on that brand [re: the World Heritage status] with as much zeal as Lijiang'.

With support from central government, Lijiang's local government took steps to boost tourism development. LTB and CWHMC both sought external advice on how to bolster tourism development while protecting the town's rich heritage. In 2003, LTB invited elites from Kunming to formulate Lijiang City's Tourism Master Plan. At the same time, other expertise was sought for comparative purposes. The CWHMC consulted planners from Tongji University in Shanghai. As it turned out, both plans proposed that conservation and development are twin goals that cannot be separated.

As the planners from Shanghai argued, 'as a World Heritage Site, Lijiang should place conservation in the framework of development' (Shao *et al.* 2004: 53).

In order to accelerate tourism development, the then Lijiang CCP secretary started wooing the private sector to get involved in Lijiang's tourism after 2000, especially in the development of hotels, cultural products and transportation. Many government-run tourism corporations and cultural units were also privatized. Without a doubt, marketization stimulated many forms of capital, ranging from the local (within Lijiang) to the domestic (within China), to the global. For instance, *lishuijinsha* (literally, beautiful water and golden sand) is a variety show developed for tourists by a company from Shenzhen in Guangdong province. The company employed many designers from Beijing and Hong Kong to incorporate Broadway into Yunnan ethnic dance in the belief that this will appeal to many visitors. In addition, many residential houses along the main thoroughfares were bought over or rented to outsiders who converted them into souvenir shops or service facilities. According to Bao and Su (2004), in 2002 Lijiang Ancient Town had 877 souvenir shops and service facilities along the main streets. These shops are overwhelmingly controlled or operated by people from the coastal areas of China (namely Guangdong and Fujian) and from foreign countries (South Korea and Japan).

Tourism development would not have been so rapid if it had not been embraced by grassroots representatives as well. Interviews with these people revealed that they had considered the economic returns from tourism and that they believed that tourism can have a role in Naxi cultural revival and identity building. They related that they had offered advice to the local government on how to incorporate tourism into the local community: 'I proposed a [strategy] . . . to turn [Naxi] culture into an industry for the tourists . . . so that local people can make profits' (Madam Huang, aged 60, a Naxi resident involved in the cultural activities of the community). Some of the strategies included turning Naxi religious artefacts such as their 'bible' into a tourist souvenir or using their written dialect on book marks, key chains and bracelets:

Many people are doing tourism businesses in the old town. These businesses have cultural connotations as some businessmen even develop Naxi culture [by producing Naxi] . . . souvenirs. I think the mainstream of tourism development is good. It enhances Naxi people's horizon and improve our knowledge. It also impels Naxi people to accept modern civilization. Without a doubt, it is good (Mr Wang, aged 65, a Naxi resident).

The efforts made by local government have the imperative of forging Lijiang into a world-class destination and to prompt Lijiang's economic development (*Lijiang Daily* 2006a). This was achieved through infrastructure development and tourism product development, and by improving tourism service generally (Lijiang CCP 2006). Because of these efforts, the town witnessed an exponential increase in visitor arrivals. From 1.04 million domestic tourists and 102,100 international visitors in 1996, by

2005, Lijiang City boasted that its domestic tourist arrivals reached as high as 3.9 million and overseas tourist arrivals rose to 182,800. In 1996, domestic tourism receipts were 0.16 billion RMB. This rose to 3.45 billion RMB by 2005. While international tourists brought Lijiang \$US9.7 million in earnings in 1996, this rose to \$US49.3 million in 2005 (LTB 2004; Lijiang Bureau of Statistics 2006a). In 2005, tourism revenues accounted for 63.9 percent of the local gross domestic product. The ambition is for tourist arrivals to reach 7.4 million and tourism revenue to rise to 8 billion RMB by 2010 (Lijiang CCP 2006).

