Chapter 1
Cultural Heritage Politics in China: An Introduction

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Introduction

In 1966, the People's Republic of China embarked on a campaign to eradicate the "Four Olds"[1] and literally smash remnants of bourgeois, counter-revolutionary thought and substance in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The ensuing turmoil—what Sofield and Li (1998) term "cultural vandalism"—would lead to the destruction of innumerable sites of religious and historic significance throughout the country. Indeed, Sofield and Li lamented that the "scope of mass destruction nationwide was so grave that it may never be fully chronicled" (1998: 369).

Marking over 20 years of an entirely different approach to cultural heritage, China began celebrating "Cultural Heritage Day" in 2006. Instead of exhorting urban youth to burn books and damage relics, the new ideology officially encourages preservation of historically valuable sites and objects. At the same time, China's rapid economic transformation and real estate frenzies beginning in the 1990s have made urban demolition a regular sight nationwide and dam construction and other water projects routinely submerge spaces of historical significance. What accounts for these dramatic shifts in a relatively short time period,

[1] The Four Olds included old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas.

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and how can the contradictions of simultaneously destroying and protecting heritage be understood? Broadly speaking, how universally embraced is the current rhetoric about heritage preservation? And what, if anything, is particular about the role cultural heritage plays in this nation of nearly 1.35 billion people?

A consideration of cultural heritage politics in China implicates tourism, economic development, government ideology, national and ethnic imaginaries, social sustainability, and intraregional, interregional and international relationships within the framework of China's fast-paced modernization in the context of globalization and China's assertive political maneuvering on the world stage. In 2010 China convened an international conference to consider cultural heritage values, threats to cultural sites, and the involvement of local stakeholders in site protection (Yu et al. 2011). Prominent in the discussions was the recognition of a strong link between increased domestic tourism to places of cultural interest, economic development promoted by the national and regional governments, and increasing stress on heritage "resources." These are topics that have attracted significant attention from scholars in recent years (see, e.g., Harrison and Hitchcock 2005; Leask and Fyall 2006; Smith et al. 2010; Ruggles and Silverman 2009).

Analysis of recent Chinese leadership attitudes toward cultural tradition reveals an official intent to enlist it as "a constructive factor in unifying the Chinese nation… 'China's cultural tradition has become a strong bond for ethnic harmony and national unity'" (Ai 2011: 130) and "official support for cultural heritage has centred around the elements that are most directly aligned with CCP's priorities" (Ai 2011: 132). Cultural tradition is, thus, a political tool and is much about those in positions of power telling stories about the past and present. As such, it is not surprising that "[w]hat is considered 'heritage' is continually subject to interpretation and reinterpretation, claim and counter claim, and negotiation" (Harrison 2005: 7). Heritage in China generates a range of contradictions, such as praise for Tibetan civilization but not Tibetan society and promotion of the Imperial Palace of Beijing as a prime tourist destination while selectively representing the regimes that produced it.

In addition to its World Heritage List sites, thousands of other cultural sites in China are "key cultural relics protection units" (Shepherd 2009: 69, translated from the Chinese term). While this extensive patrimony may seem highly valued, contradictions between rhetoric, policy and practice raise questions about relative power in these valuations. Local governments and government officials in general profit from land sales that involve demolition of existing structures (for instance, in Shanghai, district governments may keep up to 85% of the revenue thus generated; see Hsing 2008: 68). Given these incentives, government officials in charge of heritage preservation may be less powerful than officials who authorize sales that require destroying built heritage.

Without the threat of censure from an intergovernmental organization, little inhibits destruction of wide swaths of historically significant buildings and even mountain landscapes. The obliteration of most of Beijing's *hutong*, or courtyard

lane residences, is but one highly visible example.[2] Even buildings designated as "immovable cultural relic" by the State Administration for Cultural Heritage's National Bureau of Cultural Relics have been demolished: the former courtyard residence of architects Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin disappeared in January 2012 after achieving official protected status in 2009 (Jacobs 2012; Kaiman 2012). This structure was one of hundreds whose land was deemed more valuable for development than for preservation. A Xinhua commentary titled "Ruin of Famed Person's Former Residence is Anguished Death of Culture" notes that approximately 44,000 formally designated landmarks have met with similar fates (Xinhua 2012a).

In sites that escape demolition, structural bifurcation exists between heritage offices and tourism offices that usually contract with private tourism companies to develop infrastructure and manage sites. This is a manifestation of the broader privatization that encompasses much of today's China (Ong and Zhang 2008). Conflicts between managing and protecting inevitably occur. And, as Peter Hessler observes, breaking rules can be an effective strategy. "In China, much of life involves skirting regulations, and one of the basic truths is that forgiveness comes easier than permission" (Hessler 2010: 19). In the case of delicate built environments,[3] disregard for regulations may hold long-term and irreparable consequences. Egregious damage to a cultural heritage site may engender public outrage, but violations rarely result in significant penalties beyond rebukes.

