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Research article

The art of (not) being governed: Village governance and tourism development in a Miao village in China

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Abstract

This article illuminates a nuanced interaction between the ethnic minorities in Southwest China and the state, centering on tourism development. Through an ethnographic case study of Upper Langde Miao village, this article documents the transformation from the village's self-governed to county-government-directed tourism and explores under what conditions it loses out to the statecraft. It explains the seemingly radical changes from the villagers' avoidance of the state to their recent desire, despite distrust, for a just state to deliver economic benefits. This is more a situational adoption of a development paradigm of the state than a subjective identification with the state-nation.

KEYWORDS: village governance, statecraft, tourism development, Miao, Chinese state

Introduction

The mountainous zone of southwest China is inhabited by ethnically diverse populations, including the Miao,[1] who were historically independent of distant state centers (Scott, 2009). Nevertheless, despite their remoteness, these ethnically diverse populations have become sites of active statecraft (Blumenfield, 2014). Under threat from capitalist encroachment, they are among the primary sites for the extraction and appropriation of labor, land, culture, and other resources for state projects including tourism development (cf. Feng, 2017).

Tourism can be the greatest stimulus to change. Ethnic tourism, characterized by the commodification of ethnic-minority culture through a "gateway village" strategy, is rapidly developing in this region, by which the whole village becomes a stage for *performing* the group's ethnic culture (Wu, 2014). As an effort to integrate and monetize the resources of the periphery in the name of development, tourism provides a unique lens to illuminate the power relations between these non-Han ethnic groups and the Chinese state in the modern era.

Existing research on the studies of dynamic interactions between ethnic minorities and the Chinese state is primarily situated in imperial and republican China (cf. Crossley et al., 2006; Cheung, 2012, 2003; Wang, 2000). This article is an attempt to address the relative sparseness of relevant studies in contemporary China. It asks: how the ethnic minorities have reacted to and engaged with development projects such as tourism and how such development impacts the relationship between ethnic minorities and the Chinese state. Focusing on tourism development, this article aims to illuminate a more nuanced interaction between the ethnic minorities in Southwest China and the Chinese state in the contemporary era.

Through an ethnographic case of Upper Langde Miao village in Guizhou, I will try to examine the meanings and significance of state practices for the villagers in a tourism context.[2] I will also try to document the transformation from the village's self-governed to county-government-directed tourism and explain the seemingly radical changes as their long-standing avoidance of the state has recently been supplanted by their desire, despite their distrust, for a just state to deliver the economic fruits of tourism development. I will try to explore under what conditions and by what means Upper Langde los-

[1] Miao is one of China's fifty-five officially designated ethnic minorities, referring to the various groups of people in Southwest China who call themselves Hmong, Mong, Hmu, or Xioob. For an elaborated discussion on defining the Miao, see Diamond (1995).

[2] The fieldwork conducted in 2018 and 2019 was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Eastern Michigan University.

es out to the statecraft. The analysis will distinguish between one's partial and situational adoption of the dominant group's cultural markers and a more subjective identification with an imagined Chinese political community (Crossley et al., 2006).

Self-governing, state-governed, and the in-between

Zomia (formerly known as the Southwest Asian massif) refers to one of the largest remaining nonstate spaces in the world, the vast expanse of uplands sprawling across eight nation-states including southwest China (Scott, 2009). Scott's discussion of Zomia builds upon the binaries of the encounter:

> … between self-governing and state-governed peoples—variously styled as the raw and the cooked, the wild and the tamed, the hill/forest people and the valley/cleared-land people, upstream and downstream, the barbarian and the civilized, the backward and the modern, the free and the bound, the people without history and the people with history. (2009, p. 3)

The neat binaries, however, exclude zones and communities that have straddled or interconnected the two (Randeria, 2010).

Regarding the interactions between the Chinese state and the non-Han ethnic others in southwest China, Cheung (2012) laid out a dichotomy between total submission of sinicization through the practice of "mimicry for prestige" or *pānfù* (Wang, 2000)[3] and fleeing the state for self-imposed exclusion to remain "not being governed" (Scott, 2009). As Cheung (2012, p. 165) points out, between the "assimilation model" proposed by Wang (2000) and the "escape model" suggested by Scott (2009), a wide range of various degrees of engagement between the state and upland natives existed.

Historically, the Zomians had successfully employed various mechanisms to repel states. However, the possibility of avoiding the state as an option is fast vanishing (Scott 2009). To this day, many of the Zomian peoples have avoided and continue to avoid states to varying degrees, but more may have been taken over by the states. Through this case study of Upper Langde, it is possible to examine a space in-between the dichotomy of mimicry for prestige (Wang, 2000; Cheung, 2012) and of not being governed (Scott, 2009), where the natives assert their non-Han identities while being included into

[3] Wang (2000) refers to the historical ethnic process, by which non-Han groups claimed their Han-Chinese identities by tracing legendary genealogical linkages to the Huang Di (Yellow Emperor) through the mechanism of *pānfù* [social climbing], which Cheung (2012) calls "mimicry for prestige."

the administrative and cultural domains of the transforming Chinese state. As Sutton (2006, p. 195) points out:

> Applied to the Miao, sheng and shu,[4] raw and cooked, unfamiliar and familiar, "untamed and docile," "uncivilized and civilized," are not simple opposites but dynamic categories, for it is always inferred that the former can become the latter.

This article thus explores the fluid relationships between Upper Langde and the state during a time of enormous change brought by tourism.

