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Confrontations and concessions: an everyday politics of tourism in three ethnic minority villages, Guizhou Province, China

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As a state-promoted livelihood diversification approach for ethnic minority communities in rural China, tourism development influences household and community assets in diverse ways. Focusing on three case study villages in Qiandongnan Hmong and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province, we compare the livelihoods of one village without tourism to date (but slated for tourism development in the near future), one with a 'medium' level of tourism, and another where tourism is in full force. Our analysis of the transitional characteristics of these communities focuses on agriculture, income-related activities, cultural norms, and social relationships to shed light on the everyday politics of ethnic minority households under different stresses and demands from local government and state-controlled tourism businesses. We find that confrontations have arisen due to tourism expansion and state tourism planning directives among a wide range of stakeholders: Zhailao elites, core and peripheral tourism communities, country-level governments, local residents, and tourists. In turn, local residents have made broad concessions ranging from resignation to unwelcome changes in their livelihoods and new income inequalities, to acceptance of certain tourism-based changes and reallocation of resources. In sum, we find that villagers' everyday politics involves coping with or challenging new tensions in diverse ways, yet at times marginalisation remains.

Keywords: ethnic minorities; livelihood diversification; tourism; everyday politics; Guizhou Province

Introduction

Since China's 'Open Reform' policies began in 1978, tourism has been considered a development tool to alleviate poverty among ethnic minorities in China's southwest frontier (Yang, 2011). Initially, provincial and prefectural governments chose specific ethnic minority communities in this region to showcase tourism development (Zhong, Chen, & Yan, 2005). Spurred by the 'China Western Development' policy in 2000, ethnic tourism has now become a key government strategy for improving rural economies and living standards (Ma, 2000). As the Chinese government's relentless push for modernisation – styled 'development' – has underpinned an agrarian transition in the southwest, diversification has

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been key to rural residents' ability to maintain viable livelihoods (Cui, 2009a). Five principle forces are propelling livelihood diversification: national policies, off-farm opportunities, environmental degradation, land shortages, and social-cultural change (Rigg, 1991).

Ethnic tourism, as an off-farm opportunity, is frequently argued to improve local livelihoods through socio-economic development and job creation (Xie, 2011; Yang & Wall, 2009). However, tourism projects and activities in China's ethnic minority areas have also brought about conflicts and drawbacks alongside claims of economic prosperity. Many tourism projects in these areas exert negative influences, catalysing conflicts among stakeholders (Wood, 1984; Yang & Wall, 2009), social-cultural destruction (Cohen, 1988; Oakes, 1997), social change (Xiao, 2006), and landscape transformation (Xi, Zhao, & Ge, 2011).

In southwest rural China, tourist attractions are frequently living ethnic minority communities (Chow, 2005; Ryan & Aicken, 2005). The competing obligations of tourism and rural farming livelihoods mean local residents are often faced with a major transition from a farming-dominant to a service-dominant economy. As a result, rural livelihood diversification has increased dramatically. Such diversification has spurred the modification and renegotiation of kin and community social networks as well as relationships among key stakeholders, challenging traditional rural livelihoods and complicating the roles of multiple actors (cf. Ellis, 2000; Rigg, 1991). In turn, farmers are engaging with a range of 'everyday politics' (Kerkvliet, 2009) to negotiate the changes brought about by tourism activities and interventions.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, we examine the impacts of tourism on ethnic minority livelihoods in three villages in Qiandongnan Hmong and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province (Figure 1). Second, we investigate the villagers' responses and the everyday politics they draw on to cope with or negotiate such impacts. We start by outlining the conceptual lens of everyday politics through which these encounters and farmers' reactions are examined. Then we describe our methods and contextualise tourism

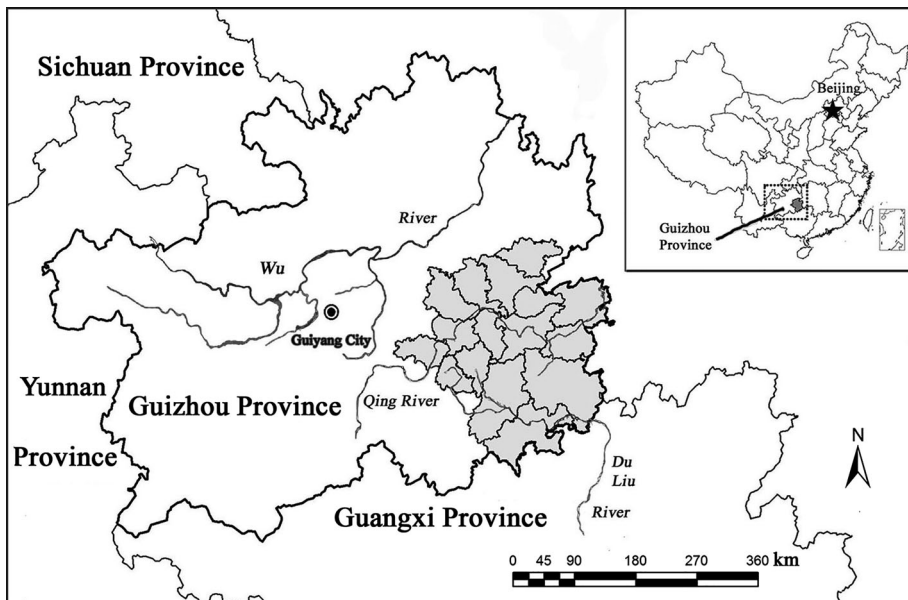


Figure 1. Case study site in Qiandongnan Hmong and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province, southwest China (adapted from Xiong & Yang, 2010).

development in Guizhou Province, broadly sketching the livelihood strategies and leadership structures of three case study villages with different exposures to tourism: Xijiang Hmu Administrative Village (Leishan County), Basha Hmu Administrative Village (Congjiang County), and Huanggang Dong Administrative Village (Liping County). We highlight a range of confrontations and concessions that have been occurring among villagers, tourism developers, and other stakeholders in these locales. We argue that this ‘development’ trajectory is resulting in increasing vulnerability and marginalisation for villagers, and we focus on the everyday politics farmers use to respond in complex ways.