China, UNESCO, and Cultural Heritage Bureaucracy

Following a somewhat delayed engagement with the global cultural governance regime of UNESCO, China ratified the 1972 World Heritage Convention in 1985. The next year, China proposed its first five cultural sites for inscription, which was achieved in 1987. As a result of extensive diplomatic efforts—and the careful restoration and reconstruction of structures damaged in the late 1960s—China is now home to 43 UNESCO cultural, natural, and mixed World Heritage sites (http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/cn; Xinhua 2012b). Dozens more sites are on China's Tentative List (http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/cn) awaiting nomination to the World Heritage Committee, which determines the World Heritage List. No country in Asia boasts more World Heritage List sites. Only Italy (with 47) and Spain (with 44) have more sites. Fyall and Rakic note that presenting

[2] It is interesting to note that not only did China not seek to inscribe *hutong* on the World Heritage List, UNESCO was powerless when large numbers of these vernacular environments were razed preceding the 2008 Summer Olympics. By this point, the best located *hutong* have been gentrified and now are zones of expensive housing, restaurants, bars, and other tourism sector services, both for the Chinese and foreigners.

[3] For instance, the famous Ferrari car maker caused great consternation when one of its cars drove onto the 600 year-old Ming Dynasty city wall of Nanjing (see http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-18006291).

World Heritage nomination dossiers to UNESCO's World Heritage Centre has become an international race (2006: 173).

Today, China's World Heritage properties include important pre-imperial and imperial sites such as Late Shang Dynasty Yin Xu, the Forbidden City's imperial palace of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Temple of Heaven and the Summer Palace in Beijing, the Mausoleum of the first Qin emperor and the famous Terra Cotta Army near Xi'an, the Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples in Chengde, and the Great Wall. Major non-imperial cultural sites include Confucius' home town of Qufu and the classical gardens of Suzhou as well as towns with notable vernacular architecture—Xidi and Hongcun in southern Anhui, the *tulou* of Fujian, Kaiping's *diaolou* (multi-story defensive village-houses), Lijiang, and Pingyao. Religious sites are also on the World Heritage List including the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, the ancient building complex in the Wudang Mountains, Mount Emei and the Leshan Giant Buddha, Dazu Rock Carvings, Longmen and Yungang Grottoes and Tibet's Potala Palace (the latter being a highly contested site).

China's enthusiasm for the World Heritage List reveals three aspects of cultural policy. First, China has been employing a national strategy of cultural soft power on the global stage (see, e.g., Fiskesjö 2010; Kurlantzick 2008). Second, cultural heritage promotion serves goals of regional and local economic development. Third, China has set up a mechanism that brings "properties" of "Outstanding Universal Value" (UNESCO's terminology) into the national cultural treasury first through a comprehensive national system of heritage administration and then by placement in the international repository of wonders. UNESCO's system facilitates China's strategy, for it is states (states parties) that nominate sites to the World Heritage List. In China this has particular political resonance, especially when the sites in question are in minority areas. The Chinese state seeks to incorporate minority ethnic regions more firmly into China through its official heritage and tourism policies (Shepherd 2006: 244). The official recognition of non-Han sites reinforces China's doctrine of itself as a multi-cultural country whose traditions go back thousands of years in an unbroken history. For instance, Yalong is on China's Tentative List. It is identified as "the cradle of Tibetan culture. The extant relics, artifacts and ancient sites demonstrate the early civilization of the Tibetans, including their early religion, culture, arts and society" (http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/cn). As Shepherd observes, China is "harness[ing] Tibetan culture in service to a greater China" (2009: 255).

In the same way that western states have surveyed—literally and ideologically—their territories for the purpose of governance (e.g., Edney 1997; Scott 1998), so too China has attempted to inventory its copious immovable and movable heritage wealth. In the 1950s the new Chinese state undertook the first National Cultural Heritage Survey and Registration; the second one was conducted in the 1980s (Chen Shen and Hong Chen 2010: 73) and the third one was completed in 2011 (Lu Na 2011). Under the current system there is a State Administration of Cultural Heritage within which there is a hierarchy of National Major Heritage Protection Units, Provincial Major Heritage Protection Units and Municipal/County Major

Heritage Protection Units that evaluate heritage sites in a ladder of managerial responsibility (Chen Shen and Hong Chen 2010). Immovable heritage sites are divided into six categories: ancient cultural/archaelogical sites; ancient tombs; ancient architectural structures; cave temples; stone carvings and murals; important modern and contemporary historic sites and memorable buildings. Movable cultural relics[4] are categorized in four grades of descending value: Grade 1 (the most rare), Grade 2, Grade 3, and Ordinary (Chen Shen and Hong Chen 2010: 72–73).

China's tangible cultural heritage is under a hierarchical and centralized state administration. However, increasingly, local governments are seeking to "set their own standards and priorities for the best interests of the region," thereby engendering bureaucratic problems (Chen Shen and Hong Chen 2010: 75). The principal problem for China's tangible cultural heritage is economic development, whose effects can be devastating on the valued physical environment and problematical for the in situ social one.

China's eager participation in the international system is not restricted to the tangible. China is a signatory to UNESCO's 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (*ICHC*). A 2005 article observed that upon signing the *ICHC* China earmarked 46 million yuan (US$ 5.6 million) for a special project designed to preserve important cultural forms (Wang 2005). An additional 50 million yuan (US$ 6.1 million) was allocated for 2005–2010 to preserve Kunqu (traditional musical theater: see Wong 2009), one form already on UNESCO's ICH list.

