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Reconciling tourism, cultural change and empowerment in a Tibetan host community

Kelly Dombroski



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Contents

Contents	ii
Abstract	iii
Biographical Note	iv
The Case Study	1
Using indigenous measurements	2
Wellbeing in Jiuzhaigou	3
Livelihoods	3
Choice	4
Cultural and family identity	5
The Hanification of Ngah Village?	5
Wrestling with reconciliation	6
Choice as part of cultural identity	7
The choices made	8
Lessons for culture change and empowerment	9
References	11

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Abstract

Tourism to Tibetan regions has become increasingly popular amongst Westerners in the last few decades, as interest in Tibetan culture and religion has grown. This interest in things Tibetan has combined with the literature on development and tourism in indigenous communities to result in a conceptualisation of Tibetan culture as a fragile cultural relic that must be preserved and protected from outside influences. However, the indigenous Tibetan communities of Western China's Jiuzhaigou National Nature Reserve have told a different story of their experiences with tourism and development. Mass tourism in Jiuzhaigou has in fact been harnessed for community development and cultural revitalisation through local women's communal businesses. Yet their development and empowerment has been to some extent bittersweet, as the women fear that their decision to use tourism revenue to offer their children choice through the Chinese education system may ultimately erode their traditional culture. The dilemma for the people of Jiuzhaigou is similar to that for many indigenous groups: how can a desire to preserve traditional culture be reconciled with a desire to empower the next generation?

Biographical Note

Kelly Dombroski is currently undertaking a PhD in Human Geography at the Australian National University, involving research among the Hui women of Qinghai province China.

Introduction

Tourism has long been critiqued as an imperialist and neo-colonialist force that systematically destroys culture by incorporating previously independent communities into the global capitalist system. The arrival of tourists is thought to mark the beginning of a cycle that involves commodifying and consuming culture until it is ultimately absorbed into the world system and subsequently rejected as an 'authentic' tourism destination.¹ Some enlightened travellers try to avoid this kind of cycle by insisting on small-scale authentic travel experiences that benefit communities and do not harm the environment – hence the arrival of ethical tourism and a new moral tourist who rejects mass tourism and attempts to find more ethical ways to travel the world and help the poor (Butcher 2003). Yet these discourses of tourism sometimes conceptualise indigenous communities as fragile cultural relics that need to be preserved and protected from the rest of the world, to be accessed only by the initiated few who have the cultural capital to understand and consume this experience in the proper light.

There are four important problems associated with this sort of conceptualisation. Firstly, the concept of 'community' as a unit of discussion can only really be applied to individual communities as delineated by their own members – hence it is not really a valid unit of discussion at the general level (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). Secondly, conceptualising tourism as a boom and bust cycle is not necessarily accurate in all situations of tourism, providing regulation of the tourism site and flow of tourists are both sufficient (Weaver 2000). Thirdly, it cannot be assumed that independent tourists have necessarily less impact on culture or the environment, since it is much easier to regulate and control the effects of mass tourists as a group (Dombroski forthcoming; Weaver 2001). The fourth and most important problem with the cultural preservation conceptualisation is that it is based on a moral discourse of fragility that fails to acknowledge the importance of individual communities' choice and agency.

This paper explores the tensions between agency and cultural change at the conjunction of tourism, development and empowerment in a small community of Tibetans in Western China.² Drawing on qualitative fieldwork conducted from March to June 2004, this paper shows how the situation in Jiuzhaigou demands that tourism and development researchers resist the temptation to reinvent pre-tourism Edens that never existed in fact (to rephrase Manzo 1995: 238). It shows that empowering a group of people is not the same as preserving them, and it argues that indigenous peoples themselves are entitled to determine the nature and extent of their interaction with the forces of tourism and development.

The Case Study

Ngah Village (pseudonym) is situated within the Jiuzhaigou (nine-village gully) Biosphere Reserve, which is located in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province, China. Jiuzhaigou is listed under the World Heritage, Man and Biosphere and Green Globe 21 programmes, as a site of natural and scenic significance, mostly due to its unusual karst-formed lakes and waterfalls. Jiuzhaigou is managed by a single-purpose government administration bureau with a staff of around 1000 (the Administration). The reserve receives more than one million tourists a year of mostly domestic origin,

who are day-only visitors, staying outside the reserve in privately owned hotels. The amount of tourists to the reserve has meant that, unlike the characteristically under-funded 'paper parks' common in China (Jim and Xu 2003), the Administration has the means both to manage the reserve effectively and to invest in the development of the 1000 indigenous Tibetans who reside inside the reserve.

