Yujie Zhu

Heritage and Romantic Consumption in China

International
Institute for
Asian Studies

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Prologue: Somewhere in Time

On 11 May 1920, Austro-American botanist, anthropologist, linguist and adventurer Joseph Rock travelled from Chiang Mai, in Thailand (then called Siam), to Lijiang, in the northwest part of China's Yunnan Province. He made the journey with caravans and his medical team. The eminent scientist had a commission from the US Department of Agriculture to collect commercial botanical specimens in that region, as he had done on previous missions to Siam and Burma. Eventually he decided to settle down in a Naxi village in Baisha township, at the foot of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, remaining there until 1949 (Yoshinaga et al. 2011: 126). He was fascinated by the natural environment and indigenous culture of the region. Over the years, Rock wrote essays and took high-quality black-and-white photographs documenting local culture and religion, which were later published in the journal of the National Geographic Society. His most influential work, *The Nakhi Kingdom of Southwest China*, published in 1947, well documented the region through his photographs as, in his words, 'a magic Kingdom of wealth, scenic beauty, marvellous forests, flowers and friendly tribes.'[1]

Few Westerners had travelled in this region. Another was the Russian explorer and exile Peter Goullart, who had spent years in Shanghai learning Chinese and working as a tour guide before getting a position with the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives (a government agency) in Sichuan and then, in 1942, Lijiang, where he remained until 1949. Like Rock, Goullart documented the life and customs of the Naxi people in the region and described the Lijiang plateau as an ancient forgotten Naxi kingdom of southwest China in his books (Goullart 1955). In the postscript of his work *Forgotten Kingdom* he wrote:

> Thus, due to the political upheavals, I ended my stay, of almost nine years, in the little-known and all but forgotten ancient Nakhi Kingdom of southwest China. Even during my youth spent in Moscow and Paris I had been unaccountably attracted to Asia, her vast, little-explored mountains and her strange peoples and, especially, to mysterious Tibet. The fates, stern to me in many other ways, have been kind in vouchsafing my long travels in Asia which even now, I have a feeling, are not at an end. I had

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1   This is a description written by Joseph Rock in his book *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom of Southwest China*, published in 1947. This book is the very first work introducing Lijiang to Western readers.

always dreamed of finding, and living in that beautiful place, shut off from the world by its great mountains, which years later James Hilton conceived in his novel *Lost Horizon*. His hero found his 'Shangri-La' by accident, I found mine, by design and perseverance, in Likiang.

The Lijiang that Rock and Goullart documented has now become a distant memory, a hazy 'magic kingdom' of the past. These adventurers, who left together after the Communist Revolution in 1949, believed that they had stumbled upon a mythic civilization forgotten to the world. Now their own accounts have become the stuff of legend, as over the decades of revolution and then of economic reform, the town of Lijiang would go through unprecedented (and irreversible) urban, architectural, religious and social change. In particular, Rock's photographs are a valuable record of the traditional social, cultural and religious life of Lijiang as well as of the natural landscape of this region, a fact that earned him the moniker 'The Western Father of Naxi Studies.'

Rock and Goullart's stories have featured in Western documentaries, films, magazines, and books, many of which are still in print today. Backpackers have clung to them since the early 1980s, when the region was first opened to foreigners, and Western and Japanese backpackers began visiting Lijiang, keen to follow in the footsteps of Rock and Goullart. They were attracted by Lijiang's mountain scenery, narrow waterways, wildlife, relatively unspoiled traditional architecture, and unique minority culture. The 1990s witnessed an influx of international documentary makers. The documentaries – the most famous perhaps being Phil Agland's *China: Beyond the Clouds* (1994) – focused on Lijiang's breath-taking scenery and on the 'exotic' lives of the local ethnic groups (Su and Teo 2009). They portrayed the place as an ideal destination for trekking as well as a backdoor to Tibet.

Yet, why did Rock's and Goullart's books make such a splash in the Western world in the first place? In her 2006 book about ethnic tourism in Dali (a town 140 kilometres from Lijiang), *Displacing Desire: Travel and Popular Culture in China*, Beth E. Notar (2006: 25) explored the region's attraction to tourists from Europe, Australia and America.[2] In her view, it is deeply rooted in the 'colonial nostalgia' of generations of European explorers who attempted to 'retrace the footsteps of Marco Polo' in the late nineteenth

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2   Dali has attracted scholars such as the Australian sinologist C.P. Fitzgerald, who travelled in this region in 1930. His book *The Tower of Five Glories* (1941) recorded the culture, language, religion, economy and family relations of the Minjia people of Dali. Fitzgerald's photos have also contributed to the romantic image of the area, and the 'Orient' in general.

and early twentieth centuries. Echoes of 'colonial nostalgia' pervade *Lonely Planet* guidebooks to the region, which in their stress on 'off the beaten path' destinations, give travellers the illusion that they are like the great explorers and adventures of yore.

In their writings, Rock, Goullart, and other Western adventurers in southwest China contributed to an imaginary idea of the East. Their stories, along with such classics as *Lost Horizon*, have become part of the exotic heritage of this place. Western and Japanese tourists travel to Lijiang – now a World Heritage town – in conscious homage to the likes of Rock and Goullart. They publish their impressions in blogs, journals, and websites, reinforcing the image of this peripheral region as a place of authenticity, ancientness, unbroken tradition, and untrammelled nature.

Rock and Goullart's stories, along with Hilton's novel *Lost Horizon* (later a film), the documentaries, the blogs, the *Lonely Planet* guidebooks and the rest have helped to construe Lijiang as a 'stage' on which visitors can enact fantasies of exploration and discovery. The authenticity of these stories does not affect their impact on the Western imagination – and as such, they are now embraced by the state to promote the area's romantic image for purposes of tourism – to the extent that a number of Chinese as well now subscribe to the same mythology.

1 Introduction

It was the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, the traditional Chinese day for celebrating romance, or 16 August 2010 by the Western calendar. I was in Lijiang, watching a colourful and noisy procession led by two people dressed as majestic, white-crowned cranes. Musicians beat gongs and drums and blew on a *suona*, a Chinese double-reeded horn. An old man with a flowing white beard, wearing a yellow vest and a long red gown covered with characters for longevity embroidered in white thread waved pine twigs in his hands; whatever incantations or blessings he may have been mumbling were drowned out by the band.

In the centre of the procession three beautiful young women were riding white horses. They all wore red-and-white coats and embroidered boat-shaped shoes, and had garlands of red roses on their heads. Three handsome young men in white yak leather vests walked beside the women, leading the horses. Both men and women had a large red satin flower pinned to their chest. They waved to the crowd, and occasionally threw smiles at one another. A dozen elderly Naxi women were walking behind them, dressed in dark red wide-sleeved loose gowns, long trousers and goatskin waistcoats with seven round circles.[3] They carried household utensils such as bronze ware, quilts, sheets, and pillows.

When every member of the group had arrived at a courtyard in the middle of the town, the music came to a sudden stop. A girl dressed in a light blue coat with embroidered laces on her collars and sleeves started speaking in Chinese:

> Welcome to the Naxi Wedding Courtyard! You are now in Lijiang, a place with a history of a thousand years and at a courtyard with a history of a hundred years. Today you will experience the utopia of love and the flavour of romance. Today is a special and happy day, because we witness the wedding ceremony of three couples. According to our Dongba script,[4] this month is the best in the year, and this day is the best in the month. We will introduce you to the sacred magic of the Dongba ritual. The wedding

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3   The decoration of the dress means 'wearing stars and moon' which symbolizes that the Naxi women go out to their work before dawn and return home at night.