Ethnicity and Heritage

Cultural heritage politics in China engages the practices of the 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities who, under the Chinese Constitution, are guaranteed the "freedom to preserve or change their own folkways and customs" (China 1999) as well as respect and protection of their religious beliefs. Chinese policy toward ethnic minorities involves different implementation of policies from one locality to the next and one province to the next. Overall, however, China's policy toward its ethnic peoples has been described as a domestic "civilizing project" with the state viewing its ethnic minorities as "in need of civilization" and "education," their ancient ways requiring "advancement" (Harrell 1995: 13). This governmental

[4] The word "relic" is semantically laden in English in a negative sense—something obsolete and out of time. Magnus Fiskesjö discusses how the term "relic" is used among Chinese antiquities collectors. He quotes a prominent Chinese historian saying "relics are the purveyors of culture" (2010: 231) and a private China Foundation for the Development of Folklore Culture using the word to express the sense of relics as the "concrete evidence of the long history and cultural traditions of a state and a people… the blood vessels that connect the [nation's] present with history [its past]" (2010: 231–232).

approach pushes ethnic minorities to become members of the modern nation, participate in the process of modernization, and cease being an obstacle to the state's goal of nation-building. China exercises governance from a Han-centric position that enforces Han dominance (Han are over 90% of China's population), including sponsorship of Han emigration into heavily minority regions and suppression of minority people/culture when deemed necessary by the state (McCarthy 2009). Thus, notwithstanding China's official ideology and legal framework of cultural pluralism, interdependency, common destiny, and shared interests (China 1999), the policies enabling these concepts frequently falter on the ground as dramatically seen in repeated Tibetan resistance (e.g., Shakya 2002, 2008), Uighur protests (Bovingdon 2010), and the complaints of other ethnic groups or *minzu* (roughly equivalent to "minority nationality"). While the Chinese state promotes minority distinctiveness, it is both vigilant and active in suppressing those who threaten the unity of the nation or its goals of modernization (McCarthy 2009).[5]

The tensions in Tibet and Xinjiang demonstrate that when threatened, the Chinese state responds by weakening protections for cultural heritage. A stark example comes from Kashgar's "Old Town" where nearly two-thirds of the homes, mostly occupied by Uighur residents, were demolished (Holdstock 2012; Wines 2009). Similar bulldozing of vernacular houses is occurring throughout China, often despite protests and other forms of resistance—some coming from cultural heritage promoters within the state bureaucracy—but the ethnic tensions in Kashgar make its situation especially vexing.

Given the circumstances, it should not surprise us that the Chinese government has not actively sought World Heritage site inscription anywhere in Qinghai or Xinjiang, despite their encompassing 24% of China's total area. There are only two World Heritage sites in all of western China: a Silk Road site in Gansu and the Potala Palace in Tibet, compared to the 41 that fill other parts of China. Certainly, any list will be partial and incomplete, and the very notion of a heritage list has rightfully come under challenge (Hafstein 2009). Nonetheless, the selective preservation, demolition and promotion of some cultural heritage, together with exclusions from heritage lists, show how very political the defining of heritage can be.

Regarding ICH, we note that official government policy currently promotes preservation of "traditional cultures" through state-organized folkways specialists and supports professionals from the fields of archaeology and architecture. These

[5] While qualitative classificatory distinctions between one ethnic group and another are not normally made by the Chinese system of *minzu* classification, it is important to note that significant differences exist between the "minority nationalities" present in Tibet and Xinjiang, and those in, for example, multi-ethnic zones of southwest China. Xinjiang and Tibet can be better understood as "nations within the nation," while zones where smaller ethnic groups like the Naxi and Wa live are minority areas, not nations within a broader nation. This distinction plays out in cultural heritage politics and the way the state interacts with those living in the respective regions. See McCarthy 2009 for further elaboration of this discussion.

specialists collect, edit, translate, publish, and exhibit non-monumental cultural heritage. Performances of "folkloric authenticity" are not just tolerated in China, they are actively encouraged by the state for the purpose of domestic and foreign tourism—tourism being a vehicle for the economic development sought by the government. China is so enthused about ICH that in 2007 the "International Festival of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" was jointly organized by UNESCO and the Chinese Government (along with other Chinese state-level festivals), and has been held biannually since. It is said to be the only thematic festival of ICH in the world. It has a permanent base in Chengdu. The grounds are divided into five districts: Intercontinental Friendship, Century Dances, Architecture Stories, Time Travel, and Folk Plays. The festival is intended to "promote the succession and development of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage and the international cultural exchanges and cooperation" (http://www.unima2012.org/Item/Show.asp?m=111&d=24). The promotional website (ibid) casts a Chinese perspective on this International Festival, speaking of its "diversified recreational projects" and characterizing the festival as a "leisure consumption resort" as well as "opening itself to the world as a cultural tourist attraction." It can be understood in the context of Asian tourism (see Winter et al. 2008).