Ngah Village is generally thought of as one of the least wealthy of the six remaining villages in the reserve, due to its mountainous location away from the main tourist areas, and the lack of *guanxi* or contacts on the part of the villagers themselves.³ However, the people of Ngah Village have in general responded positively to tourism in their area, and from the early 1980s have supplemented their farming with tourism businesses. The first tourism businesses involved horse and yak rides around a small forest area in the reserve, and the hiring out of Tibetan clothing to tourists for photographs. The women of Ngah Village were among the first to begin hiring clothing to tourists, and one woman claims to have invented the idea. They initially rented out their own clothes, but later found that the tourists preferred brighter clothing. In response they sewed cheaper versions of Tibetan celebration clothing from some unlikely but popular substitutes, replacing brightly coloured but expensive silk with pink-sequined polyester, and the traditional beaver or leopard fur with fake feather trims. They also redesigned their own clothing in response to an increased need to have clean, easy-to-wash clothing for wearing to tourism-based work (as opposed to farming), replacing heavy sheepskin robes with lighter cotton versions of the traditional Tibetan dress, sometimes with sleeveless summer versions. The new clothing reflects their higher status by incorporating thicker trims, previously reserved for celebration or wedding clothing.

During the 1980s and 1990s, most of the 350 members of Ngah Village moved to Sum Village which is closer to the tourist area, and had been constructed by people from Ngah Village and other upper-mountain villages for housing tourists in large Tibetan-style guesthouses as an extra income earner. However, since 2001 tourist overnight stays have been banned in the reserve, due to the extra pressure on the reserve environment. From this time, all residents in the reserve were compensated for the closing of guesthouses and the disallowing of yak and horse renting activities, regardless of their actual involvement in tourism ventures. In 2001, residents each received ¥3,000 per person; 2002, ¥5,000 per person; 2003, ¥7,000 per person in compensation.⁴ Farming within the reserve was also prohibited in 2001, when flooding along the Yangtze River caused the government to implement the 'Converting Farmland to Forest Project' in all catchment areas, beginning with those areas such as Jiuzhaigou where residents had other sources of income. Now the main income earners are the women, who continue to rent clothes to tourists, and who also run small businesses such as souvenir stalls. These women have managed to increase their incomes significantly over the last ten years, as tourist numbers have increased.

Using indigenous measurements

Although indigenous knowledges are promoted as valuable in academic literature, this is often technical knowledge and does not extend to indigenous epistemologies and understandings of well-being. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) point out that although researchers may use indigenous knowledge, the way they interpret indigenous knowledge is still through their own epistemology

or understanding of truth, rather than the theories of knowledge that the people themselves use. Obviously, as a researcher who is not indigenous to the Tibetan plateau, the author was able to interpret the research data according to a local epistemology, and is in some senses unable to escape a primarily Western cultural filter that affects the way this paper theorises and understands what is true. The author's own perceptions in the area of wellbeing, which, although not necessarily composed of Western, Modern economic ideas, are not indigenous to Jiuzhaigou either. In order to avoid writing these cultural perceptions on to the 'field data' as best as possible, the researcher spent most of the time in the field attempting to understand firstly the villagers' perceptions of wellbeing, and secondly, their analysis of the changes to their own wellbeing over the last twenty years since tourists first began visiting. This methodology was largely qualitative and reflexive, involving the use of open ended questions and focus group discussions on the concept of wellbeing, then questioning and discussing changes in wellbeing over time. If open-ended questions gained no response, participants were asked to rank a list of important factors in wellbeing (using factors mentioned by previous participants). The following outline of the local people's understanding of wellbeing is drawn from these discussions, although of course translated and interpreted using the closest terms in English. Likewise, there were varied answers between groups and individuals, meaning that the following presents a general overview of what was consistently ranked as important to the people of Ngah Village.

Wellbeing in Jiuzhaigou

All in all, tourism was seen to have resulted in a definite increase in well-being for the people of Ngah Village, according to their own measurements. In general, the villagers used three main indicators in judging wellbeing. Firstly, they emphasised the ability to earn a livelihood – considered possible through good health and the physical ability to get a job or work the land. Secondly, they discussed the amount of choice over one's future – especially in terms of the increased choices that education allows. Thirdly, their cultural and family identity was considered an important part of 'living the good life', or having wellbeing, particularly within the community of Ngah Village and the wider community of Jiuzhaigou Tibetans.