Conceptually, we draw on Ben Kerkvliet’s work on everyday politics to examine the agency of local individuals and households. Focusing on the quotidian, Kerkvliet defines everyday politics as involving ‘people embracing, complying with, adjusting, and contesting norms and rules regarding authority over, production of, or allocation of resources and doing so in quiet, mundane, and subtle expressions and acts that are rarely organized or direct’ (2009, 232). Everyday politics, unlike official/advocacy politics, entails little organisation and is carried out by allegedly ‘powerless’ individuals who are often unlikely to deem their low-profile actions political. Attention is paid to the common, informal, and banal, rather than to the formal. Kerkvliet suggests that everyday politics be further divided into four categories: support, compliance, modifications and evasions, and resistance. We build upon these categories to determine the responses of rural farmers and other stakeholders to tourism ventures in Guizhou Province.

Our methods

Fieldwork was conducted in Qiandongnan Prefecture by a research team (a professor and two Master’s students from Guizhou University, plus the first author) during two months in 2013. Our mixed-methods approach, adopted to gain a cross section of responses, included semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and on-site observations. Twenty in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with government officials at the provincial, prefecture, and village levels. These key informant interviews covered policy orientations, decision-making and planning, and the distribution of tourism benefits. Of the three field sites, only Xijiang Hmu Village has a tourism company currently taking the leading role in tourism development; staff from this company (affiliated with and directly administered by the local government) were also interviewed. In addition, 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted following purposeful sampling with *Zhailao* elites (defined later in the article), local tourist guides, farmers, and tourism practitioners. Interviews covered attitudes towards tourism and reactions to this new livelihood opportunity, village management structures, social relationships, and livelihood approaches. These interviews were conducted after the community questionnaire survey (discussed next) and were organised to further the research team’s understandings of core emerging themes.

Two questionnaire surveys were carried out. One collected data on community expectations and the impacts of tourism development on local residents; 110 questionnaires were distributed to residents in the three village field sites during our fieldwork period, with a 98% ($N = 108$) response rate.¹ Another questionnaire, focusing on tourists’ perceptions and experiences, was distributed both on-site and via the Internet, with a

¹The questionnaire response rate was as follows: Huanggang: $n = 30$ (17 men, 13 women); Basha: $n = 28$ (16 men, 12 women); Xijiang: $n = 20$ (10 men, 10 women). Questionnaires were also distributed in nearby villages ($n = 32$) for comparison purposes.

response rate of 82% ($N=286$; 97 women, 108 men; 42% ethnic minorities, 58% Han). The on-site questionnaires were distributed to tourists in the villages during April and May 2013. The online questionnaires were conducted on the professional Chinese questionnaire platforms ‘askform.cn’ and ‘sojump.com’, and targeted tourists who had visited these villages.

Our fieldwork team also recorded observations, focusing on on-site activities and the attitudes and behaviours of tourists, *Zhailao* elites, farmers, and tourism practitioners. Secondary sources including tourism plans, other official documents, and newspaper articles were also analysed. While the survey and online questionnaire data were analysed quantitatively, interviews and observations were analysed by drawing out thematic codes and applying axial and constant comparative techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Clearly a limitation of this approach was the brief fieldwork time, only two months. Nonetheless, by conducting the research as a team and creating a mixed-methods approach that allowed for triangulation of results, we propose that initial insights into the impacts of and reactions to tourism in these villages can be gained.

Contextualising tourism in Qiandongnan prefecture, Guizhou

In China, ethnic tourism development is typically controlled directly by the government. The government determines the role of ethnic minority identities in tourism marketing, including which types of images and commodities are presented to enhance commercial attractiveness (Yang, 2011). Tourist attractions are ranked as being of national, provincial, or local levels of importance. In Qiandongnan Prefecture, our case study locale, numerous ‘tourism communities’ have been allocated one of these rankings (Figure 2).²

Qiandongnan Hmu and Dong Autonomous Prefecture lies in southeast Guizhou Province, with a population of 3.47 million belonging to 33 official minority groups as well as the Han majority. Over 70% of the prefecture’s residents are Hmu-speaking³ or Dong minorities. The prefecture covers 30,300 km², divided into one prefectural city, Kaili, and 15 rural counties. Tourists are attracted to the prefecture’s forests, grasslands, and terraced landscapes, subtropical climate, local traditional architecture, colourful ethnic festivals, and numerous minority cultures. The prefecture has witnessed a dramatic increase in tourism from only 100 tourists bringing in RMB120,000 (US\$50,000) revenue in 1984 to 24.1 million tourists and a revenue of RMB19.85 billion (US\$3.15 billion) in 2012 (Figure 3). Tourism is now a primary livelihood strategy for many residents who actively participate as guides, restaurant/hotel/cafe/bar owners, performers, souvenir traders, photographers, and photo models.