4   Local Naxi use pictographic scripts when the ritual practitioners, called Dongba, carry out their ceremonies and rituals to communicate with spirits. The Dongba script consists of drawings of men, animals, natural elements and cultural objects (Arcones 2012).

will bless the couples with everlasting happiness. The blessing will also
bring happiness to all of you, our distinguished guests.

'Is it a real Naxi wedding? Or just a touristic performance?' several tourists
asked the girl. I had the same question in my mind. 'Yes, it is a real wedding,'
the girl answered. 'This is a sacred Naxi traditional wedding, a treasure of this
World Heritage town, a culture certified by UNESCO, representing a living
record of our past. Today these couples will receive the spiritual blessing from
our senior Dongba. You are most welcome to join the wedding ceremony!'

　　Guided by the band and the couples, the group was invited to sit around
tables in the courtyard where a wedding banquet was prepared. Each guest
was asked to pay 120 *yuan* (approximately 20 dollars). Attracted by the
romantic image of Lijiang, I was on my fieldwork studying the impact of
heritage and tourism on this place. I had happily paid for the experience
of witnessing a traditional wedding ceremony of the local Naxi people.
However, after I was introduced to the couples during the banquet, I soon
realized that none of them were local residents at all. They all came from
different places in China, including a couple from Shanghai who ran a
guesthouse in town, a tourist couple from Guangdong on a honeymoon trip,
and a couple who were not even really a couple! They were Han Chinese
studying in the local college and had booked the service just for fun. I asked
myself: 'Why has such a courtyard been created in the first place? Why do
these people come here to get married and why do others come to watch?'
It was with these questions in mind that I decided to embark on a journey
to explore this place and its significance.

Lijiang Old Town and the Naxi

Lijiang is a prefecture-level city in southwest China, 600 kilometres from
the provincial capital of Yunnan, Kunming, not far from Laos, Burma, and
Vietnam. A prefecture is one level down from province in political status;
even though it is considered remote, it is not insignificant. As part of historic
military and trade routes to Southeast Asia, known as the Ancient Southern
Silk Road and the Ancient Tea Route, the area once earned the nickname
of China's 'South Gate.' With 25 officially recognized ethnic minorities,
Yunnan is the most ethnically diverse province in China.[5] Yet, unlike Tibet,

5   According to a recent provincial survey, more than one-third of the province's total population
belongs to ethnic groups, occupying 70.2 per cent of the territory (Lijiang Bureau of Statistics 2011).

Figure 1.1   Lijiang Prefecture on two location maps in 2010
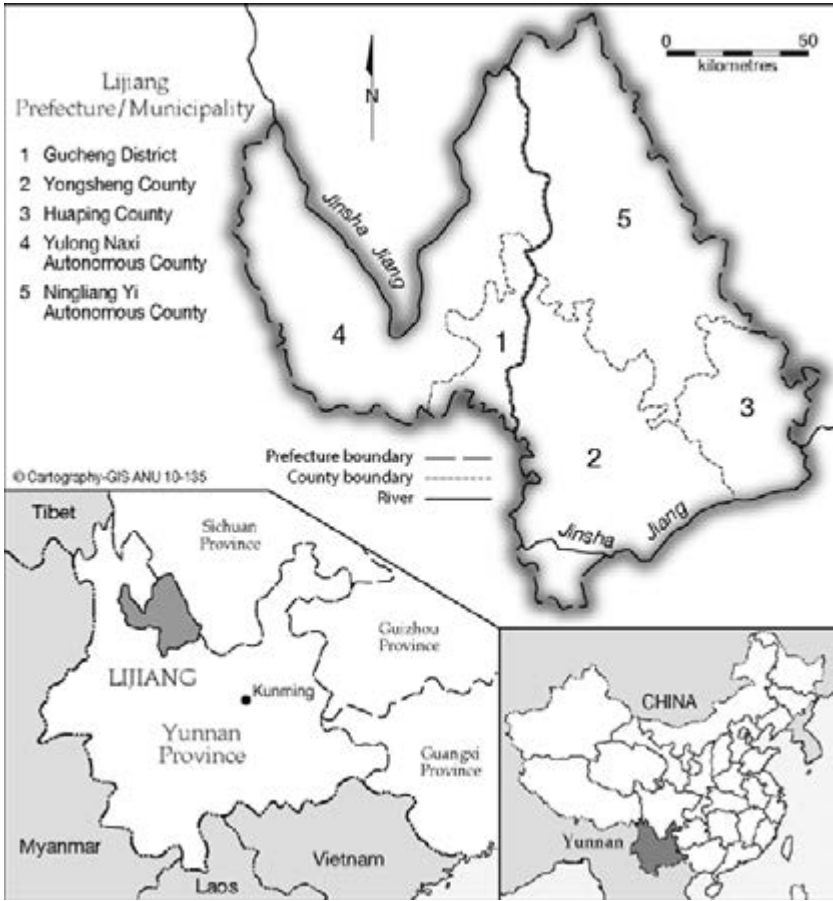
Source: CartoGis, College of Asia and Pacific, the Australian National University

Mongolia, Xinjiang and the Hui autonomous area, Yunnan has not seen much ethnic unrest since the anti-Qing Rebellion of the late nineteenth century.

   This book is mainly concerned with Lijiang's Old Town, also called Dayanzhen and one of Lijiang's five administrative districts; Lijiang residents nickname the area around the Old Town 'New Town.'[6] Lijiang is populated by

6   Lijiang has undergone a series of administrative changes: Starting off as Lijiang district (*Lijiang zhuanqu*) in 1950, Lijiang was named Naxi Autonomy County (*Lijiang naxi zizhixian*) in 1961, and promoted to Lijiang city (*Lijiang shi*) in 2002. Currently Lijiang city is divided into five parts: Lijiang's Old Town (also called *Dayanzhen*) forming the centre of Lijiang city, Yulong Naxi Autonomous County in the west, Ninlang Yi Autonomous County in the north, Yongsheng County in the south and Huaping County in the west. Local urban and rural Lijiang residents

Naxi (Nakhi in the old spelling), the ethnic group living in the northwestern part of Yunnan Province, as well as in the southwest of Sichuan Province. According to the census in 2010 (Lijiang Bureau of Statistics 2010), over 40 per cent of Lijiang's population is Han Chinese, followed by 20 per cent Naxi, while the remaining are made up of various other minorities, such as Yi, Lisu, Bai, Pumi, and Tai.

The Old Town has long been the political, economic and cultural centre of the Naxi and other minorities' life. In Naxi language, the town was originally called *gongbenzhi*, meaning 'market and storage for rice.' Beginning in the twelfth century, the town became a trade centre and commercial market, establishing advanced leather, textile, copper and iron industries. At the peak of its commercial development in the thirteenth century, the town accommodated an estimated 100 companies and 1,200 shops from different industries. Naxi women were active in local business, while Naxi men participated in regional caravan-based trading networks for a living, extending from Lijiang to Lhasa and beyond to India. Lijiang became the administrative centre of the region in late thirteenth century when the Mu families ruled the region as local commanders (*tusi*) through a hereditary system of chieftainship. Yet, even then, it continued to preserve substantial autonomy. The Mu family maintained close relations with the emperors, resulting in Naxi areas being increasingly influenced by Chinese culture through migration and trade (Zong 2006; Yang 2009).

The region's relatively autonomous status changed in the late seventeenth century. During this time, the Qing dynasty carried out administrative reforms aimed at preventing the indigenous groups of the empire's peripheral regions from engaging in acts of rebellion or challenges against the dominion of the empire. This policy, referred to as *gaitu guiliu* (replacing the local and reverting to the mainstream),[7] transformed the Mu family's chieftainships into a district administration under central control. Especially after 1723, many Chinese soldiers migrated to this region and married local women, further integrating the region into the Han Chinese polity.[8]

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Lijiang region, like the rest of the country, went through a series of political,

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started to call the area around Lijiang's Old Town, 'New Town' (*Xincheng*), indicating its difference from the Old Town.