The legitimacy of tourism is not only in the number of jobs it has generated and the income it has brought to the town. While there is certainly a drive for tourism-induced modernization in Lijiang, it also acknowledged that the built heritage and Naxi culture should be monitored closely. In 2003, Mr He, the incumbent Secretary of Lijiang CCP Committee, stressed that the purpose of preservation of the town is to 'insure the sustainable development of the ethnic cultural industry' (*Lijiang Daily* 2006b: 1). As he argued, appropriating ethnic culture is a way to 'display the infinite charm of the excellent culture of Chinese nationalities to the whole world and advertise Lijiang's cultural image as a vivacious and burgeoning city' (*Lijiang Daily* 2006b: 1). In the eyes of local government, all efforts about planning, regulation, marketization and promotion aim to make Lijiang's rich heritage more famous, while, at the same time, conserving it so that Lijiang's tourism growth is sustainable. How far do the people subscribe to this discourse from the state? The next section explores this.

A Shared Discourse? The Hegemony of the Ancient in Lijiang

If the intent is to grow tourism in Lijiang with support from the state and from the private sector, would gentrification as well as commodification of the ancient town mean the alienation of the local Naxi? The priority given to the preservation of old buildings and of the Naxi culture (religion, costume, language and music, in particular) bring a surreal feel to the ancient town, as practically everyone seems to be scripted into a heritage manuscript for consumption by the tourists. If tourism is indeed the make or break of Lijiang, do the Naxi feel marginalized in this landscape?

The responses of the locals were collated on seven statements about the perceived impacts of tourism on local society and about the role of government in heritage tourism development (Table 3). Respondents were asked to tick on a five-point Likert scale, how far they agreed with each of these statements.

Positive perceptions about the impact of tourism prevailed. For instance, 81 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that tourism helps Naxi cultural revival. Almost two-thirds felt that the town would be a dull place without the tourists. According to the survey data, 72.5 percent strongly agreed or agreed that the local government had done well in restoring historical buildings in the town and three-quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the government should continue to encourage tourism development. As a way to protect the historical value of the

Table 3. Perceived tourism impacts and the role of the government in heritage tourism (%)

Statement	Local residents (<i>n</i> =200)				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Tourism helps Naxi cultural revival	1.5	4.5	13.0	52.0	29.0
The town would be a dull place without visitors	10.0	16.0	14.5	32.0	27.5
Government has done well in restoring historical buildings	2.0	3.5	22.0	51.0	21.5
Government should further encourage tourism in the town	3.0	6.0	16.0	44.5	30.5
Government should enact stricter regulations for urban conservation	3.0	4.5	11.0	23.5	58.0
<i>Vis-à-vis</i> tourists, locals are treated like second-class citizens	16.0	34.5	19.0	17.0	13.5
Commercialization causes locals to lose their sense of identity	6.5	29.0	29.0	26.0	9.5

Source: Authors' data.

ancient town, 81.5 percent strongly agreed or agreed that even stricter laws should be enforced on urban conservation. More (50.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed than agreed that, *vis-à-vis* tourists, they were second class citizens. With regard to the negative impacts of commercialization taking away local identity, there were as many who agreed as those who disagreed. Without tourism, the Naxi believed that traditional culture would have died a natural death. Mr He, a 60-year-old choreographer of Naxi folk dance who works in a private sector tourism corporation had this to say:

Tourism is a theatre stage of Naxi culture. Without this stage, it cannot be displayed or [made] known to others. In turn, the existence of Naxi culture flourishes tourism . . . The staged Naxi cultural performance can help the revival and transformation of excellent traditional culture . . . But tourism also causes the commodification of Naxi culture and adds many invented elements to it. In the end, you don't know which is true or false.

Some locals said, 'tourism widens our horizon about the world [but] it also alienates locals from the town' (Mr Yang, a provision shop owner, aged 50) and 'tourism distorts Naxi folk tale' (Mr Wang, a scholar researching Naxi religion, aged 50). However, many were positive about tourism: it 'increases our salary and improves local life quality' (Miss Xiong, a tourism employee aged 20); 'Tourism enhances my confidence when I come into contact with strangers' (Miss Zhang, unemployed, aged 25). These answers provide evidential support that locals bought into the hegemonic discourse proffered by the state that the positive impact of tourism far exceeds the negative.