Livelihoods

Tourism has improved livelihoods through both increasing health and increasing access to income in three main ways. In terms of health, running water has been installed by the park Administration in each village, with standpipes in the courtyard of each household thus improving hygiene. Electricity generated by a water-race is provided at a reduced rate for local households, this has had the effect of better lighting for children doing homework and women being able to spend less time in poorly-ventilated kitchens cooking over wood-fire ranges as electricity is used for day-time and summer cooking (when the extra heat from the fire is not required for household heating). Electricity is likely to have positively affected family optical and respiratory health. Housing improvements made possible through increased household incomes has meant that families are protected from the cold and elements more consistently, and do not share residential space with animals (which has led to serious problems with hydatids in other parts of Tibet and Tibetan China).

In terms of income, there is an increased range of employment opportunities, all of which give a much higher rate of benefits for each hour of work than farming ever did. Job options include those outlined above such as clothes-renting and small souvenir businesses, along with 'environmental protection' (a euphemism for rubbish collection and toilet supervision), bus driving, tour guiding and various administrative positions. Secondly, each household has access to shares in a purpose-built restaurant facility that caters to some 4000 tourists per day (49 percent belongs to locals, 51 percent to the state). Thirdly, each individual, regardless of age or involvement in the pre-2001 guest-house business receives annual compensation. A County official estimated that the average income of a person in Nanping County, in which Jiuzhaigou is situated, is ¥1,200 per annum, whereas the average income of a person within the Jiuzhaigou national reserve is ¥18,000 per annum.

Choice

The people of Ngah Village repeatedly used a concept which the researcher has called "choice" in explaining the changes over the last twenty years. Giving the younger generation the choices the elders never had was a theme that was returned to constantly in discussions of wellbeing, no matter which of the three main generations the participant belonged to: those who grew up in pre-tourism Jiuzhaigou, those who grew up in the period of tourism development, and those who have lived their whole lives with mass tourism. The people of Ngah Village see that tourism has definitely led to increased choice over their lives, especially in terms of career. The discourse of choice was present in all discussions concerning education, which was now attainable due to the increased income from tourism. Locals can afford to send their children away to secondary school and even polytechnic and university; it is thought that the higher the education given to the next generation, the greater the range of options that generation has. Children were generally seen to have a much greater range of opportunities available to them as compared to both the previous generation and their classmates from other neighbouring towns and villages. The current generation of adults had little to no education. Many of them were unable to read and write Tibetan or Mandarin Chinese, and some could not speak Mandarin. This severely limited their opportunities for outside employment, since the dialect spoken in Jiuzhaigou is limited to the immediate area (not more than a 20 kilometre radius from the reserve entrance) and most cannot speak the more widely recognised Tibetan dialects. This meant that their lives were restricted to the hard life of mountain terraced farming, and more recently, small businesses within the area. The women were especially pleased that their children were able to attend primary and secondary school, and foresaw much greater choice in the lives of their children than they themselves were privilege to. These days there are young people training in such varied areas as tourism, management, sports coordination, teaching (both primary and secondary), forestry and the performing arts – all made possible through the increased incomes brought about through tourism.

Locals with higher education levels could access administrative positions, such as the manager of the Residents' Management Office, who was the first Ngah Village resident to receive a university education. Other people from within the reserve had gone on to be Japanese-Chinese translators, school teachers and businessmen and women in Sichuan and beyond. This has the effect of

increasing local control over the administrative mechanisms of the reserve, an indirect form of local empowerment (as discussed by Dombroski, forthcoming).

Cultural and family identity

Tourism was thought by locals to have allowed the revival of their traditional culture in a way that is somewhat typical in post-Mao China (for example, see Oakes' 1993 outline of tourism in Miao regions). Because of strong anti-traditional sentiment during the Cultural Revolution, many minority peoples came under attack for their 'backward' ways. Religious minorities especially faced persecution. In Jiuzhaigou, the traditional Bon temple was burnt down, and one whole village destroyed. Some wealthier people and monks were killed as well. This dampened the expression of traditional culture, both religious and non-religious. Prior to that, the very existence of the local culture was endangered during the great famine of 1958-1961, where around 100 people in Ngah Village died – almost half of the population at that time. Some consider that this disaster was due to the people not appeasing Chairman Mao, who is considered by a few of the elderly residents something of a god or powerful lama due to his perceived ability to control the environment.