7   *Gaitu guiliu* integrated local political systems into the imperial administration, functioning as the main strategy by the government to centralize power in local societies during the Ming-Qing period (1368-1912).

8   For a detailed discussion on the reform and its impact on the local society, please see Zong (2006).

economic, cultural and social upheavals, including the land reform and class labelling in 1951, the Anti-rightist campaign (targeting intellectuals and cadres) in 1957, and the Great Leap Forward (an economic and social campaign by the Communist Party of China) in 1958. In his autobiography, Peter Goullart witnessed a number of arrests and executions of merchants and the destruction of monasteries and temples after the communist victory (Goullart 1955; Rees 2000: 33). The chaos of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 further damaged the local economy and local culture, resulting in the shutting down of the schools and the destruction of ancient landmarks and cultural relics.

With the implementation of the open-door policy and economic reforms introduced by the post-Mao leadership in 1978, Lijiang has slowly recovered from the previous disaster by developing private business and invigorating the educational system. Lijiang County was re-opened to foreigners for travel in 1985. Since then, Lijiang has become a Mecca for foreign backpackers and, increasingly in the 1990s, for domestic tourists (Rees 2000). Since the construction of a modern airport in 1995, train lines in 2009 and a highway directly from the provincial capital in 2013, tourism in and around Lijiang's Old Town has been on the rise. The increase of ethnic tourism in Lijiang has also been driven by the mythology of an exotic and isolated land promoted by its earliest Western visitors and amplified on the pages of guidebooks like the *Lonely Planet* (Su and Teo 2009).

During my first visit to Lijiang in 2005, I witnessed the construction of many traditional-style buildings and guesthouses, cultural theme parks and museums. In alliance with real estate developers and tourism operators, governmental officials designated Lijiang a key city for domestic tourism expansion. The image of the town, which was created by early visitors to the region, as a mysterious and exotic place for Western backpackers, has been gradually transformed into a popular Chinese holiday destination, where people travel in search of romance and alternative lifestyles. As a consequence, the town has attracted millions of domestic tourists, investors and Chinese migrants.

The sudden influx of people from outside has resulted in many problems for local residents, including 'rising prices, tensions between local and migrant entrepreneurs, tensions among local ethnic groups, and an increase in prostitution and drugs' (Rees 2000: 34). Many local residents have left the Old Town and its traditional courtyard houses, moving to the new town with its modern apartment buildings. The Old Town has become an ideal destination for cultural display and ethnic tourism consumption.

The metamorphosis of Lijiang's Old Town contributes to our understanding of the contested nature of heritage and the domestic tourism industry

in the rapidly shifting urban landscape of contemporary China. What is the nature of ethnic tourism and heritage? Why does it change local society so powerfully? What insights do the social context of tourism and heritage provide? These questions have been at the very heart of this book from its inception.

Ethnic Tourism in China

The first theme of the book is ethnic tourism.[9] Although various forms of travel have existed in China since the Tang dynasty (618-907), such activities were often limited to social elites or business merchants. They either travelled to the capital for imperial examination to become political officials, or occasionally travelled to the countryside to escape political control or to pursue spiritual self-nourishment. During the Tang and Song dynasties (618-1279), a number of literati, such as Li Bai and Du Fu, wrote poems about their official or personal journeys visiting temples or climbing mountains with family and friends (Nyiri 2006; Strassberg 1994). Such travel, mainly by scholar-officials and cultural celebrities, was associated with certain forms of 'civilized modernity,' which showed the moral superiority of elite travellers compared to the average Chinese population (Oakes and Sutton 2010: 11).

After the government of the People's Republic of China was formed from 1949 to 1978, tourism became a form of special political activity to 'enhance China's political influence and propagate the achievements of socialist reconstruction' – an activity organized for foreign diplomats with permission to visit China under strict surveillance (Sang 2009; Sofield and Li 1998). Self-funded domestic tourism hardly existed, and outbound travel was limited to diplomats and important government officials at public expense. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), tourism was considered to be a reflection of a capitalist bourgeois lifestyle and was therefore largely shunned, although a number of Chinese youth (the Red Guards) frequently visited places with historic significance for Chinese

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9   Ethnic tourism was first defined by Valene Smith (1977: 2) as a form of tourism that 'is marketed to the public in terms of the 'quaint' customs of indigenous and other exotic people, exemplified by the case studies on Eskimo, the San Blas Indians of Panama and the Toraja in Indonesia.' Under the broader umbrella of tourism, ethnic tourism often shares similar meanings with aboriginal tourism (Mercer 1994) and indigenous tourism (Ryan and Aicken 2005), although they involve different people and cultures. For a detailed discussion on ethnic tourism, please see MacCannell (1984).

Communism, with a similar spirit as red tourism today. They travel around the country to 'exchange experience, destroy feudal sites, and visit sites of Red Army history' (Oakes and Sutton 2010: 11).

Tourism has only become popular in China since the 1970s as an economic activity to enhance foreign exchange and accelerate the circulation of domestic currency. In July 1979, some months after China had initiated policies of economic reform, the party leader Deng Xiaoping had a three-day holiday at Yellow Mountain. During his stay, Deng encouraged transforming the tourism industry from a political activity to an economic enterprise (Sang 2009). Following his speech, the Heritage Conservation Act in 1982 and the first National Conference on Domestic Tourism in 1987 turned tourism into an appropriate form of economic development in which cultural heritage (previously presented as 'backward and anti-socialistic') served as a valuable resource to restore national unity (Sofield and Li 1998; Airey and Chong 2011). Several policies were issued to encourage Chinese citizens to travel domestically as a means of stimulating consumption. These policies resulted in the development of thousands of heritage sites, scenic spots and theme parks, the establishment in 1995 of a nationwide five-day working week (as opposed to the former six-day working week) and of national holidays associated with traditional Chinese festivals.

Both domestic and international tourists are drawn to China's southwest region due to its natural scenery and unique ethnic culture. In Chinese, 'ethnic' refers to *minzu*, a term linked with the idea of nation in the late nineteenth century. It was first used to refer to the Han majority, as opposed to the other minority groups.[10] Yet, under the Chinese Communist Party, the meaning of the term *minzu* shifted from the discourse of nationalism to concepts of ethnicity and identity, rooted in shared social traits and histories (Zhang 1997; Chio 2014: 26).

In the 1950s, the Chinese government initiated a national project of ethnic classification (*minzu shibie*). Rooted in Marxist-Leninist theory and

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10   In the late nineteenth century, *minzu,* a translation from the Japanese term *minzoku*, was gradually been linked to the idea of a nation, especially in the writings of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. Since the twentieth century, the idea of *minzu* has commonly been integrated into to the Chinese notion of nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*), particularly when Sun Yat-sen, the father of new Chinese Republic, attempted to use ethnic policies to unify Chinese people by classifying the country into Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan territories in 1921. The Chinese Communist Party government later continued this approach to unite the Chinese state as a national body (*guoti*).

the past experience of the USSR,[11] Chinese policies of ethnic categorization were considered to be 'discursive creations rather than reflections of organic realities' (Chio 2014: 7). The project classified more than 400 self-identified ethnic people into 55 *shaoshu minzu*, which can be translated as 'minority nationalities' (Harrell 1995).[12] Each group ranges from a few thousand to several million people, who reside predominately in frontier lands of strategic significance, particularly in Yunnan, Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, constituting 60 per cent of China's land. These areas are often undeveloped regions with abundant natural resources or strategic international borders, and are thus important for geopolitical security (Swain 1990).