In fact, most of the respondents endorsed the contribution of tourism in reviving Naxi culture, which had been kept in check during Mao Zedong's communist regime (1949–1976).

Many aver that tourism brings Naxi culture to the whole world. While the centre of China remains Beijing, the periphery is stretched as far as Mongolia and Yunnan. What better way to return Lijiang to an economically if not physically central position in the Chinese perception of core and periphery than through tourism? The ancient town is a source of pride: 'I feel proud of being the town's Naxi people. We own such a beautiful town and so many people come here to see it' (Miss Xiong). Mr Zhao (retired, early 60s), who had turned his own house into a guesthouse, commented on the host–guest interaction:

We can exchange information. I can tell tourists Lijiang's history and Naxi culture to let them understand Lijiang. In turn, I can fully obtain the information about many places. All of us are happy and many become my friends. This is a form of communication between people and people, place and place, nation and nation.

Local government considers tourism in Lijiang as the life force that will bring economic development to this peripheral location. Without the unique ethnic composition and building styles in Lijiang, the hurdles to growth seem insurmountable. Just bordering Shangri-la, Lijiang is indeed mysterious and inimitable and this discourse is evidently shared by quite a number of locals.

Reclaiming Space: Instruments of the Weak

Almost inevitably, some of the expected outcomes of tourism development include the commodification of heritage landscape and the colonization of lived spaces by tourists and tourism developers. While the state, private enterprise and locals may agree on the benefits that can be derived from tourism development, there also exists alternative readings and this is corroborated by the manner in which locals consume the townscape and transform spaces of representation meant for tourism into representational spaces of the local people (LeFebvre 1991). Naxi people may embrace the hegemony of tourism development but they also modulate these outcomes so that tourism capital does not become the dominant agent determining Lijiang's physical and cultural landscapes.

This section will use two examples to show the interplay between the state, locals and tourists as they influence and are influenced by each other in a common space of interaction – a main thoroughfare where many food and beverage outlets are located, and the main gathering point of the town square. Along Xinhua Street, which is picturesque for its hand-strewn stone houses, flag-stoned pavements, waterways with strategically placed bridges and willow trees, many food and beverage outlets have emerged to allow the tourists to sit and enjoy the ambience of Lijiang Ancient Town

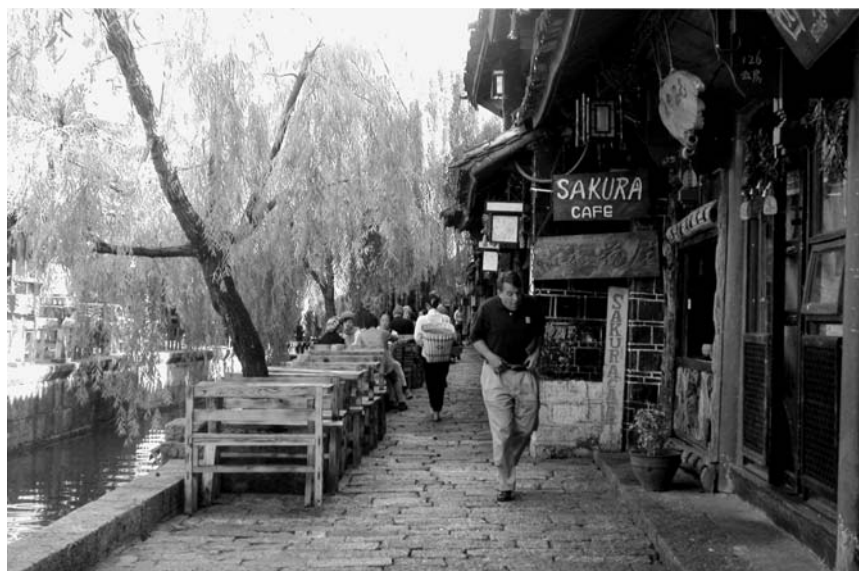


Figure 2. Picturesque Xinhua Street in Lijiang Ancient Town.