Of the three villages where fieldwork was conducted (see Table 1), Xijiang Hmu Administrative Village (Leishan County) consists of six ‘natural’⁴ villages with 1432 households. The government selected Xijiang as one of the first tourism communities in

²These national, provincial, and local levels are overseen by the central state, province, and prefecture governments, respectively. The higher a community’s tourism ‘attractiveness level’, the more funds and preferential policies they can reap from the government (Guo, Wu, Liu, & Fan, 2000).

³Hmu, also known as Qiandong Miao, Mhu Miao, or Central Miao, is one of the four sublanguages of the Miao language group in China. While Miao is the official minority nationality group, it is believed that most Miao in Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture belong to the Hmu linguistic group (Lemoine, 2008).

⁴Rural villages in China are classified as either ‘natural’ that spontaneously exist (自然村, *zirancun*), or ‘administrative’ bureaucratic entities (行政村, *xingzhengcun*). The latter are also often fashioned

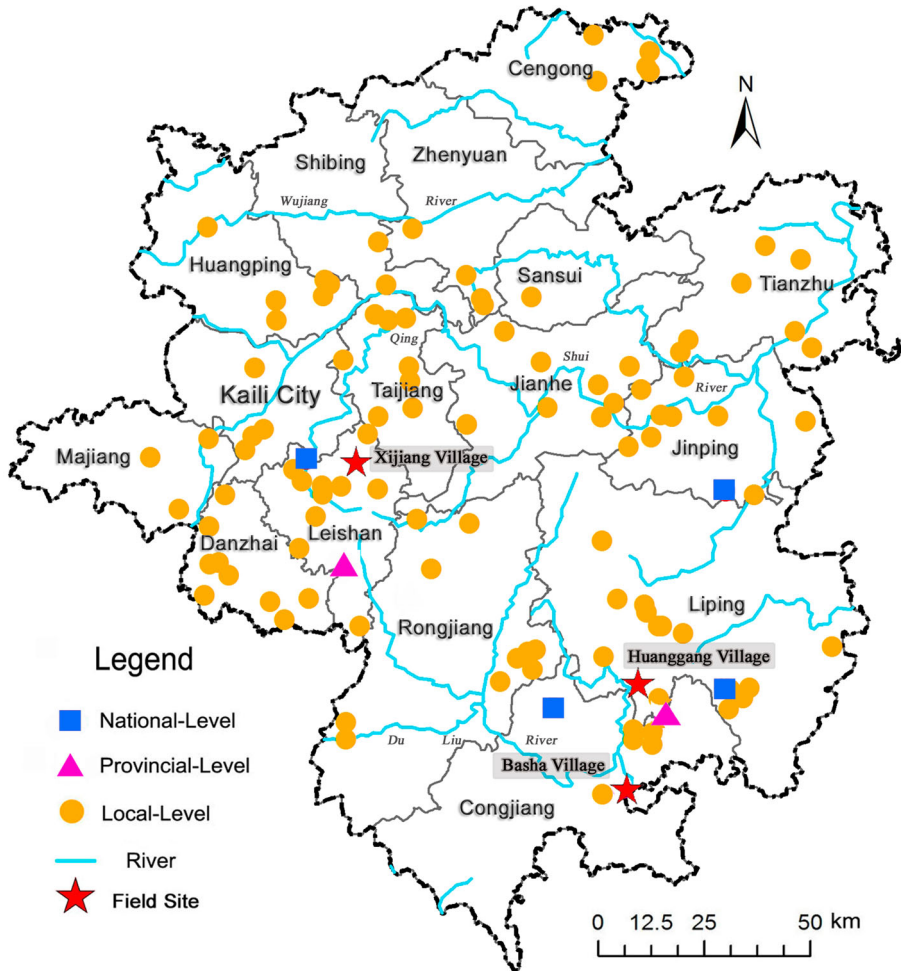


Figure 2. Classification of tourist sites in Qiongdongnan Hmong and Dong Autonomous Prefecture (Tourist administration of Qiongdongnan Prefecture, various dates: online).

Guizhou Province in 1982 and classified it at the national level of tourism importance in 2007. By 2012, the total number of tourists had reached 2.5 million annually and tourism income had soared to RMB310 million (US\$49 million), in part due to an entrance fee of RMB100 (US\$15) introduced in 2009. Xijiang Village houses 123 *Nongjiale* (locally run bed and breakfasts), 498 specialised tourist shops, and about 1500 tourism practitioners. Second, Basha Hmu Administrative Village (Congjiang County) includes six natural villages with 472 households. In 2005, Basha was selected as a tourism community of provincial-level importance. In 2012, the total number of tourists (mainly day-trippers) reached 123,600 and tourism income was RMB80.58 million (US\$12.7 million). Finally, Huanggang Dong Administrative Village (Liping County) consists of 359 households. Tourism

from previous 'natural' villages. When we speak of a 'village' in this paper, we are referring to the administrative village, unless specifically noted otherwise.