Ethnic groups comprising China are praised in China's officially sanctioned heritage literature as "crystallization[s] of the wisdom" of these peoples (Luo Zhewen 2005). Thus, Minister of Culture Sun Jiazheng argued that ICH protection should be undertaken "in good faith instead of with the sole goal of fueling local tourism or enhancing publicity" (Wang 2005). But it is very difficult to separate "altruism" from "commercialism." The fundamental issue is how cultural heritage is managed, by whom, in whose interests, and with what impacts. For instance, vernacular architecture that has been described as "a warren of passageways and ancient mud-brick homes" (Teague 2009) is transformed into a partially rebuilt "ethnic showcase for tourists" (Holdstock 2012; see also Boulton et al. 2012: 198).

Heritage and Tourism: Heritage Tourism

Cultural heritage politics in China is complex and cultural heritage tourism is the genie let out of the bottle. The extraordinary emergence of a numerically large Chinese middle class and the dramatic liberalization of internal movement, along with the creation of three official Golden Weeks when most employees and students are encouraged to travel, have led to tremendous interest in travel through the huge and varied national territory. The state sees tourism "as a two-way civilizing tool, capable of producing positive change in tourists as well as 'tourees'" (Nyíri 2009: 154). This is reminiscent of Bennett's (1995) "exhibitionary complex," which posits the birth of the modern museum as a venue of discipline, surveillance, and spectacle (following Foucault). The state organizes its own representation (self-definition) and conveys its power through the museum script. The state presents itself as a spectacle to be consumed; viewers are performers.

The Chinese state promotes "leisure culture" whereby tourism synthesizes "material civilization and spiritual civilization" so as to generate a "desirable citizenry" (Nyíri 2009: 155), much as western European states saw museums as a vehicle for producing desired subjects. Tourism is "indoctritainment" (Nyíri 2009: 159) and its assemblage "disciplines" the travelers for "government bodies (mostly at the county, prefecture, or provincial level) are present as both stakeholders (co-owners) *and* regulators in every tourism development project" (Nyíri 2009: 163). Chinese tourists may not participate in the ideology underwriting their travels but they engage in tourism as a quintessentially modern activity (Nyíri 2009: 155–156, 165).

But tourism has major consequence for local populations. State-encouraged mass visitation to heritage sites and natural wonders has deeply impacted those who live in and around them for they "have begun to lose control of their economies, cultures, and lifestyles" (Timothy et al. 2009: 97). Moriss has argued that "Whenever tourism is an economic strategy as well as a money-making activity, and wherever it is a policy of state, a process of social and *cultural* change is initiated which involves transforming not only the 'physical' (in other words, the *lived*) environment of 'toured' communities, and the intimate details of the practice of everyday life, but also the series of relations by which cultural identity (and therefore, difference) is constituted for both the tourist and the toured in any given context" (1995: 180).

Problems generated by cultural tourism are well known. Mass visitation exerts pressure on ancient walls, historic buildings, vernacular towns, and scenic spots as well as the physical environment supporting these. It can deform social relations, diminish community sustainability, transform the local economy, and generate political conflict.

Tsing's (2005) concept of "friction" conveys the sense of diverse and conflicting social interactions that occur as multiple demands are made on, contested by, and negotiated among those whom state agencies and the global tourism industry have identified as interesting and worthy of attention. We can read into Tsing a framework for understanding much of cultural tourism in China today, particularly in southwest China, which, for centuries (and, indeed, millennia), has been a multi-ethnic mosaic and engaged with a vast territory beyond its villages.

> The term 'global' … introduces a way of thinking about the history of social projects, including 'business' and 'local empowerment.' First, such projects grow from spatially far-flung collaborations and interconnections. Second, cultural diversity is not banished from these interconnections; it is what makes them—and all their particularities—possible. Cultural diversity brings a creative friction to global connections (Tsing 2005: ix–x)… 'Friction' [is] the grip of worldly encounter. Capitalism, science, and politics all depend on global connections. Each spreads through aspirations to fulfill *universal* dreams and schemes. Yet this is a particular kind of universality: it can only be charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters. (Tsing 2005: 1, emphasis in original).

Friction, as used by Tsing, is appropriate for our discussion for it highlights the lack of ease of the tourist encounter as peoples and their settlements are opened to inspection and exploitation, both from within and without. Tsing speaks of "global

motion" and recognizes that the pervasive flow of goods, money, ideas, and people generates friction in interaction. That global motion coincides with Urry's "mobilities paradigm" by which he refers to "movements across regions" and "how social relations are performed, organized and mobilized" (2007: 44). Frictions of distance and frictions at local, national, international and global levels of interactions exist and must be greased (i.e., negotiated, mitigated).

Museums and Collections

A large body of literature deals with the role of museums in creating a national identity (Broun 2004; Coombes 2004; Errington 1998: Chap. 6; Kaplan 1994; Kaufman 2004; Kennedy 2004 *inter alia*). Typically, such museums are created in newly independent countries seeking to define their identity in contradistinction to a previous colonial or otherwise "impaired" condition (e.g., Anderson 1991: 179–184). They are a key attribute of nation-states (to have a national museum is to be a nation-state); they are often a venue in the itinerary of official visits made by visiting dignitaries from other countries. Museums in China developed from an engagement with Japanese and European representational practices. The museums promote the national vision of nation-ness and nationalism, authorizing a national history and validating the national imaginary.