After the introduction of the research site and dat collection, I will try to provide a historical overview of the Upper Langde, paying attention to the elements that might have worked as mechanisms to repel states in the past. I argue that these mechanisms contributed to the success and longevity of Upper Langde's community-based tourism, an inclusive bottom-up model featuring a *gōngfēn* [work-point] system,[5] which helped resist the pressure from the county government to shift away from its self-governed participatory tourism model over the years. I then document the strategies deployed by the county government through its "second development" project to take a leading role in Upper Langde's tourism. I pay attention to, on one hand, how statecraft functioned in controlling and assimilating the ethnic minority and, on the other hand, how pressures work on the individual and the community resulting in diverse responses. While recognizing native voice as expressions of local agents who sought to negotiate with the state, this article demonstrates how the Zomian peoples such as the Miao in Upper Langde are increasingly being further incorporated into the state control.

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[4] Based on the degree of their assimilation and willingness to cooperate with the state or submit to state rule, a binary division existed among the Miao, the *sheng* [raw] Miao and *shu* [cooked] Miao. The sheng practically means ungoverned and not-yet-incorporated (Scott, 2009). Oakes (1998) talks about the difference between the cooked and the raw among China's southerners. See also Diamond (1995) for further elaboration.

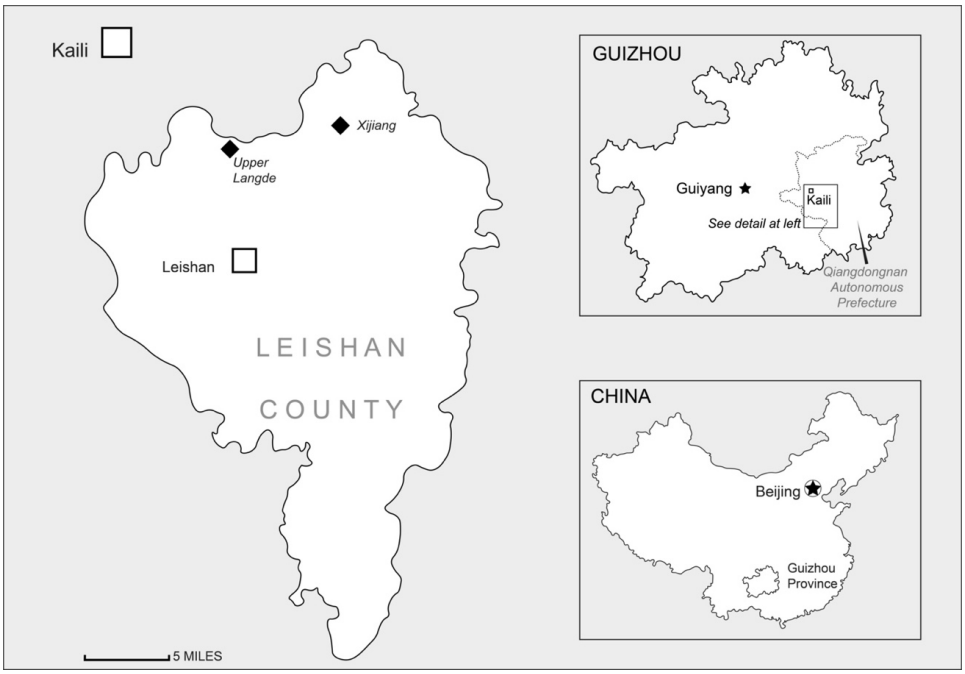
[5] The gōngfēn (work-point) system is a relic of China's agriculture collectivization during the 1950s–1970s. According to Jacka (1997), the evaluation process for the work-point remuneration system adopted in Chinese communes varied considerably from place to place, but almost invariably, it discriminated against women. Apart from taking into account the number of hours a worker spent in collective labor, work points were assigned on the basis of an evaluation of the labor (in which case lower rates for women were justified on the grounds that they were not as physically strong as men), or based on the evaluation of task performed (in which the tasks usually done by women were rewarded at a rate lower than that done by men, on the grounds that they were "lighter" or require less skill).

Research site and data collection

Upper Langde village[6] is located in the northwest of the Leishan County in the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture in Guizhou, China. Guizhou was known as an impoverished region described as, "no sunny sky for three continuous days; no flat ground for three kilometers; no one with more than three cents." Tucked in the rugged landscape southeast of Guizhou, Upper Langde sits at the foot of Leigong Mountain by the Wangfeng river, with the village settlements built along the mountain slope with an altitude of 735–1447 meters (Tang 2016: 2). It is about 15 km from Leishan (the county seat) and 29 km from Kaili (the prefecture capital) (Figure 1). Built at the end of the Yuan and beginning of the Ming dynasty, Upper Langde has a history of over 600 years (Leishan County Annals Compiling Committee, 1992). The villagers are all Miao, except a few in-marrying wives who were from outside of this region. In 2019, the village had 213 households with a population of 871, divided into four production teams.

Figure 1

Upper Langde village is located in Leishan County of the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture in Guizhou Province, China (Feng & Li, 2020, p. 5)



Known for its tourism gōngfēn system, Upper Langde is a well-researched site in both Chinese and English literature (e.g., Chen et al., 2013; Li 2014; Li, 2008; Lor et al. 2019;

[6] In this article, Upper Langde village refers to one of the two natural villages [*zìráncūn*] that make up the Upper Langde administrative village [*xíngzhèng cūn*]. In rural areas in China, one administrative village may consist of two or more natural villages. The Upper Langde administrative village includes two natural villages, Upper Langde natural village and Bao natural village.

Oakes, 1998). I had the opportunity to visit Upper Langde for the first time in the summer of 2016 for an overnight stay. The sharp contrasts regarding tourism development between Upper Langde and the Miao villages in Fenghuang County of Hunan (where I did fieldwork from 2002 to 2016) sparked my interest. I returned to Upper Langde to conduct ethnography in the spring of 2018 and the summer of 2019. This article is largely based on the data collected from my fieldwork during a one-semester sabbatical in 2018.