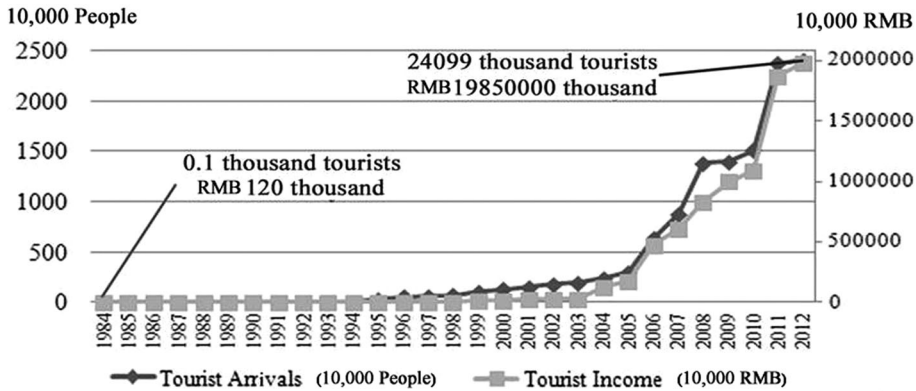


Figure 3. Tourist flows and income, 1984–2012, Qiandongnan Hmong and Dong Autonomous Prefecture (Qiandongnan Statistical Yearbook, 2009–2012).

Table 1. Tourism data for 2012 in the three field sites, Qiandongnan Prefecture.

Name	'Natural Villages'	Households	Tourist arrivals	Income from tourism	Tourism businesses
Xijiang Hmu Administrative Village	6	1432	2.5 million	RMB310 million (US \$49 million)	123 <i>Nongjiale</i> , 498 tourist shops, and about 1500 direct tourism practitioners
Basha Hmu Administrative Village	6	472	123,600	RMB80.58 million (US \$12.7 million)	5 guesthouses, 3 stores, and 1 souvenir shop
Huanggang Dong Administrative Village	2	359	Minimal	Minimal	None

Source: The official website of Qiandongnan Prefecture government: <http://www.qdn.gov.cn/>

activity has not started here in earnest even though the village was selected as a local-level tourism community in 2005. In March 2013, the county-level government provided funds to build a new road as part of initial efforts to begin tourism development in Huanggang (interviews with village chairman Huanggang, member of Tourism Bureau of Xijiang, member of Tourism Bureau of Congjiang, April 2013).

Livelihoods in these Hmu-speaking and Dong communities, situated at an average elevation of 1157.5 m, have traditionally been focused around agriculture, especially sticky rice, maize, and tuber crops, with fishing and hunting as secondary features. The process of sticky rice production, including seed selection, sowing, maturing, and harvest, comprises important traditional ecological knowledge for these communities (Wu & Huang, 2011). Logging (for house construction or trade), fashioning silver products, and embroidery are also traditional livelihood skills (Xiong & Yang, 2010). Agricultural production was and continues to be mainly for subsistence (Xiao, 2010), while cash incomes from the sale of handicrafts, small livestock, and silver production are now increasing. Before tourism, local residents had relatively equal access to traditional farm and non-farm incomes (He, 2010); the advent of tourism has changed this.

Wu (2013) suggests that there are now three groups of elites in these villages: traditional elites, contemporary political elites, and contemporary economic elites. Traditional elites of the hereditary Hmu *Yi Lang* social management system (including *Guzangtou* and *Huolutou*⁵) are only found in select Hmu-speaking communities (Xia, 1990). The positions and roles of these traditional elites have now been absorbed into the *Zhailao* system coordinated by the Communist Party and local government structures since 1949. In addition, other *Zhailao* leaders in Hmu-speaking communities are generally elected, charged with settling disputes within and among communities and organising agricultural activities, festivals, and worship ceremonies. Nonetheless, these *Zhailao* and other elected leaders still take on the role of 'traditional village elders'. Similarly, Dong communities formerly followed the traditional *Dong Kuan* system, but now elect local 'traditional' leaders (Zhou & Guo, 2007). In contrast, contemporary political elites – state cadres with political authority assigned by the government – such as the village headperson, village secretary, and other officials, are responsible for managing village business; while contemporary economic elites are a newly rising category of stakeholders.

Confrontations over tourism

Our data revealed that there are confrontations arising due to tourism both within and beyond villages. Within villages, tensions are occurring between *Zhailao elites* and residents. Tensions have also risen between different villages, between local residents and state representatives, and between tourists and villagers.

Within the village: Zhailao elites versus residents

As spiritual leaders, *Zhailao* elites are expected to sustain harmonious relationships within the community. However, our fieldwork reveals that increasing tourism activity has intensified tensions and conflicts between these elites and other local residents. Residents are increasingly dissatisfied with the special status of *Zhailao*, who have comparatively more opportunities to engage in tourism activities. In turn, the prestige that residents formally assigned these elites is declining, most obviously in villages heavily engaged in tourism such as Xijiang Hmu Village.

Local residents and state officials interviewed in Xijiang explained that in the tourism upsurge since 2008, *Zhailao* elites – especially hereditary elites such as *Guzangtou* and *Huolutou* – have increased their involvement in tourism activities and have become popular as tourist 'sights' due to their special status. Tourists, academics, and journalists alike have pursued these elites for interviews and photos. As Mrs Zhang,⁶ a tourist from Beijing (27 April 2013) stated, 'I have travelled a great distance to get here, and I will definitely visit the *Guzangtou*. They are so special and mysterious'. In 2008, the county-level government funded and built a '*Guzang Hall*' (where objects used in the *Guzang* festival, a

⁵*Guzangtou* is usually an inherited title/position (passed onto the youngest son) for a man who organises bullfights and ancestor worship ceremonies in Hmu communities. *Huolutou* is a title given to a man who organises production and livelihood activities. Again this is an inherited title, this time by the oldest son. Both are the main traditional elites and spiritual leaders in the *Zhailao* system with different roles.