Denton (2005) is especially clear in highlighting the propaganda role of Chinese museums and their use by the state for legitimizing purposes. The massive wave of museum construction also speaks to the "important symbolic roles [of museums] in the larger context of the urban environments in which they are located" (Denton 2005: 571). The unique architecture of many of these museums and their new exhibition designs facilitate their "participat[ion] in the market economy by contributing to the cultural life of cities, making them more attractive to tourism, commercial investment and global trade" (Denton 2005: 572). Indeed, China is engaged in a dramatic exhibitionary project across its territory, building museums with such frequency and intensity that this activity has been international news (see, e.g., The Economist 2007: 49). China's "museum boom" (ibid.) is manifested in the rush by "[c]ities and towns across China … to build museums… Local governments, caught up in what the Chinese press calls a 'museum fever,' are vying to outdo one another with architectural wonders" (The Economist 2007: 49). Already two survey books have been published in English, *China's Museums* (Li and Luo 2004) and *China: Museums* (Clifford et al. 2009)—and these are by no means complete in their coverage. Whereas in 1990 there were about 300 museums, by 2008 there were at least 2,310 "excluding the newly permitted private museums, new arts centres and vibrant districts and villages dedicated to contemporary arts and culture" (Clifford et al. 2009: 12). Similar to Denton's (2005) analysis, Li and Luo (2004: 2) place museums in the context of "China's opening and reform policy as well as… the development of a market economy, travel, tourism, and cultural exchange" over the past 20–30 years.

The Shaanxi History Museum in Xi'an is an example. Shaanxi Province is a place of great historical significance; it was the birthplace of the Western Zhou, Western Han, Qin, and Tang civilizations. Xi'an (formerly Chang'an) was an imperial capital city for more than a millennium. Built in evocation of Tang architecture, the Shaanxi History Museum opened in 1991 and was the first national museum with modern facilities. The museum, located in the heart of classic Han Chinese civilization, evinces no (apparent) ideological conflict or political pressure in its exhibit scripts. It does not have to deal with an ethnic minority, such as the Tibetans, whose unwillingly incorporated population chafes under Han and governmental intrusion in its homeland. The Shaanxi History Museum does not have to prove that the Shaanxi region is part of China. However, its historical purview is explicitly truncated in the museum script: following Mao Zedong's historiography that divides "ancient China" from "modern China," in 1840, the Shaanxi History Museum cuts off its timeline in that year, just beyond the midpoint of the Qing Dynasty.

The Tibet Museum in Lhasa also truncates its time line, in this case ending on May 23, 1951 with the *Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet* (colloquially known as the Seventeen Point Agreement), which is on display. In order to understand the situation of the Tibet Museum it is necessary to consider the official (and unambiguous) discourse of the Chinese state toward Tibet. China expresses the achievements of its ethnic policy toward the Tibet Autonomous Region this way:

> … to promote the social and economic development of Tibet, to satisfy the Tibetan people's increasing needs for rich material and cultural lives. At the same time, [the government has] devoted large amounts of human, financial, and material resources to protecting and carrying forward the fine aspects of traditional Tibetan culture, as well as initiating and developing modern science, culture, and education by employing legal, economic, and administrative means. As a result, considerable achievements attracting worldwide attention have been attained. All the people in Tibet, as masters of the new era, jointly carry on, develop and enjoy the traditional Tibetan culture, and jointly create modern civilized life and culture, bringing unprecedented prosperity and development to Tibetan culture. (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2000).

Shepherd argues that an important aspect of China's policy toward Tibet is a deliberate creation of a "de-politicized space of 'culture'… a broader policy aimed at the pacification of Tibet through the aesthetization of Tibetan culture" (2009: 255). We see this in the Tibet Museum.

The Tibet Museum took seven years to complete (1992–1999) with an investment by the central government of 11.6 million dollars in the project (Tibet Museum n.d.). The building, designed by a Han Chinese architect from Sichuan province, invokes traditional Tibetan architecture while having a Modernist practical functionality and Postmodernist artistic flairs (Fig. 1.1). The museum is located across the street from the restored Norbulingka, the summer palace of the Dalai Lama.

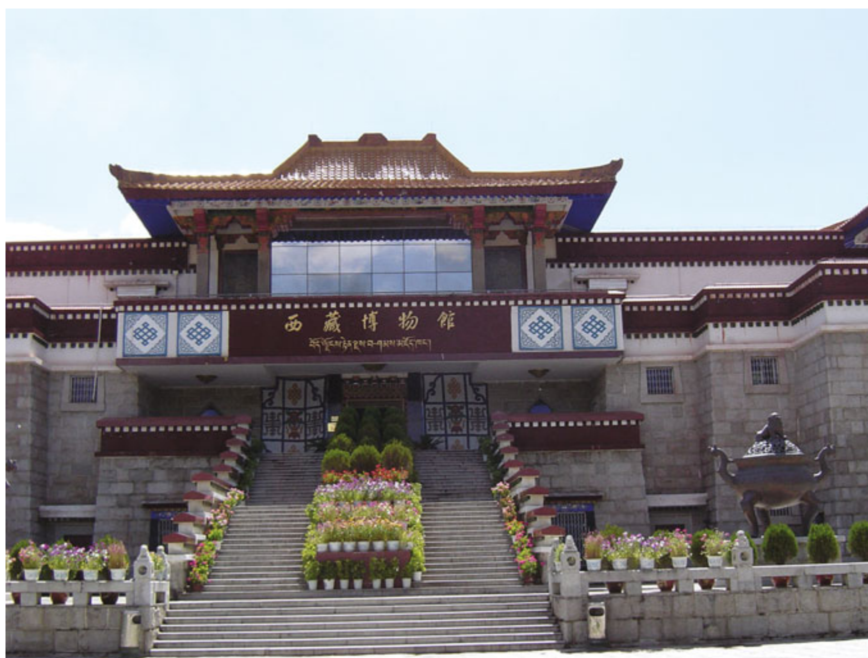

Fig. 1.1 Tibet Museum (photo: Helaine Silverman 2007)