During the field trip in 2018, I visited Guizhou Minzu University in Guiyang (the provincial capital) before heading to, and upon returning from, Upper Langde. I conducted archival research at the Guizhou Minzu University Library and the Leishan County Library. I visited the offices of the Guizhou (provincial-level) Tourism Development Committee in Guiyang, the Qiandongnan (prefectural-level) Tourism Development Committee in Kaili, and the Leishan (county-level) Tourism Development Committee in Leishan.

I conducted two in-depth interviews in Guiyang and one focus group interview in Kaili, as well as 20 in-depth interviews and two focus group interviews in Upper Langde. The interviewees, including village cadres, villagers, tourists, tourism company staff, and government officials in charge of tourism development at the provincial, prefectural, county, and township levels, provided various perspectives regarding Upper Langde's tourism development.[7] I took part in village religious, social, and political events, such as shamanistic rituals, feastings, meetings among village cadres in Upper Langde, and a meeting hosted by the tourism company and attended by the Upper Langde village cadres. I dined and socialized at village homes, at the village committee office kitchen, at meeting banquets, in restaurants, in the woods, and at the village graveyard.

Daily conversation and on-site observation were recorded in detail by journals. Locally accessed archives include local gazetteers, essays by local Miao scholars, village account books of tourism income and distribution, internal reports, and development plans from the tourism company, and other unpublished materials from village cadres and the provincial-level, prefecture-level, county-level, and township-level governments provided additional valuable information.

[7] Part of the data were gathered for the study of tourism development and poverty alleviation, which was published in another article (Feng & Li, 2020), that provides more details on the contemporary tourism context in Upper Langde village.

Upper Langde: A historical perspective

As Crossley et al. (2006, p. 16) point out, "The making of local society and indigenous populations may not be analytically detached from or mechanically posed against state-making processes." Defined largely as the counter-image of Chinese civilization generated during the Chinese Empire's southward expansion (Cheung, 2012), Miao was one of the prominent ethnic categories of otherness, as portrayed in the Miao Album (Diamond, 1995; Zhu, 2018). Residing at the eastern edge of the Yunnan-Guizhou plateau, the Miao in Southeast Guizhou remained stateless prior to administrative regularization during the Qing Dynasty,[8] and were referred to as sheng, meaning uncivilized or unsinicized Miao, who resisted assimilation, pacification, and state control (You, 1985, p. 289, cf. Diamond, 1995, p. 100).

This ungoverned territory of the sheng Miao was the southwest front of the Chinese imperial expansion in the Ming and Qing dynasties (Cheung, 2012, p. 146). The spread of state power into this region met with violent resistance, which lasted well into the 19th century, the so-called "Miao rebellions" (Guizhou General History Editorial Board, 2002; Wu 1999), among which was the well-known Zhang Xiumei Insurgency. Yang Daliu, as one of the leaders of this insurgency, is from Upper Langde.

As a Miao rebellion hero, Yang Daliu was featured prominently in Upper Langde's history (Yang, 2008). While the insurgency was being put down by the Qing state, Upper Langde was blood washed, with only 15 survivors out of more than 200 villagers (Wu, 2005). The collective memory from their traumatic experience during the insurgency solidified a local sense of identity (Li & Sun, 2010). The relics of the battlefields were preserved around the village along with the stories associated with Yang Daliu, and his former residence in the village is preserved as a museum named after him. The historic significance of Yang Daliu distinguished Upper Langde from other Miao villages in this region, which partially contributed to the county government's keen interest in Upper Langde's tourism.

Scott (2009, p. 178) notes that Zomian populations disincentivized statecraft via "pattern[s] of settlement, agriculture, and social structure." Applying Scott's ideas, Stringham and Miles (2012) discussed Zomian populations' three mechanisms for repelling states more broadly as locational, productional, and cultural. The rest of this section provides a historical overview of Upper Langde, including its livelihood, community

[8] Not until the late Qing were the majority of the Miao in Guizhou brought under the rule of the state, following the policy of *gǎi tǔ guī liú* [replacing former native officials with posted officials from the state] implanted in 1413 (Cheung, 2012).

life, and internal governance, paying attention to the elements that might have worked as mechanisms to repel states.

Daily life

As mountain dwellers, the Miao were traditionally self-sufficient subsistence farmers. They relied on slash-and-burn farming, supplemented by hunting and forest gathering. Similar to the Miao of Congjiang County documented by de Beauclair (1960) and the Guizhou-Hunan Minorities Social-Historical Investigation Group (1958) (see Diamond 1995), Upper Langde villagers grow rice in terraced irrigated fields wherever possible and dryland crops where it was not. They raise fish in the paddy fields. They collect nature's abundant gifts from the river and forest, and wild mushroom, bracken, and fruits are among seasonal delicacies.

In 1985, Upper Langde had cropland of 210 *mu*.[9] Subsistence crops included paddy rice, corn, sweet potato, and wheat; cash crops were mainly tobacco and rapeseed (People's Government of Leishan County, 1986). Since the village started tourism in the late 1980s, the villagers' living standards largely improved. Per capita annual income increased from 250 yuan in 1986 to 2,756 yuan in 2007. Even though their per capita annual income was enough to feed themselves, the majority of the villagers were unwilling to leave the farm field. They hosted tourists when they arrived; they returned to the field as soon as tourists left (Li & Sun, 2010, p. 60).

Small scale enables Upper Langde to be an "acquaintance society" (Wang, 2013), in which everyone knows everyone else. Social obligations were enforced through reciprocity and reputation mechanisms. The traditional value of egalitarianism among the Miao was prominent in the village (Li, 2008). Sharing among kinsmen and fellow villagers served as a mechanism to prevent hunger and eliminate wealth accumulation. With limited disposable income, the majority of households were neither rich nor poor. Except for a few households with disability and lack of labor, there was no extreme poverty.

For most of the Upper Langde villagers, the geographical boundaries of their day-to-day world are those of the hamlet and local markets in Leishan. Among a handful convenient stores in the seat of the township located in Lower Langde,[10] only two sold fresh

[9] *Mu* is a traditional unit of land area in China. One mu is about 1/15 hectare or 667 square meters.