⁶All names are pseudonyms except for government representatives who agreed to have their positions recorded.

sacrificial practice commemorating ancestors, are stored and displayed) as a tourist spot; the entrance fee provides *Zhailao* elites with additional income.

Locals in Xijiang noted that *Zhailao* elites have seized far more opportunities than other residents to open guesthouses and participate in tourism activities. Local residents complained that *Zhailao* elites are blessed by the ancestors and thus should not use their status to earn money so overtly. As a resident, Mr Tan noted (28 April 2013):

Look at [this] *Guzangtou*, his family is so rich in my village just because he got so many chances to develop tourism. The government also supports him. But the system could be changed if these hereditary elites still do things unfairly; we will oppose.

These elites are now facing a decline in community respect that may catalyse changes to the traditional management systems of local livelihoods and village structures.

Between villages: core versus peripheral

Interviewees explained that the cooperative, neighbourly relationships that had existed between the two administrative villages of Huanggang and Xiaohuang before tourism expanded now face significant tensions. Though administered by different counties, these villages lie only six kilometres apart and share similar ethnic traditions, livelihoods, and festivals. Xiaohuang Village, known as the birthplace of ‘Dong Big Song’,⁷ started tourism development in the early 2000s, gaining fame through advertising campaigns and numerous performances. Its new status as a core tourism attraction has raised socio-economic wealth, while Huanggang remains a less-prosperous peripheral community.

According to the head of Huanggang Village, their residents are also experts in Dong Big Song and some even taught Xiaohuang villagers, yet Congjiang County government officials initially promoted tourism in Xiaohuang. In Huanggang, interviews and questionnaire results revealed that residents are dissatisfied with such uneven tourism opportunities. They have started to decline to help their rich neighbours during the tourist and harvest seasons, while trying to develop tourism in their own village. The village chairman of Huanggang Village (21 April 2013) noted with passion:

We sent our singers to teach them [Xiaohuang villagers] how to sing Dong Big Song during the past few years But look at their income from tourism! That is why we do not want to help them when they need more singers at present. We have to develop our own tourism activities in our village.

A young singer in Huanggang (21 April 2013) echoed the chairman’s argument:

I was sent to Xiaohuang Village to sing for tourists last year. Tourism is good, they are richer than us now. There are no tourists in my village at present. I want to sing in my village instead of going to other villages.

Likewise, in Xijiang Hmu Administrative Village, tourism is prospering in two of the six ‘natural’ villages boasting better road access, with imbalanced tourism development

⁷Dong Big Song is a multi-voice singing style performed in large groups without a conductor or accompaniment. It is estimated to be 2500 years old and has been identified as a unique part of China’s intangible cultural heritage (Interview, principal of Dong minority chorus in Xiaohuang Village).

resulting in significant income inequalities. According to a report by researchers at Guizhou Normal University, 74% of Xijiang residents participated in tourism in the core villages, while only 13–15% did so in the transitional and peripheral villages; overall, 89.8% of residents felt that the gap between rich and poor was increasing (Li, Wu, Zeng, & Hou, 2013). Meanwhile, tourism has driven up commodity prices, in turn increasing labour costs, while previously voluntary labour exchanges between villages have been transformed into paid labour arrangements (cf. Long & Yang, 2007).

Core tourist villages have the potential to influence tourism in peripheral villages through radiation or diffusion (Dredge, 1999). However, government support and other external conditions can inhibit or facilitate these effects. For instance, tourism has been flourishing in Xiaohuang over the past decade, but it was not until 2013 that Huanggang received funding from the Liping government to improve their connectivity with a road. Administratively, a county government's financial support for infrastructure development can play a crucial role in whether a village can engage with tourism or not.

Citizens and the state: local residents versus county-level government

State officials and local residents alike reported confrontations over admission fees, regulations, and county-level government interventions in residents' lives and land-use options. Before the direct intervention of county governments, communities charged no tourist admission fees. Tourists came and consumed, which, locals argued, directly benefited the communities. In 2009, Xijiang began to charge visitors a RMB100 (US\$15) entrance fee, as noted earlier. The majority (67%) of local residents who completed questionnaires consider this to have created inconveniences in their daily life, such as inhibiting access for relatives from other villages and causing time-consuming checks on villagers' identification certificates. As local villager Mr Tang (27 April 2013) noted, 'now that they charge for a ticket, when my friends or relatives from other villages visit us, we have to come to the ticket office to explain. It really wastes our time'.

The county and town governments have also established regulations and policies to attract more tourists, including house construction requirements and a heritage protection and rating system. In 2007, the county government rated the heritage protection levels of all the old houses in the village (called 'house museums') and provided financial incentives for residents of old two- or three-storied timber houses to protect or restore them in specific ways. Strict requirements were introduced, such as only using traditional household appliances and maintaining houses in wood rather than brick. Yet with increasing population densities, fire hazards have plagued local communities; from 1991 to 2013, 2026 house fires resulted in 560 casualties and RMB162.3 million (US\$26 million) damage in Qian-dongnnan Prefecture (Yang, 2013). Local residents often prefer to rebuild with brick to prevent fires and improve sound insulation. However, this contradicts the county's heritage protection efforts, causing tensions with local residents who perceive the regulations as impractical and unfair.