Nowadays, 92 per cent of its nearly 1.4 billion people are officially classified as Han Chinese, while the remaining 114 million people belong to one of the 55 ethnic groups (Leibold 2013: 2). Due to the overwhelming percentage of the Han majority, the Chinese Communist Party under Mao developed the system of ethnic autonomous regions and a series of special rights for the non-Han Chinese population.[13] Some ethnic groups, especially those in the southwest China, have greatly benefited from these policies while others (like the Uyghur and Tibetan communities) fail to develop a sense of national belonging.

As in other multi-ethnic countries, management of ethnic relations in China has always been the priority of the party-state. China's policy towards its ethnic populations has been described as a domestic 'civilizing project,' in which the state views its ethnic minorities as 'in need of civilization' (Harrell 1995: 13). Ethnic policies serve the political goal of social security, national integration, and political stability (Gladney 1994).

In post-Mao China, the party-state finds that ethnic tourism is significant for state-guided inter-ethnic integration. Similar to other countries in Asia, Chinese central and local governments function as 'planners of tourist development, as marketer of cultural meanings, and as arbiter of cultural practices displayed to tourists' (Wood 1984: 353). They define, regulate, and develop the ethnic tourism industry to facilitate the cultivation of

11   Stalin defined nationality as people sharing a common language, territory, economic life and psychological disposition; the identification of ethnic minorities as such links them to a singular historical narrative of socialist progress (Chio 2014: 32; Gladney 1994; Mullaney 2004).
12   The official identification of 55 national minority groups is the result of a contest between them. In the early 1950s, the government asked over 400 ethnic groups to claim official recognition as 'minority nationalities' (*shaoshu minzu*) at their local authorities. More than 700 scholars and college students then participated in this nationwide ethnographic and linguistic survey, writing numerous monographs on their findings. These monographs were used to support the official selection of the 55 national minorities.
13   Special rights include regional subsidies, special tax breaks, and educational policies such as extra points added to the score on the national entrance exam.

ethnic identity while integrating ethnic groups into the state economy. In cooperation with tourism operators and entrepreneurs, local governments often establish various stereotypes of ethnic people to satisfy tourists' imagination and curiosity (Blum 2001). Numerous published volumes and local gazetteers (*difangzhi*) on ethnic minorities written by Han anthropologists and officials establish 'an ethnocentric hierarchy' that supports state policy (Davis 2005: 19).

Using the concepts of 'internal colonialism' or 'internal orientalism,' scholars often emphasize the power asymmetries between the core and periphery – symbolizing the Han Chinese majority and the ethnic minorities – in ethnic politics in China. These asymmetries result in a continuing exoticization of minority culture (Oakes 1998; Harrell 1995). Louis Schein (1997), for example, showed how ethnic tourism in Guizhou has produced an 'internal otherness' through exoticization and self-objectification.

On the one hand, these stereotypes are similar: Han Chinese as modern and civilized and ethnic people as backward, feminine and exotic (Gladney 1994; Diamond 1988). Such classification legitimizes the state ideology of Marxism and its 'stages of history' approach in which ethnic groups are often portrayed as 'living fossils' (Oakes 1993: 54). This seems logical because ethnic minority people remain in a position socially, economically, and politically inferior to the majority Han Chinese who control the resources and tourism activities in their areas (Swain 1989; Xie 2003). Prerevolutionary Tibetan society is typically identified as 'feudal,' for example, and Chinese anthropologist Yan Ruxian (1984: 81) has suggested that the Naxi's family system and their customs serve as a 'basis for a comparative study of the history of the family.' On the other hand, each group is distinctive: the Miao are singers and drinkers; the Dai are often framed as slender and romantic; and the Naxi, whom the Han consider both civilized and harmless, are portrayed as knowledgeable and talented (Blum 2001: 13).

These stereotypes are promoted to both foreign and, since domestic tourism began in 1980s, to Chinese tourists as well. A self-other relationship between Han Chinese and minority groups has been created to motivate Chinese Han to travel around the country and seek the 'backward' and 'exotic' others within their own nation (Zhu, Jin, and Graburn 2017). Visiting these ethnic minorities can be an act of curiosity and offers a form of exotic travel that doesn't require tourists to leave China. Foreign tourists are not exempt from the Orientalist pull of the exotic 'Other': minorities represent the 'authentic,' 'native' or 'off-the-beaten-track part of China.' For both foreign and domestic tourists, ethnic people and their cultures become a 'living spectacle' to be photographed and observed (Yang and Wall 2009a).

Yet, the government isn't the only party engaged in the formation of ethnic identity, culture, and history – in fact, it is a collaboration (conscious or not) with scholars, local religious practitioners, and, of course, the 'explorer' writers of the past and present (Litzinger 2000). Ethnic groups actively participate in shaping the local tourism industry to enhance their benefits (Yang and Wall 2009b). They show remarkable resourcefulness in utilizing tourism to preserve and revive their culture while strengthening their ethnic identities (Hansen 1999; Swain 1989; Tapp 2014). Market-driven tourism celebrates ethnic culture in the form of restaurants, markets, museums, theme parks and performances.

Members of ethnic minority groups in China generally embrace the economic prosperity that comes from ethnic tourism. The intensive encounter with both international and domestic tourists, their Sinicized education and mass media motivates some members of ethnic minority groups, especially the young, to become 'modern' like tourists. To be modern means that they can live in urban flats, dress in fashionable clothes, and sing popular songs.

However, as Dean MacCannell (1976) pointed out in his seminal work *The Tourist*, such self-determination in the tourism industry is linked to a state-led discourse of exoticization. Tourists' demands for 'authentic' ethnic culture urge them to remain an 'exotic Other,' even primitive in dress and customs to suit an imaginary of being 'premodern' (Walsh and Swain 2004). This dissonance between tourists' expectations and local desires results in a fluid and multifaceted ethnic identity. To the performers I met in the Naxi Wedding Courtyard, wearing ethnic dress while singing and dancing is only part of their work. Their daily life is similar to that of most Han Chinese youth in the cities: they drink Coca-Cola, make friends on the Internet, and dream of going on vacation to Paris.

Cultural Heritage in China

The second theme of the book concerns cultural heritage in China. The concept of 'cultural heritage' – *wenhua yichan* – did not exist in Chinese until the late 1980s. Before the introduction of the Western ideology of architectural conservation, China appeared to demonstrate 'a curious neglect or indifference (even at times downright iconoclasm) towards the material heritage of the past' (Ryckmans 2008). While in the West, antiquity and heritage is present in objects and monuments from the Parthenon to Philadelphia's Liberty Bell, architectural conservation is practically absent in China, partially because of wars and natural disasters and a tendency to construct in wood

rather than stone, but also because of a different attitude towards the need for enduring monuments (Mote 1973; Botz-Bornstein 2012). Chinese buildings have an 'in-built obsolescence,' meaning that the material decays rapidly and requires frequent rebuilding (Victor Segalen cited in Ryckmans 2008). The rooted wooden parts need to be replaced so that buildings are constantly regenerated. New dynasties often destroyed the palaces of the previous dynasty: when the Ming came to power by vanquishing the Mongol Yuan dynasty in 1368, for example, it completely destroyed the palace and city that Kublai Khan had built and Marco Polo had called one of the most magnificent in the world. As a result, China has witnessed a historical continuation of periodic destruction of the material heritage of the past.