[10] Lower Langde is one of the natural villages in Langde Town. It is where the town government is located, and about a twenty-minute walk to Upper Langde.

fruits, and these catered to tourists rather than the villagers. The villagers still reply on, albeit to a much less degree than earlier days, peddlers who traveled throughout the area selling goods. When I stayed in Upper Langde, I was awakened many mornings by the loud speaker selling streamed buns and other goods from a peddler's mini-van parked on the roadside by the village entrance (Figure 2).

Figure 2

A spring morning of Upper Langde village, with a peddler's mini-van parked on the roadside by the village entrance selling steamed buns, apples, and other goods (photo by author, 2018)

Despite the distraction from tourism, their traditional village life was preserved relatively well. Festivals, ritual practices, and feasting at various scales are an integral part of their everyday business. Within my first week of stay in the village in 2018, three ceremonies took place, including *Jì Báihǔ* [sacrifice to the white tiger], *Dǎ Kǒushé* [beat mouths and tongues], and grave-side ancestor worship (to erect the tombstone as the third-year anniversary of the burial ceremony).

Each ceremony ended with a feast for those who attended (Figure 3). Ritual feasting in Upper Langde creates and maintains social relations that bind the villagers together in various intersecting groups, which is "extremely important in establishing sentiments of friendship, kinship, and community solidarity" (Dietler, 2001, p. 69)

Figure 3

Grave-side feast during the third-year anniversary of the burial ceremony to erect the tombstone for a deceased villager (photo by author, 2018)

Internal governance

Traditionally a stateless society, the Miao have no formal political organization (Culas & Michaud, 1997, p. 230). *Gǔ shè* [the drum community], *yì láng* [the council], and *lǐ lǎo* [the elders] were the three pillars of Miao societies (Li, 1999). The drum community was the Miao social organization composed of two or more clans who exchanged marriage partners. It held the major ancestor worship ceremony once every few years, in which the bronze drum played a central role. The council functioned as the Miao legislature, where customary laws were discussed and formulated among participating villages and clans in that region. The elders were those thought to be just and resourceful and were respected by the villagers. Some of them specialized in ritual practices. They were informally elected based on their reputation and were not appointed by the government (Ting & Jiu, 1980; Li & Jiu, 1981; Li, 1999).

Many Miao villages functioned without the law and order of modern times and instead relied on customary laws (Li & Jiu, 1981). In Upper Langde, village elders rather than

state judges adjudicated disputes with customary laws (Tian, 2017), similar to what was observed by Kandre (1967) among the Mien in Northern Laos and by Phuc (2002) among the Dao in upland Vietnam. Effective since 2008, the current Upper Langde Village Regulations[11] are mainly derived from its customary laws.[12]

The village regulations are executed on the basis of village autonomy and through the village council, and there are few crimes in the village. When I was in Upper Langde, I noticed a surveillance camera installed on the first floor of my host family's house. The head of my host family explained to me, "Our village is very safe, no stealing and no need to lock doors. The camera is to watch out for tourists."

Self-governed tourism in Upper Langde (1980s–2015)[13]

Upper Langde is designated as the "Home of Chinese Folk Art" by the Ministry of Culture, and as one of the "Hundred National Museums with Special Characteristics" by the National Bureau of Cultural Relics. Its historic architectural complex of village residences is listed as an important heritage site under state protection by the State Council (Wu, 2005). Upper Langde's tourism started in the late 1980s. With the principle that "as every villager contributed to the construction and preservation of the village, they shall all benefit from tourism" (Chen et al., 2013; Luo, 2012), Upper Langde adopted a community-based tourism model, known as its tourism gōngfēn system.[14] Despite the inspiration from the original gōngfēn system, Upper Langde's version has been developed as an inclusive bottom-up tourism model that emphasizes a cooperative approach to tourism activities and the fair distribution of its associated benefits. It features shared resources, equal opportunity, effort-based distribution, and caring for the vulnerable. As a survival strategy from the imputed isolation in the past, solidarity is both the foundation and the goal of its gōngfēn system.

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[11] It is composed of nine sections, including public security, cultural relics protection, tourist reception, sanitation, fire safety, forests, crops, domestic animals, and aquatic resources. Punishment for an offense is generally in the form of fines, ranging between 5 to 1,000 yuan, with one exception: whoever cuts down old forest trees is punished by hosting a community feast, with the offering of one jin (one jin is half of kilogram) of rice, pork, and rice liquor per villager. Offering for a community feast as a punishment for one's misconduct was a common practice among local Miao villages (Wen, 2010; Xu, 2005).

[12] In addition, both in its opening paragraph and the section of cultural relics protection, it states that the national Cultural Relics Protection Law and relevant laws are used as references, adapted to Upper Langde's situation.

[13] Some of the ethnographic data (the introduction of Upper Langde's gōngfēn system and its second development) presented in this article unavoidably overlaps with those in Feng and Li (2020). However, they are largely rewritten and are being examined under completely different theoretical framework in this article.

[14] Other villages in the same region (e.g., Upper Jidao) adopted similar work-point system in their tourism development (Chio, 2014).

Its gōngfēn system

Village self-governance contributes to community integration and participation and local control over tourism development (Xu et al., 2017). The Upper Langde Tourism Reception Team (ULTRT) has managed Upper Langde's tourism since its inception in late 1980s. Comprising fourteen villagers, the ULTRT was responsible for organizing tourism activities within the village and ensuring the fair distribution of related benefits to all villagers who participated.

Upper Langde's main tourism income came from performing for tour groups. Upon the arrival of a tour group, the village performed an elaborate Miao-style welcoming ceremony at the village entrance, which was followed by a show featuring their traditional music and dance. The village charged the tour group for the performances, with prices ranging from 800 yuan to a few thousand yuan, depending on the size of the tour group.