The late 1970s saw the end of the Cultural Revolution, and the handover of power to Deng Xiaoping along with the rapid rise in tourism both domestic and international from 1978. Tourist numbers rose in Jiuzhaigou from this time, with people's increasing incomes contributing to increasing revitalisation of their culture. Prayer flags were put up for every appropriate occasion, the temple was rebuilt, people repainted their houses in traditional Tibetan style, expanding and rebuilding them to accommodate interested tourists. Bonfire dances began in the evenings, both for tourists and their own entertainment. People purchased fabric made traditional robes, complete with fur trimmings previously reserved for the very wealthy. Tourists, surprisingly enough for the locals, took an interest in their culture, their clothing and their customs. One local man and his dance and song troupe became famous all over China through their famous song *Jiu Zhai Zhi Zi* serenading the beauty of Jiuzhaigou, as one of the earlier and most popular examples of modern Tibetan pop music (a fusion of Tibetan-style singing with Tibetan, Western and Chinese instruments).

In general, the villagers see tourism as having led to the preservation and even revitalisation of the culture of the local Tibetans in Jiuzhaigou. Although tourism to Jiuzhaigou is not primarily cultural tourism, the people's cultural identity as Tibetans was strengthened through the economic, social and psychological empowerment of the people. Yet despite the apparent cultural revitalisation of the area, when later discussions questioned the women about the biggest changes they had experienced since tourism began to the area, the most common answer was "All our children have become Han".

The Hanification of Ngah Village?

And this is where the dilemma lies for the people of Ngah Village. The education of the young people is a continuing source of pride for the older generation. They have pride that they are able to afford to give their children and grandchildren better opportunities than they themselves had – the opportunity to do something other than the back-breaking farming work of their parents and grandparents.

But this blessing has come with a somewhat unexpected curse: the children have 'become like Han', the majority people group of China to whom we are mostly referring to when we talk of 'the Chinese'. Despite a revitalisation of cultural expression in the older generations, there were several aspects of 'Hanification' they noted in the younger generation.

Firstly, the Hanification shows in many outward things. They dress in 'Han' clothing (basically Western clothing). They listen to Han music. They use cellphones, cut and dye their hair and idolise their favourite Han television stars. They love karaoke and video games, chatting on the internet and going to discos. They speak Mandarin fluently (or at least the regional version of Mandarin), and most of them are bilingual. Secondly, the women claim, there has also been a change in a more inward way. Their thinking is considered different, they have a totally different understanding of life compared with their parents' generation. The women interviewed couldn't expand on this significantly, but did emphasise that this generation was quite different from their own. They also indicated that this was not exactly directly related to tourism, since their children have very little contact with tourists. When in the reserve, they mostly reside in their own village where tourists do not often come, and interactions with tourists are generally only present during the short school holidays when students help out in their parents' businesses. The reason for change, it is thought, is that they are receiving increased education. Their education is changing the way they think, making them more Han, less Tibetan. It is introducing them to new technologies and styles, and leading them away from their traditional lifestyles.

But this is the education that the parents have strived to give their children – in order to give them increased opportunities in life. This is the education that has been funded by the same force of tourism that seems to have revitalised cultural pride in the general population. The people of Jiuzhaigou, and Ngah Village particularly, consider education to be necessary for increasing their ability to make choices about their future – for empowerment, and for wellbeing.

On the one hand, choice is considered an important part of wellbeing according to the Ngah Village understanding of the concept; and increased choice for the young people is to come about through increased education. On the other hand, it seems that education may be negating another important aspect of the young people's wellbeing – cultural identity. Tourism is leading to increased expression of culture, and increased choice and opportunity, but at the exact same time is indirectly endangering the cultural identity of the very people who are meant to maintain this culture in the future. Can these two differing forces be reconciled?

Wrestling with reconciliation

There is no short and easy answer to this dilemma, but its worth wrestling with if the tourism-based development of Western China is to continue. Many people would use this example to show why tourism is evil, why 'development stinks' (Esteva 1987: 135) – why we should try to protect minority cultures from the intrusion of dominant cultures through tourism in any way possible. The romanticisation of traditional cultures in developing countries has led to the belief that:

...deprivation is not so bad; that their [the outsider's] prosperity is not based on it; that the poorer people are used to it and like life that way... (Chambers 1983: 4).