Yet, the idea of preserving ancient objects and nostalgia was not new to China: emperors (such as Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty) were prodigious collectors of objects d'art, and built magnificent gardens and palaces in which to house them that were not intended to go to ruin, whatever their eventual fate. Emperors often aligned themselves with the imperial collection using it as a symbolic manifestation of power and authority to create a continuity between their rule and previous dynasties (Elliott and Shambaugh 2005). Wealthy Chinese families also cherish heirlooms, and the culture generally reveres ancient objects and texts. Yet on the whole, Chinese civilization is transmitted through the learning of these texts, passing on the culture and the structures of social, cultural and political life that have endured in an evolving form for centuries while acquiring spiritual meaning (Ryckmans 2008; Mote 1973).

The traditional Chinese attitude towards heritage dramatically changed in the early twentieth century. At this time, Chinese architects and archaeologists expressed a Western-inspired interest in architectural heritage, which led to a cultural movement of heritage conservation and restoration (Zhu 2009).[14] Liang Sicheng (1901-1972), one of the pioneers of architectural conservation, returned to China with his architect-trained wife Lin Huiyin (1904-1955) after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania in the 1920s. Adopting the methodology of Western architectural history, Liang and Lin introduced the Western notion of 'authenticity' to China. They thought old buildings should remain 'old,' in terms of what they called the principle of *zhengjiurujiu* (preserving or restoring the original state) (Lai, Demas and Agnew 2004).

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14   In the 1930s, Zhu Qiqian (1871-1964) founded the Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture (Zhongguo yingzao xueshe), the first academic institution for the conservation and restoration of historic architecture.

Following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Communist Party-led government promoted nation-building through domestic economic development and alliances with other socialist nations. The government led by Mao Zedong endeavoured to establish a unified socialist culture, a culture that sought to align itself with scientific, democratic, and revolutionary ideals. On 1 June 1966, Chinese customs, culture, habits and ideas of the past (labelled the 'four olds') was officially described in a *People's Daily* editorial as 'monsters and demons' that 'have poisoned the minds of the people for thousands of years.' Under Mao's pursuit of 'totalistic iconoclasm' during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), all Chinese traditional culture (not just that of ethnic minorities) was ruthlessly suppressed (Wang 2010).[15] Fired-up youth in the revolutionary Red Guards rampaged across the country destroying temples, palaces and monuments, as well as many ancient books and artworks, although Premier Zhou Enlai managed to protect some sites (including the Forbidden City) and the most valuable artwork taken from individual collections (Elliott and Shambaugh 2005: 126).

The post-Mao leadership under Deng Xiaoping began the process of reconstruction and cultural revitalization (Wang 2013). In 1982, the country promulgated the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics. The State Bureau of Cultural Relics, later renamed as the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH), is responsible for protecting over 500,000 immovable sites and relics, including a list of Major Historical and Cultural Sites Protected at the National Level, such as the Forbidden City, the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, the Peking Man site at Zhoukoudian, and the Great Wall. These sites not only showcase a rising nation with a rich civilization but also create an imaginary of Han-centred national coherence through the inclusion and exclusion of particular heritage narratives and objectives. Particularly in minority areas, heritage conservation is presented as 'a national project of unity' (Shepherd and Yu 2013: 28). The descriptions of the Potala Palace in Lhasa of Tibet, the archaeological site at Xanadu presented as the Mongolian capital established by Kublai Khan, and the Old Town of Lijiang have all been similarly re-interpreted as sites of long term collaboration between Han Chinese and minorities.

In 2017, 32 years after joining the World Cultural Heritage Convention, China has 52 sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List, second only to Italy.[16]

15   The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a cultural movement that imposed Maoist orthodoxy and sought to remove all capitalist and feudalistic elements from Chinese society.
16   UNESCO, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, established as a division of the United Nations in 1947, was a significant step in institutional development for the protection

Accordingly, this participation in the global cultural heritage discourse generates a form of soft power on the global stage, while also becoming a domestic instrument of governance and regulation, as well as a resource for spurring local economic development.[17] As the main heritage authority in China, SACH is responsible for heritage nomination and managing its exploitation. Since 2004, all conservation and heritage-related activities at national and provincial levels must follow a process of approval, planning and conservation. Central and regional governments benefit from the management of heritage both politically (it bolsters their legitimacy) and economically (it promotes tourism and thus prosperity).

Since the start of the twenty-first century, in alliance with heritage experts, local governments have facilitated urban renewal of historic cities for the purpose of city branding and theming (Zhang 2006). While Hangzhou is linked to the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) and its capital Lin'an, Xi'an is associated with the Tang dynasty (618-907). Whereas Beijing is related to the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1912), Luoyang is identified with the Wei-Jin period (220-589) and Nanjing has a history as a capital of failed dynasties and governments. In addition to historical imaginaries of capitals, the 'semi-colonial era' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is linked to images of old Beijing, old Shanghai, and old Tianjin.

Historic cities in China are often reconstructed in order to promote tourism by creating updated, clean buildings and neighbourhoods which reference the ancient architecture, streets and culture they supplant in a way that is marketable to tourists. There is a glaring contradiction in demolishing heritage sites and original buildings considered dirty or shambolic in order to create neighbourhoods designed for heritage tourism that simply reference the area's material heritage with no intention of replicating the function of the old neighbourhood, their buildings and culture. An example of this is the tearing down of Beijing's centuries old commercial and artisanal Qianmen neighbourhood in order to build a sanitized, theme park 'shopping street'

of cultural heritage. UNESCO launched its first international safeguarding campaign in 1959 to save the Abu Simbel and Philae temples in the Nile valley from destruction caused by the Aswan High Dam. The success of this effort inspired additional campaigns to rescue Venice from a flood in 1965 and the Buddhist Temple of Borobudur (Indonesia) in 1972, and to protect the archaeological ruins at Mohenjo-Daro (Pakistan) in 1974. This success led UNESCO to develop the World Heritage Convention in 1972 with the support from other international organizations. The convention is the foundational document of the contemporary world heritage movement and stipulates that 'the international community as a whole [is] to participate in the protection of the cultural and natural heritage' (UNESCO 1972, 1).

17   For a detailed discussion on the various roles of cultural heritage in China, please see Fiskesjö 2010; Svensson 2006; Oakes 1998; Nyíri 2006.

complete with a Zara and a Starbucks. This strategy echoes Sinologist Wang Gungwu's (1985) observation concerning Chinese views on the recent and ancient past. Compared to the recent past, which implicates the Communist Party in violence and the destruction of heritage, so Wang argues, the ancient past is more attractive, loveable, and safe.

Yet when this romantic construction of the ancient past as a safe and idyllic place involves the material reconstruction or repurposing of communities situated within heritage sites, cultural heritage often becomes a mechanism that legitimizes social stratification, gentrification, and displacement. The process of reconstruction transforms areas into sites for tourist consumption, areas where local communities once lived, practiced their customs and carried out traditional rituals. These situations do not arise passively from global and national ideas of heritage, but from competing value systems in a time of social and economic transition.

Romantic Consumption

This book investigates where and how heritage and tourism practices are produced, negotiated, and experienced. Taking the Naxi Wedding Courtyard in Lijiang as my primary case study, I will explore how the state, the tourism industry (primarily domestic) and certain popular modes of consumption bring about the commercialization of heritage in a way that reflects a general longing to consume the romantic in contemporary Chinese society.

The notion of romantic consumption I use here does not refer to the European Romanticism of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that was an intellectual, artistic and cultural reaction to, in part, the Industrial Revolution and the rise of scientific rationalism. Despite similarities in ways of thinking about the dichotomies of self and other, culture and nature, and city and country, European Romanticism arose from a particular historical context. My use of 'romantic' is based in the social, cultural, and economic contexts of a modernizing and urbanizing China. This includes the fact that China is a state ruled by a Communist Party with specific policies concerning ethnic minorities that are based both in politics and economic thinking, as well as concerning the cultural heritage and the tourism industry.