Twenty-five percent of the show income was reserved for the village collective fund. The rest was distributed every month among those who participated, with different roles and degrees of involvement being assigned corresponding gōngfēn, which determines the individual's share (cf. Li, 2008; Li, 2014). Over the years, Upper Langde's gōngfēn system gradually evolved, with specific rules developed and fine-tuned regarding how to earn gōngfēn, for which hundreds of gōngfēn cards were made for distribution.[15]

Besides the show income, the villagers had the opportunity to make money from tourists independently. With no outside investors or merchants, what tourists spent on meals, lodging, and handicrafts went directly into the pockets of the corresponding villagers. In 2006, its tourism income reached 1,260,000 yuan, which accounted for forty percent of the village's income (Yu, 2008). In 2007, its per capita income was 2,756 yuan, which was 1,024 yuan and 828 yuan more than that of the township level and the county level, respectively (Xu et al., 2017). Even though its overall tourism income was on a small scale, every penny stayed within the village. The villagers took charge of tourism decision-making and perceived that everyone benefited from a stable and reliable tourism income (Li, 2008).

Resistance to the county government

Upper Langde ran the village tourism based on its gōngfēn system and was resistant to the involvement of outsiders, including the county government. The county government

[15] See Feng and Li (2020) for a detailed description on how the gōngfēn cards were distributed to the villagers during the welcoming ceremony and the show and how individual's gōngfēn were recorded immediately after the show.

was eager to accelerate Upper Langde's tourism to drive additional revenues. Upper Langde had kept the county government at arm's length. During his stay in Upper Langde in the 1990s, Oakes (1998) observed instances of resistance among villagers to the state's effort to take control of the village's tourism development. The administrative system seemed to have fallen short of full incorporation of Upper Langde, permitting a degree of autonomy.

Hu[16] was the Deputy Director of the Qiandongnan Tourism and Development Committee. Before his promotion to this position in 2017, he had worked at the town government of Langde. During an interview dinner in Kaili, Hu referred to the Upper Langde villagers as *niú bī* [cocky]. He recalled that when he and his colleagues at the town government took upper-level officials to visit Upper Langde, they had to help the villagers to do cleaning in preparation for the visit. According to Hu, Upper Langde once charged the officials from the provincial tourism bureau for watching the show, saying that even the officials from the central government had paid for it. Upper Langde appeared to be not readily at the service of the state.

Upper Langde's being niú bī was also known to Hui, an official of the Leishan Tourism and Development Committee. I met Hui at his office in Leishan for an interview. According to Hui, the county government was once hosting several provincial officials. They planned to take them to Upper Langde for a tour and arranged the County Music and Dance Troupe to perform there. However, the villagers wanted to perform themselves. Instead of saying "no," they indicated that they would not conduct their traditional welcome ceremony at the village entrance upon the arrival of guests unless they were to perform the show. Hui said, "Upper Langde was not cooperative. There was nothing the county government could do."

A former village accountant remembered that around 2007 the county government offered to re-develop Upper Langde's tourism. The village committee tried to persuade the villagers to accept the proposal but failed to persuade them all, especially the village elders. According to the Village Head Fu, the village elders contacted the National Cultural Heritage Administration in Beijing for support, since Upper Langde is an important heritage site under state protection. The National Cultural Heritage Administration then sent an official memo to the county government to disapprove the (commercial) development of Upper Langde.

[16] All people's names are pseudonyms.

Upper Langde's tourism peaked in 2008 when it was selected as a site for relaying the Olympic torch. However, its tourists significantly declined in 2010. Due to Upper Langde's resistance, the county government temporarily adjusted its development priorities from Upper Langde to Xijiang around 2008, and its investments diverted large numbers of tourists to Xijiang. With the decrease of visitors, Upper Langde was no longer niú bī, as observed by Hu. "People's mind change," Hu said to me, "and they [the Upper Langde' villagers] themselves want it [the government involvement] now." Hu believed that this was the main reason for the transformation of Upper Langde's self-governed tourism to the county-government-directed second development.

County-government-directed tourism "second development" (2015–present)

Despite the villagers' resistance, the county government persisted in its efforts to take a leading role in Upper Langde's tourism development, and eventually succeeded, with the launch of the so-called *second development* of Langde's tourism. This was managed by the Xijiang Culture and Tourism Development Company (XCTDC), a state-owned enterprise under the supervision of the county government, which is the developer of Xijiang's tourism. This project centers on Upper Langde, with Lower Langde playing a supporting role.

To proceed with the second development, in 2015 the XCTDC established the Langde Culture Tourism Company (LCTC) as one of its branch companies, headquartered right outside of Lower Langde. The LCTC initiated the collection of admission fees of 60 yuan at the entrance to Upper Langde on May 1, 2017 (Figure 4).

The LCTC and Upper Langde signed a contract in 2015. The contract stipulated that Upper Langde shall receive from the LCTC: 1) a 100,000-yuan monthly performance fee for two shows per day, starting in October 2016; 2) 18% of the entrance ticket sales, starting in 2022; 3) monthly compensation for the 14 villagers who made up the village tourism management team, in the amount of 900 yuan or 600 yuan. According to the Deputy Manager of the LCTC in March 2018, the LCTC had invested 200 million yuan in tourist facility construction[17] and as payments to the village, especially funds for land requisitions.[18]

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[17] The LCTC constructed an abundance of tourism facilities in Langde, including an "intangible cultural heritage street" (essentially a shopping strip) and a museum in Lower Langde, a boardwalk between Lower and Upper Langde along the river, and two parking lots and four tourist restrooms in Upper Langde. See Feng and Li (2020) for the list of the changes brought by the county-government-directed second development.

[18] According to China's land tenure system, peasant households have contractual use rights, but no ownership rights, to land.