(Figure 2). Le Petit Paris, one such outlet, offers a menu that is international in nature, including burgers, coffee lattes and beers besides local rice and noodle dishes. Every night hundreds of Chinese and international tourists can be found gathered at these outlets, creating a carnival-like atmosphere with merry-making going on well into the night. According to the residents, these watering holes are popular and constitute part of the tourism experience. In some ways, Xinhua Street is a space of exclusion in which ‘a socio-spatial hierarchy of winners and losers’ (Chatterton and Hollands 2003: 184) can be found, since the amount spent on food and drinks is beyond the means of most of the local residents of Lijiang. According to one resident, ‘I have never heard of a bar before . . . I just know of tea shops. The reason that bars emerge is definitely to earn money from tourists. I’ve never been to bars [in the past]’ (Mr Yu, in his middle 50s). In contradistinction to the past, some local residents, especially the better off, have taken to visiting the outlets. Henceforth, these locations have become ‘heterogeneous spaces’ (Edensor 2000) of co-existence between the tourists and the locals. Here, the gaze is inverted because locals use this space to adjudicate tourist performance. The blurred boundaries provide a chance to enact encounters that do not always privilege the tourists. Although Xinhua Street is, without doubt, a tourist enclave within Lijiang Ancient Town, locals are reclaiming the space as their own consumption patterns change and they are mediating how the landscape on this street will evolve: ‘Personally I love Le Petit Paris very much. You can find many locals

inside at night. No matter whether you know them or not, it is easy to gather together to have a drink. It is *our* place' (Miss Zhang).

Sifang Square tells a similar story. The Square was the meeting place for locals but the influx of tourism has seen the Square converted into a gathering point for the many tour groups that pass through. Here, tour guides will summarize their tour of Lijiang and review the main highlights of Lijiang. Here, also, carts selling souvenirs compete for space with vendors selling plastic lotuses meant to bring luck, good fortune or love for tourists once they are released into the ubiquitous waterways that line the Square. Here, also, dressed up 'tea traders' from bygone days offer tourists rides through the streets of Lijiang. Picture taking is a must at the Square. By night, the buildings surrounding the Square are attractively lit up and fireworks entertain tourists Disney-World style in a sight and sound panorama. Without a doubt, Sifang Square is an important public space for tourists.

To the locals, it is important that five main streets converge on the Square. These roads connect to smaller roads that provide access to every corner of the ancient town. Historically, the Square housed a daily market servicing residents in the town and villagers in the vicinity. The daily market was functional until the mid-1990s when the local government decided to replace it with tourist-orientated activities, such as the sale of souvenirs. Since tourists actively encroach on to Sifang Square, what has happened to the locals?

Reclaiming Sifang Square was a subtle manoeuvre. In the daytime, two groups of elderly residents were found, who regularly congregate at the Square to dance. They were there everyday from 2:30–4:30pm, except for during bad weather. They dance the *datiao*, which involves rhythmic movements executed by a circle of dancers (Figure 3). One of the groups gets some financial support from the government but the other is largely subsidized by a local retiree who wants to preserve the heritage. Every time the dance is performed, a large crowd of tourists would gather round to watch and even participate. According to Mr Zhang, the 60-year old benefactor of the self-financed dance team:

Our dance is an important form of Naxi tradition. It can enlighten this World Heritage Site. Sifang Square is the heart of this heritage site. Without our dance, it is a lifeless place. We are like a 'pacemaker' to the Square. . . . Among many tourists we meet, some show contempt at us. They ask whom our dance adds light to, Jiang Ze-min or Zhu Rong-ji? I don't know. I only know it is a folk activity and a part of cultural heritage. It is our culture and history.

In addition, the dance helps the older folk in Lijiang get some exercise and they can socialize: 'let our old people . . . exercise . . . they feel comfortable and keep away from diseases. Old people can also talk with each other. Many people come here everyday. If they don't dance, they feel ill' (Mr Zhang).