The 'romantic' of 'romantic consumption' includes but is not limited to the notion of romantic love as promoted in magazines, advertisements and the entertainment industry – a concept heavily influenced by imported Western ideas of Valentine's Day, white weddings and red roses, none of which were part of Chinese traditional culture, though adopted by some

urban elites in places like prerevolutionary Shanghai. My story of the Naxi Wedding Courtyard and tourism consumption of ethnic heritage in Lijiang is definitely related to such an understanding of romance. What I mean by 'romantic consumption,' however, extends beyond romantic feelings and love. As I will illustrate in the following chapters, it refers to individual desire, pleasure seeking and the motivation of consumption (Illouz 1997). In addition, the idea of 'consumption' is not limited to commodities but encompasses experiences such as touristic ones: the experience is the goal.

Colin Campbell, in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Capitalism* (1987), suggests that modern consumption is a phenomenon of imaginative, autonomous and self-illusory hedonism. It is different from traditional hedonism based on need and satisfaction. Modern hedonism, in Campbell's argument, is a process of 'emotional management.' In other words, the modern attitude of longing is triggered by dissatisfaction with real life and eagerness to indulge in new experiences of pleasure. Campbell proposes that it is the power of imagination, emotional engagement and control, and a redirection to new behaviour that lies at the heart of modern consumption practices.

Inspired by Campbell, the anthropologist Nicholas Tapp (2008: 458) has proposed that in China there is a 'romanticism' that involves 'the sense of inwardness, an aspiration to the sublime, a restive dissatisfaction with normalcy and the mundane, an interest in the spiritual and aesthetic, a searching out of the extraordinary, perhaps a rage against conventional norms and sometimes a recklessness, a heedlessness of the self and its body.' Such a 'romantic spirit,' Tapp writes, can be traced back to early Daoism and the notion of nature (*ziran*) developed during the second to the fourth century when Daoists, opposed to the Confucianists, searched for and settled in romanticized minority regions. Similarly, Michael Griffiths et al. (2010) argue that in the post-Mao era, Chinese urban elites have pursued a notion of the 'authentic self' through eating, dressing and seeking out experiences that connect them to an imagined rural 'Other.'

Why do practices of romantic consumption emerge in modern China? Following Tapp, and Griffiths et al., I argue that such a movement needs to be understood within the context of the post-Mao economic reform and modernization. Romantic consumption in China results from social transformations embedded in interactions between urban and rural populations, the state and the individual, as well as tradition and modernity. I focus on three factors that foster the development of romantic consumption.

Firstly, romantic consumption is deeply rooted in an emergent and self-conscious individualism. During Maoist times, there was a huge emphasis

on collective life; decisions, including who one could marry or when one could have a child, were not entirely one's own. Even decisions as to what to wear were conditioned and determined by society and politics.

Today, society offers its people many choices and channels through which they can pursue personal happiness and their dreams of a modern lifestyle. As a result, Chinese individuals have the awareness and capacity to choose their own life path and forge an individual entity (Yan 2010). The privatization of business online media (Zhang and Ong 2008; MacKinnon 2008), social liberalization, and wider tolerance of sexual love between unmarried partners have all contributed to this trend (Rofel 2007). Romantic consumption is in a sense the marketization of these liberated individual desires and pleasures.

Secondly, in the Chinese urban sphere, material consumption and expenditure patterns have changed dramatically: simply put, savings have been replaced by consumption (Jacka, Kipnis, and Sargeson 2013). Today, as is the trend globally, people prefer to purchase services instead of goods, though in China some of this is due to a corruption-related crackdown that can make the owning and display of luxury goods problematic. Depending on priorities, age and inclination, people may be spending more on family rituals that are associated with birthdays, marriages and funerals, clubbing or travel (Farrer 2008).

Thirdly, the discourse of happiness has also shifted from emphasizing external factors (such as money, housing and cars) to affective and emotional experiences. According to an annual survey by *Oriental Outlook* magazine and the National Bureau of Statistics, which polled 13.95 million people across the country, most economically powerful cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen are not listed as the happiest places in China. People's main concern, as part of the outcome of cities' complex and rapid transformation, are issues relating to air quality, the costs of living and food safety. Prosperity improves public goods, technology, infrastructure and transportation, but can also lead to the loss of traditional social networks, especially those related to kinship and family – it's now rare to find in Chinese cities what was once a Chinese ideal, that of four generations living under one roof. The consumer revolution that prosperity has brought to urban areas often lead to disappointment and fragile satisfaction as Chinese consumers have discovered what ones in countries like the US and UK did back in their own eras of post-war prosperity (Beck 1992): money can't buy happiness.

As a consequence of the above three factors, the contemporary Chinese pursuit of individual happiness has become experience-oriented, self-directed, and can be creative and adventurous. The dissatisfaction with

mundane urban existence leads to a romanticized interest in the natural, spiritual and aesthetic – and a tendency to invest the 'ethnic' with these qualities. This romanticization drives portions of the urban populations into a search for tradition and authenticity. People on such a quest seek to assert their individuality and create a unique identity through travel, leisure and even migration. Now that the focus has shifted from making a living to lifestyle, such activities are channels for individual Chinese to escape from their daily routines and to negotiate between realities and dreams.

Authenticity, Authentication, and Customization

Romantic consumption helps explain why Chinese tourists are so attracted to cultural heritage and ethnic tourism; in this book, I also inquire into the sociocultural impact of romantic consumption on both local people and Chinese tourists. This brings me to my second major issue: 'authenticity.'

'Authenticity,' the term, has its origin in Greek and Latin, where it was understood as meaning 'authoritative' and 'original.' In the European Middle Ages, it acquired notions that ranged from political authority, the efficacy of magic and the origin of religious texts (Comaroff and Roberts 1986). In the realm of museums, it indicates 'whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be' (Trilling 1972: 93). Authenticity today refers to notions of the genuine, the real, and the unique (Reisinger and Steiner 2006), and is common to the fields of ethics, linguistics, material culture and arts.

Tourism is often motivated by the search for a supposedly more authentic society and culture than the one in which the tourists live. The idea that urban societies are somehow inauthentic creates a longing for the past, imbuing places that have preserved their traditional heritage with a romantic aura (Gable and Handler 1996). However, the commodification of cultural heritage through tourism leads to the recreation of heritage as performance or 'pseudo-events' (Boorstin 1992).

In today's world of globalization, culture is constantly changing and reformulating. What may appear untainted and authentic custom may in fact be quite different from what it was before encounters with the likes of Rock and Goullart, colonization or mass migrations in Lijiang. We need to ask, of course, whether the concept of authenticity is still relevant or meaningful.

In recent years, sociologists and anthropologists have pushed forward theories and debates that emphasize the social construction of authenticity over the use of scientific criteria such as materiality and the notion of 'origin.' As a result of postmodernist, poststructuralist and constructivist

theories, the once unchallenged notion that authenticity refers to the actual, true, genuine or essentialist is increasingly under question (Bruner 1994; Reisinger and Steiner 2006). Today, authenticity is regarded as a fluid and constantly negotiated concept (Squire 1994; Hughes 1995). The notion can also refer to tourists' beliefs, expectations and stereotyped images (Wang 1999; Belhassen, Caton, and Stewart 2008).