Figure 4

The office building of the Langde Culture Tourism Company is located next to the entrance ticket checkpoint to Upper Langde Village (photo by author, 2018)

Detaching from land

Jian had been a village cadre in Upper Langde from 2001 to 2015. When I interviewed Jian in 2018, he was working for the LCTC as an entrance checkpoint security guard. Jian remembered that the county government was interested in requisitioning the village land back in 2007 but failed to persuade the villagers, who were then content with their self-governed tourism. The opportunity did not arrive until a flood destroyed much of the village farmland in 2015, the same year the LCTC was established.

In order to push forward Upper Langde's tourism second development, the first and foremost project of the LCTC was to requisition land, as much as they could, even before they knew what the exact uses would be. As the village head Fu said to me, "They [the LCTC] may not know the specific use of the lands that are being requisitioned, but with land in hand, they can develop however they want." According to Jian, the large-scale land requisitioning in Upper Langde was due to the lesson that the county government learned from developing Xijiang's tourism. In Xijiang, because the county government did not requisition as much land at the beginning, the villagers later built houses wherever they had the land, making it impossible for the county government to carry out its central planning.

As Polanyi (2001, p.187) argues:

> The economic function is but one of many vital functions of land. It invests man's life with stability; it is the site of his habitation; it is a condition of his physical safety; it is the landscape and the seasons.

In Upper Langde, people valued land. Even if there was a labor shortage, households rarely rented their land out. Instead, they practiced reciprocity in labor, or they hired day laborers. The Deputy Head of Langde Town said to me, "It was not easy to requisition land from the villagers. The way of life here is to grow rice and vegetables to feed oneself. It's a habit." Jian also said, "We all care very much about our land."

The LCTC relied on the village cadres to do the persuasion. Jian was at the end of his term as the village party secretary when the LCTC started land requisitioning. Jian recalled:

> At that time, all I did every month was to persuade the villagers. I called for meetings among those who were over 50 years old to gather what they were thinking so that I could work on changing their minds. I also talked to the young villagers. It was easier to convince the young, who likely had been migrant workers and thus open-minded.

He compared Upper Langde's tourist numbers with Xijiang's to his fellow villagers and said, "To gain something [more tourists and tourism income], we must give up something [land]." According to Jian, about 200 mu (out of a total of 283.4 mu) land was requisitioned by the spring of 2018.

Among the few Upper Langde households who did not sign the land contract was Jun. In the early 1980s he went to Leishan as a wage laborer, and later settled down in Guiyang and ran a small carpentry business in a rental house. Jun said, "It only takes minutes to destroy one mu of land; it takes three years for one person to build one mu of land." He refused to let his land go at the price of 30,800 yuan per mu offered by the LCTC. He said, "Tourism is good only when it does not destroy. We must protect our land. The elders taught us to value the land, not money." Jun hired laborers to farm on his land back in the village over the years. He said to me:

> One *jin* of rice is worth 3 yuan, for which I have to invest 10 yuan to produce. But the value is different. Nowadays, I can make several hundred thousand yuan a year doing carpentry work, enough to buy rice to feed my family for the rest of our lives. But the value is different.

Leadership shifting from the elders to the young

According to Hu, the inception of Upper Langde's tourism in the late 1980s should be mainly attributed to Tao, who was the village party secretary from 1963 to 2003. For instance, as symbols of the Miao culture, playing the bronze drum and *lúshēng*—a traditional instrument of reed-organ pipes—were regulated by customary law.[19] It was Tao who led the Upper Langde's elders to talk the villagers into breaking the cultural taboo of playing both to entertain tourists.

During my stay in Upper Langde, Tao, in his 80s, was among the village elderly who performed *gāo gān lúshēng* (high-piped lúshēng) in the show. I interviewed Tao at his house one afternoon after the show. Tao asked me how much I paid to enter the village and told me that he was against the LCTC's entrance fee policy. Tao played a central role in shaping Upper Langde's self-governed tourism and was well respected. He took me to look at the pictures hanging on the living room wall. The pictures were of him with different high-ranked central government officials, including the then Prime Minister Zhu Rongji. These pictures were taken when they were meeting Tao during their visits to Upper Langde.

Due to the county-government-directed second development, the village elders, including Tao, lost their influence over tourism development. Tao's role had changed from being a village leader for decades to a lúshēng performer. During my interview with Jun in Guiyang, as mentioned earlier, he told me that he was displeased that it was young people who were taking charge in Upper Langde. Jun's wife said, "The elders did not agree to the LCTC's entrance fee policy. But the village affairs were in the hands of the young people who agreed." Until recently, the village cadres were more senior villagers, including Tao and Jian. The Deputy Head of Langde Town remarked that the village cadres and town government officials (including him) were all young, many of whom were recent college graduates.

In the case of another Miao village in Guizhou, a split emerged within the village clan, as each household focused more on its own livelihood. The young villagers no longer took their elders' words into their hearts, and the elders were losing their authority in village governance (Yang, 2005). A similar situation occurred in Upper Langde. During my visit in 2018, Shaman Chen, in his 50s, was the only senior member of the village tourism management team; when I returned in 2019, he was no longer a part of it. I observed a similar divide among the Upper Langde villagers, as documented by Xu et al.

[19] The bronze drum was allowed to be played only for the Miao New Year and the Guzhang Festival (once every twelve years), and lúshēng was not permitted to be played before the harvest season.

(2017), in their attitudes towards the second development: while the older expressed deep concerns, the younger welcomed it with fervent hope.

Zhi, in his 20s, was the nephew of the head of my host family. After graduating from a college in Yunnan majoring in fine arts, Zhi returned to the village to seek opportunities in tourism. When I met him, he just completed designing and constructing a bronze buffalo sculpture in the village, commissioned by the LCTC. One day when the Deputy Manager of the LCTC visited the village to supervise a project, I invited him to have lunch with me at my host family. After he left, Zhi approached me and talked to me about his ideas for several tourism projects that he was eager to seek for the LCTC's support, assuming my connections with the LCTC.