The initiation of the project to create a Tibet Museum in Lhasa took place in the context of official re-Tibetanization, local reclamation of religious tradition, tourism, and economic development. The Tibet Museum was one of 62 government-funded "Aid-Tibet Projects" that were launched in 1994 "in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Autonomous Region of Tibet" (Tibet Museum n.d.). The museum was listed as one of Tibet's "key projects for social development." The museum brochure (Tibet Museum n.d.) specifically identifies the Tibet Museum as "a fresh new place of cultural interest, attracting tourists from both China and overseas."

The Tibet Museum opened on October 5, 1999, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 40th anniversary of Tibet's "democratic reform." The inaugural exhibit was designated one of the "Top Ten National Exhibitions" in 1999 by the State Cultural Relics Bureau, the Chinese Association of Museums, and the *China Cultural Relics Journal*. The museum "was appraised as one of the first national AAAA tourism spots" in 2000 (Tibet Museum n.d.). All these spots are under the State Administration of Cultural Heritage Office, which exercises a powerful role in creating a new collective memory of the past represented by these sites.

The Tibet Museum is more than a national architectural prize-winning building and aesthetically outstanding stunning display. Built in the political context of "reform and opening up to the outside world" (Tibet Museum 2001: 6), the

museum explicitly presents Tibet as an "inseparable" part of China from at least the thirteenth century, and it presents Tibetan culture as a relic culture and culture of relics. This exhibit of artistic treasures and ethnographic masterpieces of the region evokes a comparison with late nineteenth–early twentieth century U.S. museum displays of "pacified" Native Americans (e.g., Errington 1998). It seems that once an indigenous group is no longer a threat to a colonial state, its culture can be extolled. And, of course, the hegemonic state seeks to exert control through display. Nonetheless, ongoing widespread resistance to Chinese presence in Tibet unsettles this effort to assert control, cultural or otherwise.

Papers in the Volume

Local, Regional, National, and International Interests in a World Heritage Era

Chapters in this section are nuanced, ethnographic analyses of how communities in Yunnan, Sichuan, and Zhejiang Provinces grapple with the potential and challenges of a nationally narrated and globally influenced heritage discourse. UNESCO is a willing partner in China's heritage endeavors for beyond its concern with preservation of humankind's cultural patrimony UNESCO believes in the power of tourism to effect economic development. Indeed, the greatest challenge of UNESCO World Heritage status is not achieving it (once nominations reach the Tentative List, the politics of the World Heritage Committee appear to play themselves out and a reasonable nomination is eventually approved) but rather managing the aftermath of World Heritage List inscription as the "sticky materiality of practical encounters" (Tsing 2005: 1) that take place among different kinds of tourists (particularly Han Chinese and Western foreigners), hosts, and the various entities that constitute the Chinese state.

That no unitary, top-down strategy or narrative exists is underscored by the variety of experiences in these communities. Nonetheless, the authors demarcate a set of common elements and practices that recur in the context of what Adams (this volume) calls "Chinese heritage management with Western characteristics." The state in multiple embodiments, private entrepreneurs and development companies, tourists, and a diverse set of local stakeholders all contribute to the fascinating, sometimes disturbing situations described in the chapters.

Swain's treatment of Chinese cosmopolitanism captures some of the essence of Tsing's friction. Swain explores the two different conceptions that inform Chinese cosmopolitanism—*tianxia* (a Confucian, heritage-based worldview) and *shijie zhuyi* (an outward-looking engagement with the changing world)—and shows that both are deployed to promote minority nationality unity and global tourism marketing.

China's "scenic spots," though natural, also embody deeply intangible qualities. As interpreted by Shepherd these places "evoke the relationship between self and

nature"; tourists there are "searching for their 'authentic selves'" and the experience of a world far outside their urban lives (2009: 67; see also Nyíri 2009:156). At the Mt. Emei Scenery Area UNESCO, the central government, local government, and international NGOs interconnect and overlap in a confusing arrangement of site management, aggravated by rampant commercial tourism development. Zhu and Li consider the dynamic negotiations between the local and the global at Mt. Emei as multilayered individual, community, national, and global values come into play within the context of China's social, economic, and political transformations under modernization.

Zhao is especially concerned with the tension between community members and their local government as the economic dimensions of an officially promoted pilgrimage have drastically altered the existing cultural landscape and challenged perceptions of the authenticity of heritage. The complicated histories of religion and the displacement of temple routes in favor of an aesthetically pleasing, infrastructurally sophisticated new zone draw our attention to the discrepancies between maintaining historically rooted structures, usually valued by European heritage discourse, and adapting buildings and entire zones to modern needs.