Whereas authenticity used to be analysed as a concept, more recent studies have shifted the focus to the underlying dynamic processes of authentication (Ateljevic and Doorne 2005; Cohen and Cohen 2012). In *Authenticating Ethnic Tourism*, Feifan Xie (2011), for instance, brings our attention to the power relations behind the establishment of authenticity. Instead of inquiring 'What is authentic?' in ethnic culture in China, Xie (2011) asks 'How does it work?' and 'Who is involved?' Based on scientific knowledge, government authorities often have the power to officially recognize and certify a heritage site as well as an object or event as being 'original,' 'genuine,' 'real,' or 'trustworthy' (Selwyn 1996: 26).

In discussions about authenticity, scholars are also switching focus from the nature of objects to the global effects of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention on local traditions, cultural practices, and daily life (Smith 2006). International heritage policies and conventions have redefined the meaning of culture through the application of particular types of language and ethical precepts pertaining to authenticity. As Michael Herzfeld (2004) has argued, this 'global hierarchy of values,' historically disseminated by European colonial powers, views local heritage through the lens of political dominance and assumed cultural superiority. In this process, the authorized heritage discourse has produced new norms and standards concerning what are considered to be good, beautiful and appropriate (Smith 2006). As it is the nation states who produce and disseminate this discourse, the value system becomes a formidable 'tool of governance' in constructing 'identity, experiences, and social standing[s]' (Smith 2006: 52; Kipnis 2012).

But it is not only global agencies and government authorities that have the power to declare and certify what is authentic cultural heritage. Tourism service providers are also involved, for better or worse, even when they knowingly stage a display of faked-up or compromised heritage and market it as authentic in order to satisfy the imagination and desires of tourists (Salazar and Graburn 2014; Boniface and Fowler 1993; Zhu 2017).

Studying how Lijiang guesthouses ran their businesses, anthropologist Wang Yu (2007) describes how the hosts have created a 'customized authenticity' that suits tourists' imagination of how people live in Lijiang. More importantly, tourists also play a 'positive and proactive role' in the

process of homemaking since the hosts modify their houses simply by reacting to their customers (Wang 2007: 801). In other words, customized authenticity is an on-going process of co-production through strategizing, revision and re-adaptation.

This book moves beyond Wang's argument of customized authenticity to clarify the sociocultural consequences of heritage in the context of tourism by examining how heritage customization influences local communities and tourists. For the local community, on the one hand, the customization of cultural heritage results in the creation of a romanticized past represented through colourful and 'exotic' dresses, music and spectacle. As I will illustrate in Chapter 4 (Local actors), to suit tourist tastes, the culture of minority peoples has been fossilized in exhibitions that do not acknowledge the fact that like all cultures, it is constantly evolving (Gladney 1994). Since local state and tourism operators are typically in control of how heritage is 'customized' for tourists, the local community has become an 'actor' instead of an 'owner' of their cultural heritage. The 'emergent meanings' in such performance, as Erik Cohen (1988) proposed, can only exist as a vehicle of self-representation for an external public.

Tourists enjoy watching ethnic dance performances even though these heritage products are commercially designed and provided by tourism operators and marketing agencies (Xie 2011). However, as I will illustrate in Chapter 5 (Guests) and Chapter 6 (After the Show), tourists can only ever be 'guests': they can take part in these customized rituals, but romantic consumption doesn't allow them to become part of the community from which the rituals are borrowed. The hedonistic nature of ethnic and heritage tourism only offers them a kind of instant, albeit powerful gratification. As one tourist to Lijiang told me, 'I got married in a Naxi ceremony. I am well-travelled and have absorbed something exotic into my identity.' This type of response typifies tourists' experiences which can be generally categorised as a form of self-illusory hedonism – an imaginative pleasure, a temporary escape from reality, part, perhaps of a continuous pursuit of individual identity.

Why the Naxi Wedding Courtyard?

This book examines heritage and romantic consumption in China. Why does this case study of Lijiang and the Naxi Wedding Courtyard matter? Why is the story of the courtyard worthy of being the subject of a book? As I will show, the impact of heritage and ethnic tourism on contemporary

Chinese society reflects significant sociocultural processes that take place not only in China but also all over the world today.

In the twenty-first century, various forms of mobility, such as migration, tourism, or diaspora, have become the dominant mechanism of everyday life of the world. Modern society allows us to move around to fulfil our various needs. Most studies predict that global tourism will strongly increase over the next ten years, with the number of people travelling abroad or within their own countries doubling. According to projections by 2020, there will be more than 1.2 billion annual interregional arrivals and 378 million long-haul travellers all over the world (WTTC 2011: 27; WTO 2001). Tourism will without doubt have an immense impact on the global cultural landscape.

The story of the Naxi Wedding Courtyard offers a concentrated view of the unfolding interaction between modernity and tradition, the urban and the rural, as well as the desire and dreams of consumption in the world today. Because the Old Town of Lijiang, as a World Heritage Site, is closely linked to the global World Heritage regime and related tourism, this book examines the friction that arises when the global meets the local in regard to ethical issues such as land ownership, dramatic changes of lifestyle, the moral implications of romantic consumption, and the question of who has the power to own and interpret cultural heritage.

The 'on-the-ground' approach illuminates a complex and vivid picture of the interactions in this specific locality between people's relationship with the past, their desire to change themselves, and their visions for the future – I look at both tourists and the local community through these lenses. As a tourist attraction, it essentially functions as a stage where cultural tradition is performed rather than lives. People come to it from different walks of life and different motivations. It is also a place where new social relationships unfold and evolve. They are not always desirable relationships. They can involve mutual neglect and disrespect, cutthroat commercial competition, and the resistance to state control of cultural heritage.

The Naxi Wedding Courtyard and Lijiang are, of course, not unique in the issues they present and the problems they face. By tracing the rise of the heritage tourism industry and its interrelation with modern consumption throughout the twentieth century, John Urry in his 2002 book *The Tourist Gaze* finds that the globalization of heritage through tourism has resulted in a greater scale of romanticization and commercialization of culture world-wide, including in the United States and Europe. What's more, international organizations concerned with heritage preservation are increasingly aware of past mistakes in which physical heritage protection and tourism promotion have been overemphasized at the expense of attention to the living practices

and knowledge of local peoples. As the story of the Naxi Wedding Courtyard illustrates, the pressure of commercial tourism can also cause cultural homogenization and the destruction of local uniqueness. Such process often refers to a whole set of complex issues such as authenticity, heritage interpretation, and social exclusion (McKercher and Du Cros 2002; Timothy and Prideaux 2004). The protection, conservation, interpretation, and representation of cultural heritage is not just an issue for global institutions, local governments or the scholarly community – it is an important challenge for us all.

A Note on the Method

As a Han Chinese researcher studying the interaction between the ethnic and Chinese people in minority area of China, I consider myself both insider/outsider, while taking a position at the margins. Such position is described as 'between familiarity and strangeness' and as 'living simultaneously in two worlds, that of participation and that of research' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 112). I hope to negotiate the insider/outsider position in a way that allows my own subjectivity and reflexivity to generate knowledge that reflects social reality without disregarding my marginal position. There is no such thing as absolute neutrality and objectivity in the world. However, the ethnographic study helps me to describe and illustrate what is happening, who is involved in this transition, and what the relationship is between the various players.

I conducted research over seventeen months of ethnographic fieldwork (May to November 2006, July to December 2010 and June to September 2011) in Lijiang.[18] It was in 2010 that I realized that the Naxi Wedding Courtyard was an ideal place for studying cultural encounters, human behaviour with regard to the romantic consumption of heritage, and the power relations that inform social change and cultural transformation in China. I have participated in and observed all sorts of activities, including meetings, preparations, wedding ceremonies, and banquets.