In an act of overt resistance, local residents stopped tourists from entering Xijiang Village in February 2013, in an ultimately successful bid to gain permission from the local government to let them drive their own cars into the village instead of having to park far away. Interviews clearly reflected the rival sides of this debate. A county official (28 April 2013) stated:

The street in Xijiang is so narrow, and the houses here have no garage to keep cars, making it hard to evacuate crowds when it's busy. No tourist spots allow cars to come in and out. Residents don't understand our efforts.

Conversely, a local resident, Mrs Li (28 April 2013) complained, '[the government] just regards our home as a tourism attraction to make money, but ignores that we are living here. It is our own home and we can afford cars, so why can't we drive our own cars home?'

Insiders versus outsiders: local residents versus tourists

Tourists expect to enjoy a village environment, traditional festivals and costumes, unique architecture, and local culture and hospitality. They reported feeling disappointed when they saw modern landscapes, commercialised residents, poor-quality souvenirs, and hotels without proper sound insulation. Based on our survey, 55.9% of tourists were satisfied with their 'exotic experience' (Table 2). However, this still left 44.7% unhappy (dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied) with their accommodation, 48.5% complaining about their shopping experiences, and 40.9% displeased with residents' attitudes towards them.

From our own observations, tourism procedures and services in Basha Village were not on par with those of other provincially recognised tourism villages. For instance, tourism fees were collected twice: once at the ticket office and then again during a performance. Such practices irritate visitors as tourist Mr Liu (20 April 2013) explained, 'I am disappointed with their attitude. They are not traditional anymore and only care about money. I will not visit this village in the future'.

Local residents in the three villages surveyed overwhelmingly agreed that tourism has brought economic benefits (87.7% 'strongly agree' or 'agree') and improved infrastructure (89.5%), but also noted a range of negative impacts (Table 3). Seventy-eight per cent of respondents agreed that local commodity prices have been increasing with tourism development, while 86% complained about tourist noise. In addition, 69% were concerned with serious pollution and rubbish problems. As a local resident, Mr Chen (20 April 2013) explained, 'some tourists do not want to pay only RMB12 (US\$2) a ticket. Look at the rubbish they throw away. We have to sort it out and clean it'. With such a broad range of concerns and confrontations, a complex everyday politics involving concessions and compromises has emerged, which is analysed next.

Table 2. Tourists' perceptions of ethnic communities ($n = 286$), from questionnaire results.

Statement	Strongly satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral/don't know (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Strongly dissatisfied (%)
Food service	29.8	26.7	15.4	12.3	15.8
Accommodation	19.8	21.2	14.3	28.8	15.9
Transportation	21.9	26.4	19.6	21.8	10.3
Shopping	17.7	18.4	15.4	31.3	17.2
Exotic landscape	28.5	27.7	8.7	17.9	17.2
Entertainment performances	14.1	39.6	13.2	21.3	11.8
Residents' attitudes	25.7	23.1	10.3	28.1	12.8
Exotic experience	26.7	29.2	11.3	15.3	17.5

Table 3. Local residents' perceptions of tourism's impact on living environment ($n = 108$).

Statement	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral/don't know (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Increasing economic development	53.2	34.5	6.7	4.2	1.4
Improving sanitation and road infrastructure	47.2	42.3	2.3	5.7	1.5
Increasing recreation sites	28.6	49.3	17.3	3.1	1.7
Increasing prices	36.7	41.4	11.5	6.7	3.7
Increasing noise	47.4	38.6	9.5	7.2	6.3
Increasing pollution	32.7	36.5	19.1	7.9	3.8

An everyday politics of ethnic tourism

Transformations in infrastructure

Before tourism, sanitation infrastructure in these communities was ecologically sustainable. In Huanggang Village, for example, traditional toilets are built beside or over farmland and fishponds. Using on-site human waste as fertiliser reduces the demand for chemical fertiliser and the labour required to deliver it. For urban tourists, however, these toilets have been deemed ramshackle and unsightly. To satisfy tourist needs, the government has required lavatory construction as a prerequisite to upgrading a village's tourism status. Almost all sanitation infrastructure in these tourism communities has been transformed into 'modern' facilities. The majority of local residents (89.5%) have no objection and accept this transition; an everyday politics of support and compliance (see Table 3). They think the new facilities are cleaner and smell better. Yet, at the same time, a few individuals are beginning to realise that an environmentally sustainable method of recycling waste has been lost. Instead, the modern sanitation facilities are directly discharging human waste through the sewage system into rivers, increasingly polluting the environment.

A number of modern bars, cafeterias, and karaoke parlours are emerging in Xijiang Village to provide evening entertainment for tourists. Xijiang is now far noisier and brighter at night, as more than 4000 (notably energy-saving) lamps light up from 7 pm to 12 pm for the purpose of tourist activities, according to a local guide. From our survey (see Table 3), the majority of local residents strongly agree that rising tourism has increased noise and pollution (86% and 69.2%, respectively), decreasing their quality life and even damaging their living space. Mrs Wu, a resident (27 April 2013) in Xijiang complained:

We slept early and got up early before, but it is hard to keep a regular lifestyle now. Tourists want to have fun in the evening. There are so many noisy restaurants along the river. Until 2 or 3am, there are still many tourists hanging out or singing.