In his early 30s, Fu took the position as the village head after he graduated from a local college. Fu was staying with his parents in the village, while his wife and their four-year-old daughter were living in a rental apartment in Kaili where she ran a small retail clothing shop. "My wife made more money than I do," Fu said to me, "If there were no tourism, I would not have stayed in the village."

Despite his distrust in the government and the LCTC,[20] Fu welcomed the "second development." In his opinion, the former village leadership was incompetent, which fettered Upper Langde's tourism growth. He thought it was unnecessary to listen to the village elders or other elderly. "As long as the young people support us [the village cadres], we have nothing to worry about," Fu said to me, "We don't have village elders anymore. Shaman Chen may be counted as one, as the villagers fear his ability to cast spells. I am not afraid. It is all superstition." Nevertheless, the village council had Shaman Chen do a Dǎ Kǒushé ritual at the village committee office building, to reduce disputes at the village meetings. This ritual was commonly practiced for the village households that were quarrelsome.

[20] Fu's distrust of the government came from his own experience. The county government once requisitioned part of his family land and promised him another piece of land. Little did he know the land promised to him had already been given to another villager. When his house was lost to an accidental fire in 2008, he asked for the government for land to build a new residence and was told that he should talk to the official who promised him the land. But that official was appointed elsewhere long ago. I once attended the meeting arranged and hosted by the LCTC for the Langde village cadres to meet with and learn from the Xijiang village cadres. At the meeting, in response to the LCTC's request for the Upper Langde village cadres to support their work, Fu said to the Deputy Manager of the LCTC, "What the government promised to the villagers has to be fulfilled. Otherwise, it is hard for us, the village committee, to do our job."

Discussion

Since late 1980s, Upper Langde had adopted the gōngfēn system to run its self-governed tourism, while keeping the local government at arm's length. Content with its self-governed tourism, Upper Langde often turned its back to the government's requests and was known among local government officials for its "uncooperativeness." Its "uncooperativeness" might be read as a strategic positioning to keep at bay the threat of losing its control over tourism to the state.

Similar to other Zomian people, many elements of the Miao in Upper Langde, including their physical dispersal, subsistence routines, and social organization, might have been "purposefully crafted both to thwart incorporation into nearby states and to minimize the likelihood that state-like concentration of power will rise among them" (Scott, 2009, p. 8). Table 1 summarizes the changing situations regarding their physical dispersal, subsistence routines, and social organization, which have facilitated Upper Langde's transition in tourism development from being self-governing to state-governed.

Table 1

The changing situations regarding physical dispersal, subsistence routines, and social organization, all of which have facilitated Upper Langde's tourism transition from being self-governing to state-governed.

Aspect	Changing situation	
	From	To
Physical dispersal (friction of distance)	A "topographical maze that for centuries proved resilient against the encroachment of imperial Chinese culture." (Oakes, 1998, p. 8)	Improvements in infrastructure (e.g., transportation and telecommunication), which are expedited by tourism development, have made avoiding the state geographically less viable.
Subsistence routines	Sedentary economic activity such as wet-rice farming was once "at the center of Chinese statecraft for millennia" (Scott, 2009, p. 340)	In the process of paving the way for development projects in remote regions, local governments smash up social structures to extract the element of labor from them, for which land requisitioning is a common strategy, as land is "tied up with the organizations of kinship, neighborhood, craft, and creed" (Polanyi, 2001, p. 187).
Social organization	The role of the elders is a form of internal governance built on strong social capital (Liu and Edmunds, 2003, pp. 48–49)	The village leadership transferring from the elders to the young; "the strength of weak ties" (Granovetter 1973, 1985).

As Stringham and Miles (2012) point out that during the rapid change of today's world, "even the Zomian peoples find themselves increasingly losing out to statecraft." Regarding physical dispersal, higher altitude in hilly terrain with dense vegetation created a "friction of distance" that increased the cost of statecraft relative to the flatter lowlands (Scott, 2009). Characterized as an "internal colony" (Spencer, 1940; Goodman, 1983),

Guizhou is a "topographical maze that for centuries proved resilient against the encroachment of imperial Chinese culture" (Oakes, 1998, p. 8). However, improvements in infrastructure (e.g., transportation and telecommunication), especially when they are expedited by tourism development, have made avoiding the state geographically less viable.

Regarding subsistence routines, if encouraging sedentary economic activity such as wet-rice farming was once "at the center of Chinese statecraft for millennia" (Scott, 2009, p. 340) in imperial China and China's recent past, I argue that in today's China, it has been replaced by the practice of land requisition. In the process of paving the way for development projects in remote regions, local governments smash up social structures to extract the element of labor from them, for which land requisitioning is a common strategy, as land is "tied up with the organizations of kinship, neighborhood, craft, and creed" (Polanyi, 2001, p. 187).

Seizing the opportunity of the flood that destroyed much of Upper Langde's farmland, the county government/LCTC pushed forward the large-scale land requisition, which was crucial for Upper Langde's transformation from self-governed tourism to the county-government-directed tourism second development. The value of land does not merely lie in its economic function, but—as Jun repeatedly stated—the value is different. Of equal importance, land is the foundation of traditional village life. Wen and Su (2017) argue that the theory of social embeddedness (Polanyi, 2001) explains the reasons that the individuals embedded in local social networks pay more attention to long-standing relationships than economic profit. Once uprooted from their land, the sense of community (cohesiveness, collaboration, and trust) tends to be dissolved, and economic profit may take priority at the cost of justice, fairness, and solidarity.