Peters and Su both discuss concerns over authenticity in Lijiang, home to the Naxi ethnic group and perhaps the poster child for tourism overdevelopment under the UNESCO regime. Peters draws on years of experience in Lijiang, often on behalf of UNESCO, to examine how the extraordinary increase in tourism to Lijiang has generated a wide range of conflicting demands and pressures both for architectural preservation and community and cultural sustainability (see also Logan 2012 and White 2010). The rapid transformation of Shuhe (part of the Lijiang World Heritage inscription but some kilometers away from the Dayanzhen "Old Town") occurred after the UNESCO designation should have precluded significant redevelopment. This and the subsequent response by UNESCO highlight the challenges facing the heritage preservation office and the Bangkok-based UNESCO monitors.

Su deals with the notion of "authenticity" as he explores the tension simmering in Lijiang as migrant Han businesspeople outcompete the indigenous Naxi in the latter's own home town. Su explores how the Han understand Lijiang as their new home and negotiate their identity in relation to the Naxi as well as Han tourists, revealing the importance of a fine-grained analysis when considering effects of tourism in heritage zones. It is not only the local Naxi residents but also the migrants from elsewhere in China who are affected by the shifting politics of these areas.

Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Undesignated Sites

The third section of this book examines fixity and mobility in rural communities in Guangxi and Yunnan where concerns about UNESCO World Heritage inscription are not a primary concern. Whereas many case studies of cultural heritage tourism

in China highlight problems in the local community, Chio discusses the 30-year success of ethnic Zhuang and Yao peoples in the Longji Terraced Fields Scenic Area. Here, many households in the two main villages have benefitted economically. But the situation is not uncomplicated. Chio discusses competing claims to heritage and competition for tourism income. Different actors deploy different strategies comprising overlapping processes of identity construction and commercialization. Space is being reconfigured, creating "fences" that serve to reinforce larger claims to cultural authority and identity.

Situated on the border, Liu reminds us that flows of heritage beyond national borders sometimes take center stage in community politics. Liu considers state-promoted community-based ethnic tourism in one particular borderland, the Wa region of southwest China, located adjacent to Myanmar. The Wa are an ethnic minority who have been scripted as "primitive" by state agents and the tourism industry. Liu discovers that unlike the thriving modes of mobile networks, social mobility, and labor migration from the rural Wa regions to cities, Wa ethnic tourist development is predicated on a vernacular built environment of thatched houses and exotic heritage practice. Liu describes how tourism reverses cross-cultural flows and he recognizes subjective voices, coalitions, and contestations among all three groups of players: the Wa as ethnic subjects, state agents, and tourists.

The Politics of Museums and Collections

The fourth section of the book addresses a quintessential space of heritage production: the museum. Like the other spaces where cultural heritage politics are enacted in China, museums are sites of contestation and a particularly vivid zone for visualizing narratives.

Ashton presents a fascinating context for new museums in China. He focuses on representational politics in the Chinese capital itself, Beijing, and specifically as China engineered its most public appearance on the global stage, the 2008 Olympics. He raises the incongruity of museums—by definition past-looking or, at least, past-curating—being mobilized to service the government's drive for modernization. In a remarkable twist, new and newly renovated museums are being deployed to promote appreciation for "clean, comfortable, modern living" and thereby lessen ties to purportedly dilapidated neighborhoods (such as the *hutong*). At the same time, these museums are fulfilling their well-known function of creating national subjects (see Bennett 1995).

Nitzky's study of community museums in Guizhou is important in showing the new phenomenon of local empowerment in heritage matters: not just preservation but also interpretation and exploitation. This is truly significant in the context of China's powerful state which attempts to exercise univocal authority over cultural heritage although, as many chapters in this volume show, not absolute control. There is, to use a colloquial expression, "wiggle room" in the politics of heritage and museums in China, even in regions of ethnic diversity as is the case in

southwest China dealt with by Nitzky. Here it is not just the county level administration that is involved in the ecomuseum in question but, more significantly, the actual township and village leaders. As Nitzky observes, "the township government-village community cooperative seemed to mark a significant turn for villagers from passive subjects of government project intervention to active agents in the heritage protection project of their ancient village." It remains to be seen how tolerant upper levels of Chinese government will be toward this experiment in democracy and self-empowerment and if it should be understood as safely within the parameters of "public negotiat[ion with] the Chinese state system in order to exercise control over their own affairs. … subjects understand and engage in their role as subjective actors in a larger program of development and modernization. Community participation in China has become not so much a right but a responsibility of the people in executing government, international agency, and company strategies and programs around economic and social development, forming the participation paradigm in China" –as Nitzky argues. It is also important to put Guizhou in the larger framework of growing cultural tourism to southwest China where tangible and performed ethnic heritage can be converted through commodification into an economically viable resource (Li 2006).