But in discussing this issue with the people involved in Ngah Village, it is clear that strict preservation of traditional culture is not considered a valid solution. As Rangan notes:

It seems ironic that contemporary scholarly debates should clamour for a 'post-development' era just when voices from the margins – so celebrated in discourses of difference and alternative culture – are demanding their rights to greater access to a more generous idea of development (Rangan cited in Scheyvens 2002: 7).

Totally rejecting the idea of development is to accept current 'unfreedoms' (to use Sen's 1999 terminology) and inequalities on behalf of 'those in the margins' contrary to their own wishes and objectives. Friedmann also argues that the solution is not in the rejection of development, warning that:

...to bury development in the language of cultural relativism and endogeneity (that all development must germinate from within a particular culture) would be to silence all development discourse while giving free rein to the existing hegemonic system, which is fuelled by Western ideas and ideals and is wholly untroubled by questions of cultural relativism (Friedmann 1992: 12).

Johnston (2003), in the context of tourism, insists on the right of the community to decide whether it wants to have a tourism economy or not as an important part of self-determination. Empowerment in tourism development is not just about people receiving various benefits, but about their own ability to regulate how tourism development affects their lives. Claiming that tourism development is inappropriately changing culture, from the outside, is to in fact deny people's right to decide this for themselves, creating a morality of tourism development based on a belief in the fragility of indigenous cultures and their environments (Butcher 2003).

A degree of social, economic, psychological and political empowerment in Jiuzhaigou (using Scheyven's 1999 framework) means that it is the people themselves who get to wrestle with this dilemma, rather than outsiders arguing on their behalf. So what have the people of Ngah Village come up with themselves? How have they combated "cultural degradation", if at all? Have they curtailed choice for the sake of cultural preservation? Or have they sacrificed tradition for the sake of increased opportunities? For the most part it appears that people continue to accept the young people's choices even as they realise the dangers of the children becoming 'Hanified'.

Choice as part of cultural identity

The reason for the continuing practice of giving the young people of Ngah Village increased choice (despite some reservations and concerns) may lie in the fact that the valuing of choice is actually part of local cultural identity. Rather than visualising livelihoods, choice and cultural identity as equal parts of wellbeing, it would be more correct to argue that in fact all value-judgements are made within

cultural bounds. Hence, the values of wellbeing, choice and livelihoods are actually all enveloped within the realm of their worldview, *part* of local cultural identity. In some ways then, for the villagers to deny choice for their children would be in fact to deny a part of their cultural identity.

It is clear that choice is an integral part of the culture of the Jiuzhaigou Tibetans, when comparing them with Han Chinese. The government of China (and to an extent the Administration of the reserve) hold a very utilitarian view of development: that choice is irrelevant as long as people are kept happy through receiving enough benefits, they won't mind if they don't have freedom. In China, freedom and choice are normally considered less important than unity and stability (Meisner 1996). Within the typical Chinese family, children are expected to obey their elders unquestioningly, and parents will choose their child's education and career path with little input from the child concerned. It is the belief of many Han Chinese that unwanted cultural change can be slowed by insisting young people continue as tradition dictates.

The Tibetans in Jiuzhaigou however, place a high priority on choice. They did not see it as a valid option to overly restrict their children's choices in life. Children generally chose their own subjects at school, and parents insisted that they were going to let their children choose their own tertiary study or career paths, subject to finance. The persistence of the concept of choice came through in all interviews. The children were not forced to study or to stay in school, and likewise, were not forced to keep their Tibetan culture in the same way that their parents did. Hence, possibly the outward forms of Ngah Village's culture may be subject to change, increasingly so as technology begins to play a larger part in their lives. But technological, outward changes do not necessarily mean that inwardly a culture is dying. As can be seen when comparing the Jiuzhaigou peoples to the wider Han Chinese culture, to deny choice would be to deny the very thing that makes them psychologically and socially distinct as a group. In the end, cell-phone toting and label-bashing are outward things, things that do not define one as Tibetan or Han Chinese.