The villagers used to follow their Miao elders and were more accepting of their decisions than those of the government. The role of the elders was a form of internal governance built on strong social capital (Liu & Edmunds, 2003).[21] Under the leadership of Tao and other village elders, Upper Langde's gōngfēn system harnessed the existing resources of social capital within the community, which gave it a greater level of support. After being the core of the village leadership for four decades, Tao's involvement in village affairs became limited to performing lúshēng to tourists in the village show. His influence appeared merely a matter in the past, as captured in the moments of those old pictures on the "wall of fame" in his living room. As the only shaman in the village,

[21] Social capital refers to the sum total of people's involvement in community life (Putnam, 2001).

Shaman Chen continued to officiate ceremonies, no longer serving on the village tourism management team.

Fu's attitude towards the village elders represented that of his fellow young villagers, who were more willing to cooperate with the LCTC and county government. While complaining that his wife made more money than him, Fu nevertheless chose to stay in the village and took the position as the village head. He was ambitious and eager to take advantage of government support to accelerate Upper Langde's tourism. Despite the distrust, he was longing for a just state to deliver the economic fruits of Upper Langde's tourism second development.

The transfer of the village leadership from the elders to the young seems unavoidable. It was increasingly important for the village cadres to be computer literate. On one hand, the local government routinely requests reports from them, and tasks often need to be completed through online platforms; on the other hand, computers, and the internet connect one to the outside world for novel information; such information strengthens one's competitiveness in the tourism market. Novel information flows to individuals more through weak than strong ties, which is what Granovetter (1973, 1985) calls the strength of weak ties. The weak ties might be better sources when ones need to go beyond what their own groups know.

In their analysis of the development of small tourism enterprises in Pingan Village in Guangxi of China, Wen and Su (2017) apply the work of Granovetter (1990) and consider the strong ties as the familiarity and trust developed through living on the same territory for a long term, which is built on customs rather than jurisprudence (Fei, 2006). Moreover, they consider the weak ties as business cooperation between community members and outsiders (e.g., travel agencies, tour guides) for the sake of tourism operations which are lean and sporadic transactions (Uzzi, 1997).

In seeking an opportunity to benefit from its tourism second development, the young villagers in Upper Langde, such as Zhi, tried to connect with the LCTC, for strategic advantage, due to the strength of weak ties. Citing Ireson's (1996) notion of the village as a survival from the past where solidarity is closely associated with its isolation, High (2006) states that its solidarity is likely to be undermined if wider contexts impinge and that contacts outside the village erode cooperation. Similar to what High (2006) observed in the contemporary Lao village, today's Upper Langde is better seen as neither a primordial naturally solitary unit nor a state-engineered artifice but instead as a process and a social formation characterized by change and ambiguity.

Conclusion

This article documents the process of Upper Langde's tourism transition from self-governed to county-government-directed and explores the power dynamics between Upper Langde and the county government, with reference to local history. The local Miao's history is a history of migration (Wu, 1999; Cheung, 2003) due to forced displacement driving them into the hills rather than, as Scott (2009) argues, active avoidance in reaction to the state policies and practices. However, this is not to deny their agency in their engagement with the Chinese state from imperial expansion, throughout modern nation-building, to development projects in the 21st century.

As Cheung (2012) points out, Scott (2009) widens the discussion of the formation of civilization to include the other side of the examination of state-building—its active avoidance. Much of the Zomia have actively resisted incorporation into the states and their projects of nation-building to which it belonged, and it is "a resistance with deeper roots" (Scott, 2009, p. 19). Giving agency to those on the margins of the nation-state, this article contextualizes relevant analysis in Miao culture, and applies a historical perspective to explore the deeper roots of Upper Landge resistance to the local government's involvement in village tourism.

Egalitarianism, solidarity, and internal governance built upon decentralized social structure and customary laws had assisted Upper Langde in resisting the state, including the county government's attempts to take over Upper Langde's self-governed tourism. As Crossley et al. (2006, p. 5) point out, "state interference was seldom sufficient to override the momentum of the daily acts, material concerns, social intimacies, and manifestations of consciousness that all constitute 'culture'." After years of effort in vain, the county government recently succeeded in taking control of Upper Langde's tourism, relying on large-scale land requisition that paved the way for tourism-related development projects.

Randeria (2010) criticizes Scott's (2009) overestimation of the influence and effectiveness of the state and his underestimation of the internal dynamics of hill communities. Paying attention to the diverse personal interests among the Upper Langde villagers and the active agency of them seeking their own opportunities, this article takes equal consideration of the statecraft (e.g., land requisition) and the village internal dynamics (e.g, leadership shifting from the elders to the young), the combined effects of which led to Upper Langde's transformation from its self-governed to county-government-directed tourism.

Economic uncertainty brought by tourism constantly pushed the Upper Langde villagers to make strategic choices that redefined themselves, who might see an interest in

accommodating to the state authority. While being detached from their land and the village leadership shifting from the elders to the young, Upper Langde's avoidance of the state has been recently replaced by its desire, despite distrust, for a just state to deliver the economic fruits of tourism development. However, this is more a situational adoption of the development paradigm of the state than a subjective identification with the state-nation.

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Povzetek

Članek razsvetljuje odtenke interakcije med etničnimi manjšinami na jugozahodu Kitajske in državo, pri čemer se osredotoča na razvoj turizma. S pomočjo etnografske študije primera v vasi Upper Langde Miao poskušamo dokumentirati preobrazbo od samoupravljanega turizma vasi, do turizma, usmerjenega s strani občine, ter raziskuje pod kakšnimi pogoji izgubi proti državni politiki. Pojasnjuje vidno radikalne spremembe od vaškega izogibanja državi do nedavnega hrepenenja vaščanov, kljub nezaupanju, po pošteni državi, ki zagotavlja gospodarske koristi. Gre bolj za situacijsko sprejemanje razvojnega paradigme države kot za subjektivno identifikacijo z državo-nacijo.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: samoupravljanje vasi, državna politika, razvoj turizma, Miao, kitajska država

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