18   Between 2006 and 2010, I visited Lijiang on average once a year, staying from four days to one month. I used different ethnographic methods during my field research to interact socially with the local community, the authorities, and domestic tourists. In 2006, I worked in a local heritage management office as a consultant, where I conducted interviews with heritage officials. My interviews concerned the status quo of the heritage site, the officials' understanding of heritage, conflicts arising due to the tension between economic development and conservation, and their vision of the future. These interviews offered me the primary data that is essential for accessing the complexities of the site's heritage governance.

When I first began interviewing local actors in the courtyard, I was inspired by the reflexive ethnography work, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* by Marjorie Shostak (1981), which combined participant observations and the telling of the life story of a 'primitive' African woman in her own words. I use oral histories to delve deeper into individual stories and to illustrate how local actors see their roles in the performance in the courtyard and, following intensive autobiographical interviews, present a continuous narrative of their lives.[19]

At the same time, through ethnographic research into tourists' experiences and attitudes towards these cultural performances, I documented their views on their engagement with the weddings in the courtyard – whether gazing, photographing, participating, listening or sharing their perceptions. However, I soon realized that studying the domestic tourists' motivation behind visiting Lijiang and the Naxi Wedding Courtyard is a challenging task, because their experience in the courtyard lasts only for a couple of hours. My observation therefore extended to nearby guesthouses, restaurants, teahouses, bars, markets, and souvenir shops.[20] I also traced the daily life of several Han Chinese couples each time when I returned to Lijiang from 2007 to 2011; during that time period, some of them were married in the courtyard, had children, started new businesses, or departed from Lijiang. Such a long-term observation allowed me to understand the impacts of heritage and tourism on various stages of their journey, which was filled with a mixture of happiness, obsession, hope and sometimes, frustration.

Theatre of the Book

This book is structured as a theatrical production. My approach of studying heritage and ethnic tourism through the lens of theatre is both metaphorical

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19   In the book version of this research, the names of all informants are pseudonyms but the names of public figures have not been changed. Personal information in the interviews and personal blogs have been omitted to protect the privacy of the informants. Most interviews were carried out in spontaneous exchanges, because the settings for the interviews were chosen at the convenience of the informant, for example, before or after the wedding, while sitting for tea, or having lunch together. The spontaneity provided a good chance for more in-depth discussions contingent with a personalized tour of life and their understanding of tourism work in the courtyard.

20   I analysed the representation of Lijiang's 'urban sensorium' (Goonewardena 2005), because the tourism imaginaries do not solely rely on material forms but also on sensuous experiences. Visual and audio documentation, such as television programmes, music, films, photography, newspapers, and novels, helped me to understand how the image of Liijang is constructed and conveyed in the public sphere.

(the social life of Lijiang) and real (the actual wedding performances). Analysing the Naxi Wedding Courtyard as a theatre, this ethnography examines how heritage and ethnic tourism discourses affect sociocultural transformation in Lijiang, and how the way that people come to perform their identity affects that identity itself.

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman (1959) deploys the metaphor of theatre to understand human interaction and behaviour. According to Goffman, social life is a 'performance' in which different 'actors' interact on the 'stage' and which follows a 'script' that integrates the physical settings, the context, and the prescribed manner of each of the participants' roles. In tourism and heritage studies, the metaphor of performance has often been used to interpret cultural presentations. According to Tim Edensor (2001), 'performance' is an interactive and contingent process, and may be analysed according to the skills of the actors, the context within which it is performed, and the way in which it is interpreted by an audience. The performance metaphor also sheds light on 'the liminal nature of tourism' (Graburn 1983: 21; Turner 1967): on the road, taking part in new activities, apart from the routines and constraints of their daily life, tourists are free to perform and experiment with new modes of self-identity. Understanding both tourists and local participants as performers allows us to study heritage in ways that move beyond heritage models where meanings of objects and practices are determined by institutions and experts. A performance model of heritage repositions it as an affective, embodied, relational and situational practice which is continually unfolding.

This book draws attention to the interconnections between physical settings (stage), redesigned stories (scripts), and social interactions between local actors and guests: everyday life reproduced as theatre. It looks beyond policies and political outcomes, and emphasizes the role of memory, life histories, and personal narratives in relation to heritage production and romantic consumption. Instead of focusing on how meanings and relationships are prescribed by authorities and professionals, I highlight how they are created, reaffirmed, and altered through performances. In such a scenario, it is the individuals who have agency, and who determine the definition of heritage. Meanings and relationships are created, reaffirmed, and altered through embodied and creative engagement with heritage and tourism practices.

Chapter 2 sketches the history of heritage development in Lijiang, and discusses how the place has been transformed into a theatrical stage for the performance of heritage. In response to national policies promoting heritage and ethnic tourism industries, the image of Lijiang has undergone

a process of reconstruction associated with its World Heritage nomination, ethnic theme parks, museum development, and 'exotic' wedding ceremonies. Through a series of acts of recognizing, listing, and branding, local authorities have transformed Lijiang from a historic town into a 'theatre' of heritage. The Naxi Wedding Courtyard is a microcosm of this stage that displays and performs a romantic vision of Naxi culture and authenticity.

Chapter 3 provides the 'scripts' of the wedding performance by examining the evolution of Naxi wedding traditions. Historically, wedding ceremonies were based on the indigenous Dongba religion (which is much like the pre-Lamaist Bon religion of Tibet), a religion which was banned during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) as 'feudal superstition.' Since the post-Mao era, Naxi indigenous customs, like many religious and cultural traditions elsewhere in China, have been officially revitalized, reified, and disseminated through folk festivals, performances and heritage programmes. The performance of the Naxi Wedding Courtyard is intertwined with previous and current customs of this ethnic group in a way that satisfies modern needs. The state conceptualization of Naxi wedding customs has shifted from 'uncivilized' and 'backward' to 'authentic,' 'ethnic' and 'romantic.' There is an on-going process of negotiation between the state discourse and individual practices. All of the participants – the officials, the entrepreneurs, religious practitioners, tourists and scholars – have the capacity to author and revise these practices through their own engagement with heritage.

In Chapter 4, I present the voices of 'local actors' in the Naxi Wedding Courtyard. These stories illustrate how local people participate in the customization of their cultural tradition in Lijiang. These actors perform the roles based on their own interests and relation with the place. The stories also refer to how people adopt, negotiate and resist heritage and tourism discourses. Memory, knowledge, skills and emotion can all lead people to transgress and sometimes even subvert the official script.

Chapters 5 and 6 look at the various types of 'guests' who celebrate their wedding ceremony in the Naxi Wedding Courtyard and catch up on their life 'after the show' in Lijiang. For many Chinese people who have come to Lijiang to escape city life in the coastal regions, or have even become 'lifestyle migrants' to the area, the social construction of romantic heritage in Lijiang and the Naxi Wedding Courtyard energizes their quest for purity, pleasure, freedom, and escape, sometimes to the point of obsession. Yet even if they settle in Lijiang, these 'outsiders' do not leave behind their materialistic, capitalistic and consumerist privileges. Indeed, their social and cultural capital allows them to consume and indulge their hedonistic impulses, while local heritage serves primarily to help them fulfil their fantasy of a

more authentic life. However, romantic consumption in the Naxi Wedding Courtyard and Lijiang can only offer them an instant gratification; most of the guests, including 'lifestyle migrants,' will eventually leave Lijiang in search of other destinations and other forms of romantic consumption.

All of these stories combine to illustrate a multifaceted and vivid picture of how people live in between real and imagined worlds. I close the story in Chapter 7 by pondering on the modern spirit of consumerism in contemporary China. The romantic interests towards the ethnic and natural, the search for customized authenticity, the various forms of resistance as well as the official discourse are all deeply tied to the presence and individual desires of modernity.

I've set the stage. Let the show begin.