Such concessions over the establishment of tourist facilities are not new to the region. In Lijiang, in neighbouring Yunnan Province, over-commercialisation and the development of karaoke and nightclubs have triggered tensions and disputes among different stakeholders involved in ethnic tourism, yet the bars continue to operate (He, 2010).

Traditional crop substitution

In Hmu-speaking and Dong communities in Qiandongnan, people traditionally relied on over 30 local varieties of sticky rice as their staple diet, with terraced fields for sticky rice

possessing strong water retention abilities (Cui, 2009b). This traditional rice planting system that led to a rice-duck-fish complex ecosystem, and related festivals are a major tourist attraction. This labour-intensive system follows a strict schedule, but with tourism activities now occupying the majority of local residents' time, they are no longer able to farm the land following this approach. Traditional rice production, therefore, faces serious challenges.

In the late 1980s, the government brought hybrid rice into ethnic minority communities to help solve food shortages. Sticky rice was described as an outdated and low-yield agricultural product (Cui, 2009a); yet, most residents in our case study villages initially rejected hybrid rice for its terrible taste and over-dependence on chemical fertiliser (Cui, 2009b; cf. Bonnin & Turner, 2012). However, this resistance could only last so long, and tourism development has pushed villagers to switch to this crop because it requires less labour and time. According to our survey, in communities with more tourism such as Xijiang Village, only 10% of households still plant traditional sticky rice. In comparison, sticky rice is produced by 90% of households in Huanggang Village. In Basha Village, the medium level of tourism has influenced crop selection to a degree, resulting in an equal share of the two crops. A clear pattern has emerged in the everyday politics of villagers, from resistance, to modifications, to support: the more involved in tourism, the fewer households are maintaining traditional rice (see Table 4).

Commercialisation of local cultures

As part of the traditional agricultural livelihoods of Hmu-speaking and Dong communities, at different stages of the agricultural timetable numerous activities and festivals were celebrated, and villagers prayed to nature and the ancestors for a successful harvest. However, the rise of tourism and the substitution of new crops for traditional ones have stifled these performances and festivals. According to anonymous residents in Xijiang (April 2013), existing festivals, songs, and dances have lost their original meanings, and local residents nowadays take part more for money than for blessings. Having been turned into tourist attractions, these songs and dances are routinely performed several times in a day, rather than in relation to the agricultural calendar.

In Xijiang Village, there is a full-time performance team consisting of 30–40 people (not all of whom are from the village) trained by the local government-run tourism company to perform twice a day. For two performances of a tourist welcoming ceremony, each participant earns RMB12.5 (US\$2). In Basha Village, with an intermediate level of tourism, there are no fixed performance times and all performers are local residents. As soon as a group of tourists arrive, performers are expected to stop their agricultural work to perform; rituals and sacred dances and songs have become a task performed for income. Proceeds are distributed equally among the performers, but fluctuate far more than in Xijiang depending on the number of tourists and performances. The organiser of the Basha performances noted in an interview that local residents still rely predominantly

Table 4. Percentage of households planting traditional sticky rice and hybrid rice.

Household percentage	Traditional sticky rice (%)	Hybrid rice (%)
Xijiang Village (national level)	10	90
Basha Village (provincial level)	50	50
Huanggang Village (no level)	90	10

on agriculture and it is hard to find performers, especially during the harvest season, as locals evade this expectation so as to maintain their agricultural livelihoods.

Inequalities in tourism income

During the initial stages of tourism in Xijiang and Basha, local residents were usually the main beneficiaries as guides, photographers, and providers of food and lodging for backpackers. As more stakeholders became involved, the uneven distribution of admission fees and differing levels of external financial and business investment created income inequalities. A government cadre working in county tourism administration (27 April 2013) nonetheless felt that outside involvement was important:

We have to attract external businesspeople to set good examples for our residents. Our residents have no idea about business. The many tourists coming here need to eat, live, shop, and have fun. All these activities need professional businesspeople to operate.

According to a county-level government official (26 April 2013), more and more investors and entrepreneurs from outside these communities arrive each year for a share of the ‘tourism cake’, adding that they bring external networks and skills in providing tourism services that, in turn, have challenged local business. In 2011, there were 14 external companies investing RMB142 million (US\$21.9 million) in tourism facilities and services in Xijiang. Of the 123 *Nongjiale* and 498 ‘ethnic shops’ in 2012, two-fifths had external owners. Meanwhile, the majority of recreation spots in Xijiang are run by external entrepreneurs. As such, local residents who decide to transition from farmers to tourism entrepreneurs face stiff competition from external businesses (interviews with Tourism Bureau official, Xijiang; county-level government official, April 2013).

The distribution of village entrance fees reveals yet another concession that villagers have made. In 2009, of the RMB100 (US\$15) admission fee per tourist to enter Xijiang Village, 15% was to be given to local residents and 10% was to be used to incentivise heritage protection. Yet in 2013, residents received only 10.5% of admission income, while 4.5% was used as a heritage protection fee. In Basha Village, the RMB12 (US\$2) admission fee is divided into 12 parts (see Table 5). Only RMB1.5, or 12.5%, is distributed to local

Table 5. Distribution of admission ticket income for Basha Village.