Routes as Heritage: Branding Space in a Global[ized] China

The chapters in this section move our attention beyond China and beyond fixed space, even though previous chapters have also engaged in analysis of flows and frictions. These chapters demonstrate that it is not just individual towns and discrete places that become tourist destinations in China (or elsewhere). Of particular interest are tourism circuits that engage a region or multiple regions. UNESCO has a category of such heritage that it calls "cultural routes." Examples include the Slave Route through West Africa, the Catholic pilgrimage Route of Santiago de Compostela, and the Qhapaq Ñan (Royal Inca Highway) through the Andean countries. A Silk Road route through twelve countries has also been discussed (http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/953/). Sigley examines how China is actively developing the tangible sites and cultural heritage of the Ancient Tea Horse Road for tourism (not yet for UNESCO) and the imbrication of tourism with concerns about rapid modernization, ethnic unity, and regional identity.

Zhou interrogates the rebranding of Tengchong through an association drawn with another cultural route, the Southern Silk Road. He calls our attention to the road building through Tengchong that forms part of China's effort to connect Yunnan with Southeast Asia and India. The connections among these areas are deeply cultural and historical (Giersch 2006; Lary 2007; Tagliacozzo and Chang 2011). Yunnan is part of the greater Mekong region and closely connected linguistically to the peoples of Southeast Asia. In Tengchong, local policy makers and cultural elites are reinterpreting or inventing local history and presenting new spatial and historical representations of Tengchong so as to harmonize with the

state's non-heritage oriented process of road construction and position Tengchong at the center of future development opportunities.

Adams also examines how attention to heritage in China carries global implications, a discussion particularly salient in a year when China has become increasingly assertive regarding its maritime sovereignty claims. China's underwater cultural heritage provides remarkable objects and significant historical insight. The seabed is, in effect, a museum without walls. Adams explains the character and direction of Chinese underwater heritage management efforts, including the establishment of the Underwater Archaeological Research Center, by considering how Chinese history, identity and naval policy intersect with contemporary developmentalist and globalist agendas.

Conclusion

> *World Heritage is a treasured memory for humanity…China's cultural and national heritage belongs not only to China but to the whole world and all of humanity.*
>
> (Aoshima 2008: 7)

We have outlined how the politics of cultural heritage are negotiated and expressed in China, including the frictions they encompass and the contradictions related to enshrining tangible and intangible heritage in a rapidly changing country. If China's heritage belongs to all humanity (the UNESCO mantra), one is left to wonder whether the state and the people living within heritage zones retain any rights to modify and shape their heritage.

China's institution of property rights figures prominently in the country's cultural heritage politics, as explained by Tang in this volume. Indeed, the institution of property rights is at the heart of heritage management systems. A key problem in China is that property rights related to cultural heritage emerged in the era of the planned economy and were a vaguely defined government monopoly. The present institution of property rights is a serious impediment to rapid decision-making and acts against the sustainable development of cultural and natural heritage.

Clearly, cultural heritage is a site of intense negotiation within China, and the presentation and representation of this heritage in museums, tourist zones, and along routes conceived as heritage-scapes (Di Giovine 2009) occupy considerable attention from a wide variety of actors. These actors do not speak with a unified voice, not even those who are official representatives of the People's Republic of China. As Hsing reminds us, "The process of exercising state power… is not a zero-sum game between the central and local states but an open, endless project of strategic maneuvering and negotiation among heterogeneous state players" (2008: 70). It is this process that holds possibility for a variety of narratives and projects to emerge.

Perhaps the "heritage fever" that has gripped China for at least a decade will slowly die down. But our prediction is that the great importance attached to

national patrimony and patriotic education, coupled with the increased number of outlets for individuals to voice their opinions regarding heritage preservation (e.g., microblogging services like Sina Weibo, China's answer to Twitter), will allow embodied and intangible heritage to retain support for the indefinite future.

Challenges to physical structures will no doubt continue as long as local governments have incentives to sell land and demolish existing structures. Worrisome stories like those of the Beijing *hutong* and the Kashgar Old City will no doubt emerge. China has a pervasive pattern of razing buildings and then rebuilding them anew, thereby creating historical theme parks. Harrison (2005) would ask, does it matter if they are not authentic? Holtorf observes that "Heritage is often less valued for its literal than for its metaphorical content, that is, stories about the past that are much more so stories about the present. As a consequence, it matters little for the story-telling potential if a heritage site has been meticulously repaired, faithfully restored, or entirely reconstructed—as long as it gives a believable total impression" (2010: 50). Whether or not these sites are giving believable impressions—and who determines their credibility—is open to debate.

But if we take the purpose of heritage as the telling of stories about the past to those in the present (and future), and accept that physical structures may hold less significance than the narrativization of those stories (after all, many historically significant structures were already destroyed at least once before being rebuilt in the 1980s and 1990s), then we can shift our question to narrative power. Whose voices will be marginalized as the stories about heritage in China are told? What new structures, spaces, and practices, whether tourist routes, ecomuseums, or transborder engagements, may permit a polyvocal narration? By paying attention to the multiple narrations that emerge in the ensuing years, it is our hope that scholars will be able to continue enriching the fascinating field of study that examines the nuances of Chinese cultural heritage practice and their implications.

We close with a quote from Adams (this volume): "It is only intellectual honesty to accord China its own developmental story, at times mirroring, but never mimicking, the dawning and institutional maturation of a preservation ethos in the West." How a set of internationally approved lists that inevitably exclude as much as they inscribe will influence this story, and what other elements will affect it, will no doubt occupy researchers for years to come.

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