Figure 3. Domestic tourists participate in the *datiao* dance at Sifang Square. *Note:* Daily marketing of the elderly dancers has been conveniently placed at the centre of the dance circle. Small canals and waterways line the buildings in the background.

The *datiao* is performed to celebrate important festivals, such as the Torch Festival (in this festival, the Naxi carry torches and dance as a way to expel evil spirits and ghosts) and the *Sanduo* Festival (during this festival, the Naxi adulate *Sanduo* who is considered the most powerful god of many in Naxi mythology). Historically, *datiao* was more popular in the Naxi villages around Lijiang than in the ancient town itself. It was restored by the governing authorities of Lijiang in the year 2000 as part of an action plan to improve the attractiveness of the ancient town following the grant of World Heritage Site status by UNESCO. The state essentially organized town residents to participate in a *datiao* session every evening at Sifang Square. The other dance group, which receives some financial aid from the government to buy batteries for their tape recorders and the like, still perform the *datiao* on such a daily basis. According to Madam He, the 55-year-old organizer of this dance team, 'dance is of importance to Lijiang's tourism. Without our dance, the town is dull and dry. It is meaningless'. Whether the tourists watched or participated, Madam He also pointed out that their presence did not make a difference to the dancers. The *datiao* is a custom that has been passed down many generations and the team dances for their own edification as much as for the tourists. Both groups re-create cultural meaning in this highly touristified space in their own terms. While the former group prefers to separate itself from the tourists, they are not confrontational if the tourists join in. The

latter group also welcomes tourist participation but the symbolism behind the dance being performed in a public square is as important as tourist appreciation.

According to Boniface and Flower (1993: 70), 'every urban place needs its local heroes for its own self-esteem'. It is argued that these ordinary elderly people are Lijiang's heroes anchoring Naxi culture into a space that comprises the town's heart and enhancing the Square as an icon of local pride. Recognizing that tourism has usurped the Square, the Naxi do not employ radical tactics to alter this situation, but instead, reclaim the Square as a vital part of Naxi community by attaching everyday activities to it (see also Lowenthal 1985; 1996). To the Naxi, their dance does not celebrate China's national leaders nor are they concerned whether it adds to the authenticity described by UNESCO. The dances performed by the Naxi are part of local vernacular landscape, which is also incorporated into the everyday of tourism in Lijiang. As 'a product of spontaneous cultural forces' (Hough 1984: 10–11), this landscape is bound up with rootedness and memory in local peoples' minds and helps them to strengthen place attachment to this town and build solidarity to combat external influences. In the process of reclaiming the colonized space, the Naxi do not revolt against tourism development nor reject tourists' gaze upon them. While they permit tourist participation in their dance, self-edification is also important for self-esteem and identity. This is their way of negotiating the heterogeneous discourses that permeate their daily life within this busy tourist town.

Conclusion

Writing about the cultures of cities in a cosmopolitan world, Zukin (1995: 113) posited that urban culture – especially the elements related to local uniqueness – are saleable commodities and present 'a means of framing the city'. The consequence is the loss of authenticity but that is compensated for by a re-created historical narrative and a commodified geographical imagination which, unfortunately, does not take into account that the converted spaces belong to the community who live there (Zukin 1995: 20).

In Lijiang, tourism is embraced such that the ancient town has to be (re)produced in terms understandable to tourists, acceptable to the state authorities aiming to make some money for the city and to UNESCO, which is indirectly responsible for jettisoning the ancient town into the modern world. Because of tourism development, the authenticity of Naxi culture and built heritage has been compromised and many local elements have been packaged for sale. Local people have to jostle with the tourists in public spaces, such as Sifang Square, and many are, in fact, displaced as private capital takes over shop-houses and residences for conversion into tourist facilities. While there exists pockets of discontent, the remake of Lijiang is still a shared vision, naturalized by the authorities who have managed to persuade the Naxi to imbibe the same discourse. The hegemony of capitalism is indeed nuanced. Nevertheless, the paper has also shown that local people re-create meaning and symbolism even within

highly touristified spaces. By reclaiming parts of Xinhua Street and Sifang Square, local people have managed to create Naxi representational spaces that include local activities. Indeed, from this study it can be seen that tourist landscapes do not reflect a power dichotomy between locals and the state. Instead, it is the intersection of heterogeneous discourses.