No	Ticket income distribution	Amount (RMB)	Percentage (%)
1	Tax	0.5	4.2
2	Local travel bureau	0.5	4.2
3	Village-level government	1	8.3
4	County-level government	1	8.3
5	Tourism company	1	8.3
6	Resource protection fee	1	8.3
7	Maintenance fee	1.5	12.5
8	Sanitary fee	1	8.3
9	Stage property fee	1	8.3
10	Ticket cost	1	8.3
11	Engagement commission	1	8.3
12	Villager subsidy	1.5	12.5
	Total	12	100

Source: Interviews with government officials, Congjiang County.

people as a subsidy, while the majority goes to various levels of government. Considering all the compromises local residents make for tourism development, RMB1.5 seems an extremely low compensation rate.

Concluding thoughts

Since 1980, the primary rural livelihood diversification trend in China has been rural to urban migration. Significant research has focused on the working and living conditions of migrant workers, the challenges they face, and the impacts for urban development (Chan, 2012; Li, 2008). Concerns over social resource distribution and stability have emerged, alongside debates over migrant vulnerability and marginalisation (Rhoda, 1983; Yan, 2008). In response to such concerns, especially social stability, the Chinese government is promoting an alternative livelihood option, namely ‘leaving the fields without leaving the countryside’ (*li tu bu li xiang*) (Chio, 2011, p. 554), to encourage ‘rural modernisation’ and relieve pressure on metropolises. Tourism is strongly endorsed as a means to enhance rural, non-agricultural activities and diversify livelihoods, especially in regions with high percentages of ethnic minorities (Bhalla & Qiu, 2006; Chio, 2011). In southwest China, ethnic minority communities have been incorporated into tourism through the commoditisation of ethnicity – the production and consumption of ethnic goods and ethnic ways of life (Yang, 2011). Debates continue regarding the benefits of promoting modernisation via tourism, and the commercialisation of ethnic cultures. Concurrently, it is suggested that tourism can stimulate the creation and recreation of meanings for traditional practices, complement rather than displace existing activities, and support a sustainable livelihood strategy for development and poverty reduction (for more on these debates, see: Cohen, 1988; Donaldson, 2007; Oakes, 1997; Simpson, 1993; Tao & Wall, 2009; Yang & Wall, 2009).

Ethnic tourism is a key livelihood strategy alongside agriculture in a growing number of Hmu-speaking and Dong communities in Qiandongnan, with traditional rice farming, local festivals, and spectacular terraces attracting increasing tourist numbers. Yet while the state pushes ethnic tourism in an attempt to alleviate poverty and preserve the traditional cultures of minority groups, more attention must be focused on the impacts of commoditising ethnic communities. From our interviews with government officials at the provincial, prefecture, and county levels, it is obvious that the Chinese state is devoting significant resources to new tourism projects and establishing specific rules and regulations regarding how local communities should implement tourism. These state policies overwhelmingly focus on tourist arrival numbers and potential income. Yet while domestic tourists come to southwest China for cultural encounters, we found only 56% satisfied with their ‘exotic experience’ in Qiandongnan, complaining of inauthentic cultural performances and souvenirs, non-traditional landscapes, and so on (see Table 2). Concurrently, local residents find their communities increasingly controlled by the government, their daily lives displayed to the public as tourist spectacles, and their ‘modern’ lifestyles criticised. With fewer rights and opportunities, local residents are at a clear disadvantage compared to tourists and local government officials.

Our research has shown that ethnic minority village residents have experienced significant changes to their natural environments, lifestyles, agricultural production processes, social management structures, and relationships with neighbouring villages, all as a direct or indirect result of the growth of the tourism industry. Household incomes have also been affected differentially depending on the degree to which locals have been able to pursue new opportunities. For Hmu-speaking and Dong people, the interruption of

traditional social management structures and relationships has increased tensions among traditional elites and villagers, and between villages supporting and participating in tourism and peripheral communities with less access to tourism revenue. Overt government intervention has also caused conflicts with local residents, while a stream of tourists into communities often strains relations with villagers. In turn, residents have needed to decide the degree to which they want to embrace, comply with, adjust to, or contest tourism development plans for their village (Kerkvliet, 2009).

Building on Kerkvliet's (2009) conceptualisation of 'everyday politics' allows us to reveal the nuanced confrontations and concessions over tourism from the perspective of residents in these Hmu-speaking and Dong communities. We find that in cases such as infrastructure change, villagers sometimes endorse and support the alterations being made, such as for sanitation, regardless of the longer term environmental consequences. Tourism establishments that bring about unwanted noise and disruptions have also been tolerated to date, with villagers complying with local authority wishes. New types of hybrid seeds have brought about a continuum of everyday politics from resistance, through modifications, to support, depending on the degree to which a village is involved in tourism, and hence the availability of land and labour. This example also shows the detailed findings to be gained from a comparative analysis *across* ethnic minority villages involved in tourism to different degrees. Likewise, villagers have embraced roles in cultural performances where the income is stable, and yet are evading this expectation to a greater degree where the income fluctuates and when other livelihood roles are still deemed more central.

This analysis has allowed us to draw attention to the various forms of everyday covert resistance and small acts of reinterpretation that take place in the context of minority communities facing the juggernaut of the Chinese government's support for tourism in rural communities. Given the state's wholesale endorsement of rural tourism, it is unlikely that it will change its approach soon. It is far more likely that village members will continue to deal with increasing tensions, reallocations of resources, and at times marginalisation, constantly needing to establish suitable coping strategies to advance their own vision of equitable returns from tourism and sustainable livelihoods.

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