The choices made

The youth of Jiuzhaigou, empowered to make their own choices, can be compared favourably with other Tibetan young people from other areas in the province. Each Jiuzhaigou youth spoken to had an immense amount of confidence in their future, and a commitment to their community and their home region. Qie Jiu⁵, 18, loves teaching his high school friends traditional Tibetan dances – he is going to study to become a music and dance teacher. Cuo Mei, 19, makes plans for university with the ultimate aim of returning to Jiuzhaigou to work. Suo Lang, 24, has just graduated from a polytechnic forestry course, which he started after noting some problems with the survival of trees under the replanting scheme. Xi Wang, 19, rebukes a tourist who calls Tibetans dirty in fierce defence of his community. And then there's the role model provided by Qie Xiao, 29, of Chik village, who has recently become one of the reserve's vice directors, and works hard to ensure that the people of Jiuzhaigou receive jobs and benefits. These young people had the advantage over Tibetans from nearby Nanping and other regions around Sichuan not just economically, but socially and psychologically. They were proud of their origins, and did not deliberately try to hide their Tibetaness, as is common amongst many young Tibetans in Sichuan province.

The people of Ngah Village allow that choice is an integral part of their cultural identity, yet they have only really been able to express this or test this value until relatively recently through economic, social and psychological empowerment. Although dress, music and technology may change over time, the empowerment of the people of Ngah Village is something that will ensure the continuance of what they consider the important aspects of their culture. The increased education of the young people of Ngah Village has enabled them to increase their choices in way that does not necessarily reflect total Hanification. As Harrell and Ma rightly point out in the context of minority groups in China:

It is important to realise that when members of a minority group adopt education as a mobility strategy, they are not necessarily validating the education project of making them into compliant and subordinate citizens (Harrell and Ma 1999: 217).

The youth of Ngah Village and their families appear to be harnessing education to contribute to their own goal of empowerment and increased choice. This in turn can contribute to the sustainability of the benefits already received by the community, since it enables educated Ngah Village members to secure jobs in the reserve administration.

Lessons for culture change and empowerment

There is an important lesson that can be learned from this example of empowerment and cultural change. It is clear then that empowerment is not the same as cultural preservation, and that in some situations it may not even lead to cultural preservation. This is because culture has sometimes developed within situations of disempowerment. As seen in the Ngah Village example, choice is an important part of community culture that has only recently been given increased expression due to empowerment. The fact that until recently the culture and religion of the people of Ngah Village has been based around the yearly farming cycle was due to the fact that people had no choice but to farm rather mountainous and unproductive land – an ‘unfreedom’ in opportunity. The fact that it is now based around the schooling year and the ebb and flow of tourists is not exactly a loss, since it is a result of increased empowerment and choice through increased income and social benefits. Although the women of Ngah Village feared the Hanification of their children, they also assured me that if they could go back to their previous lives of farming, they most definitely would not.

Clearly, then, empowerment is going to look different in different situations, as depends on the people and circumstances involved. Some parts of culture and tradition are considered worth preserving, whereas others were never there by choice to start with. When looking at the case of the people of Ngah Village, the cultural preservationist view that rejects development and tourism for fear of the global homogenisation of ‘fragile’ cultures appears well-intentioned but overly simplistic and hypocritical in a changing world. Development, especially tourism development, is conceptualised as destructive with reference to concepts of cultural fragility, where:

...the preservation of existing social and economic patterns becomes something intrinsically desirable in the face of this fragility (Butcher, 2003: 56).

This idealisation of indigenous peoples, especially evident with the Western imagination of Tibetan culture, is something of a 'search for glimpses of "closeness" between nature and culture' where 'what we no longer have, or think we don't have, we seek elsewhere' (Robinson 1999: 381). The morphing of bio-conservation into cultural conservation may be more about acting out Western nostalgia than about seeking the best interests for those we 'gaze' upon. Although Ngah Village is just one community in a specific situation with its own issues and problems to deal with, it does serve to make a clear point: that empowerment and self-determination should outweigh the zooification version of cultural preservation.

Notes

¹ See Butler (1980) for a classic example of this kind of argument.

² This paper draws on observations and discussions during three months of fieldwork in Western China in 2004, as part of an MPhil thesis in development studies. Methodology involved participatory observation and semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups from Ngah Village (all village names are pseudonyms), the reserve administration, tourists and individual members from other villages. This paper is based on a presentation at the Development Studies Network of New Zealand's 2004 conference, Auckland, New Zealand.

³ According to the reserve administration. This was later confirmed by the people of Ngah Village, during a wealth ranking exercise.

⁴ Conversion rates are fixed RMB ¥8 to US \$1.

⁵ Pseudonyms used throughout.

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