The paper has attempted to be constructive in its analysis but clearly the research agenda for heritage tourism remains long and demanding. The rapid pace with which tourism is breaking into emerging economies, such as China, means only that the need is great for more research to unravel the complex tourism processes at play. This paper has simply spelt out the interactions between a few of these important processes.

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Notes on Contributors

Xiaobo Su is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography, University of Oregon. His research interest is in the politics of heritage tourism in China's historic sites.

Peggy Teo is an Independent Scholar. She works on heritage tourism, conservation, theme parks and post-colonialism.

Résumé Politique du tourisme à Lijiang, Chine: une analyse des interactions entre l'état et les autorités locales dans le cadre du développement du tourisme

La transformation du patrimoine en produit touristique a gonflé l'attente des profits à en tirer. Depuis qu'elle a acquis le statut de patrimoine mondial en 1997, Lijiang dépend de plus en plus de l'aide de l'état et d'entreprises privées pour exploiter pleinement ce potentiel. Ce développement touristique rapide a entraîné la marginalisation des indigènes Naxi dont les maisons ont été transformées en gîtes, en magasins de souvenirs et autres lieux de services pour la consommation des touristes. Nous examinons les discours de l'état au sujet du développement du tourisme comme moyen de développement et de croissance économiques et signalons aussi la réaction des Naxi devant la menace de leur touristification. Les efforts des Naxi se portent sur deux lieux importants, afin de se réappropriier des espaces touristiques, la place centrale et un marché à un croisement principal, pour y pratiquer leurs activités quotidiennes et comme espaces représentant symboliquement leur identité culturelle. Le paysage de Lijiang est finalement le résultat de l'interaction entre l'état, des entreprises privées et des forces locales. Leurs discours hétérogènes sont intégrés par les Naxi qui continuent de vivre dans l'ancienne ville de Lijiang.

Mots-clés: Tourisme de patrimoine, Lijiang, Naxi, discours hégémonique, négociation, espace

Zusammenfassung: Tourismuspolitiken im chinesischen Lijiang: Eine Untersuchung der staatlichen und lokalen Verflechtungen in der Tourismusentwicklung

Das Kulturerbe als ein touristischer Rohstoff hat Erwartungen über daraus potentiell zu schlagende Profite geweckt. Seit die Altstadt von Lijiang 1997 den Welterbestatus erreichte wurde diese in der Maximierung des Potentials zunehmend abhängig von staatlicher Unterstützung und Privatunternehmen. Eine Folge der rapiden Tourismusentwicklung ist die Marginalisierung der einheimischen Naxi, da deren Häuser umgenutzt wurden zu Gästehäusern, Andenkenläden und anderen Einrichtungen der touristischen Konsumtion. Wir untersuchen den staatlichen Diskurs über Tourismusentwicklung als Mittel zur Erzielung wirtschaftlicher Entwicklung und Wachstums sowie die Reaktion der Naxi auf die Bedrohung der touristischen Verrohstofflichung. Zwei wichtige Orte, der Stadtplatz und ein Essenslokal an einer Hauptdurchgangsstraße, werden genutzt, um die Bemühungen der Naxi aufzuzeigen, touristische Räume für ihre Alltagsaktivitäten und das symbolische Repräsentationsräume ihrer eigenen kulturellen Identität zurück zu gewinnen. In der Schlussanalyse ist die Stadtlandschaft von Lijiang ein Verflechtungsergebnis des Staates, privater Unternehmen und lokaler Kräfte, deren heterogene Diskurse von den Naxi in ihr Leben in der Altstadt von Lijiang integriert werden.

Stichwörter: Kulturerbetourismus, Lijiang, Naxi, Hegemoniediskurs, Ausgleich, Raum