Making and Remaking Shangrila: The Confrontation and Negotiation between Tibetan Cultural Preservation and State-Sponsored Tourism

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Abstract

      Since 1999, the central policy of "Open Up the West" has introduced state-sponsored tourism and global commercial market into Shangrila, a regionally peripheral and economically marginal county in Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan, China. Over the decades, the political economy of state-sponsored tourism and globalization have brought along external aggressions of commercialism and modern mode of production and thus caused tremendous socio-cultural changes in Shangrila's landscape. In my research, the major social difficulties caused by external aggressions include the emphasis on economic growth over cultural preservation, inequity, and transformation of traditional social structure. In response to these negative socio-cultural changes, Tibetan cultural preservation in Shangrila organizes itself into a form of sustainable development that reacts against and negotiates with the overarching structure of state-sponsored tourism in order to guarantee both preservation of traditional culture and local society's incorporation into modernity. In details, local preservation activists utilize tourism as a niche, in which modern technology is introduced and traditional social structure is preserved. By doing this, they also intend to convey correct representations of Tibetan culture to the general public, enhance tourists' and locals' appreciation of Tibetan culture, and improve locals' economic and social well-being.

Honor Pledge

On my honor, I have neither given, nor received, any unauthorized aid on this project. Honor Code Upheld.

Signature: Ziyu Zhao

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Shangrila is a place of imagination.

It was first presented to the world in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* in a dazzling and mystical manner—an English novelist's imagination of an undisturbed utopia located at the mountainside of milk-blue snow slopes in the Himalayas. A place with eternal peace and vigor. In 2001, Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC) granted the name of Shangrila to Zhongdian, a regionally peripheral and economically marginal county in Sino-Tibetan borderlands, Southwest China, where later visitors would be struck by its magnificent mountainous views and ethnic and biological diversities. PRC's decision to localize the name on Zhongdian projected an intangible imagination on a reality and in turn transformed Shangrila into a real place. The real immediately falls into fantasy again, however, through various and contradictory styles of conceptualization brought by myriad incomers that are attracted by the name of Shangrila.

From then on, Shangrila became a county under the jurisdiction of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan, China. Due to the international reputation, Western fervor over Tibetan Buddhism, thanks to James Hilton, as well as increasing disposable income and spiritual neediness of Chinese citizens, Shangrila has experienced a large inflow of exogenous knowledge and populations along with the rapid economic growth catalyzed by state-sponsored tourism. It consequently becomes a perfect place with interesting enough socio-political dynamics for social scientists to explore, in regards to national imaginaries, governmentality, social transformation, human agency versus structure, and sustainable development in tourism (Kolås 2008: 1; Townsend 1992; Yeh and Coggins 2014; Burns 1999; Foucault 1991). As one of the classical discussions of human agency versus structure, my undergraduate thesis research focuses on state-sponsored tourism

and Tibetan cultural preservation in Shangrila as both confrontational powers and collaborative partners for purpose of sustainable development in tourism. Concepts of national imaginaries, social transformation, and cultural authenticity are also closely analyzed.

In a 2014 book *Mapping Shangrila*, Stevan Harrell stated: Shangrila "is but one place in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands that is being not only reimagined but incorporated into the Chinese nation-state as a space of accessible wonder, friendly exotica, extraction opportunities, and conservation imperatives." (Harrell 2014: VIII) My first journey to Shangrila in 2013 was exactly to seek its accessible wonder and friendly exotica. Throughout the following six years, however, I kept coming back to this place of imagination, each time carrying accumulated perspectives and roles of observer and examiner to my original positionality of an ignorant pawn in a giant chess game.

The central policy of "Open up the West" that started from 1999 brought along state-sponsored tourism and global market into the traditionally agriculture-based society in Shangrila. Local ethnic social structures and traditions, majorly Tibetan, have been constantly surrendered to extraneous aggressions since then. These extraneous aggressions have quickly induced many Tibetan cultural preservation projects that strive to negotiate with the overarching structure of state-sponsored tourism and respond to the consequent socio-cultural changes. In reality, this negotiation is enacted in a unique style of sustainable development. Not viewing themselves as paralyzed and thinking beyond the traditional political-national boundary, local preservation activists implement their style of sustainable development through embracing globalization and appropriating state-sponsored tourism to suit their own benefits. It is important to note that most of the cultural preservation projects I have conducted my research on are for-profit. One interviewee even told me that she switched from the non-profit sector to her current position because the non-profit does not

serve well for cultural preservation under the current socio-political circumstances.

In this paper, I aim to analyze socio-cultural changes in Shangrila's landscape brought by state-sponsored tourism and globalization. I am also going to address Tibetan cultural preservation as a form of sustainable development that reacts against and collaborates with the overarching structure of tourism in order to guarantee both preservation of traditional culture and local society's incorporation into modernity. The general social difficulties happening in Shangrila's society include emphasis on economy over culture, inequity, and transformation of social structure. In response, local preservation activists design their "responsible tourism" programs, for the benefits of locals' economic and social well-being and Chinese citizens' awareness of authentic Tibetan culture. They utilize Shangrila's tourism as a niche, in which local society is benefited by modern mode of production and traditional social structure is preserved. By doing this, local Tibetan preservation activists reject mass production and fabricated performance of Tibetan culture and strive to present Tibetan ways of life, arts, and learning as correct cultural representations to the general public.

Methodology

I conducted one-month fieldwork in Shangrila for my research. Ethnographic research methods were used in the process of data collection, including doing interviews with preservation activists and participant observation in the general Shangrila region. Chinese Mandarin was used throughout the ethnography because of participants' proficiency in both Mandarin speaking and Chinese writing. For interviews, ten of my interviewees are Tibetan nationals, three are Han nationals, and two are Americans. One Han interviewee is the director of the Intangible Cultural Heritage program in Diqing government. The other fourteen interviewees are all cultural preservation activists. Except one on phone, other interviews were conducted face-to-face out of interviewees'

familiar surroundings. As an ethnographer, I also carried out participant observation in various tourism sites, business activities performed by activists, and conventional daily settings. Besides preservation activists, I interacted with tourists from diverse social backgrounds and Tibetan and non-Tibetan participants, such as tour guides, in tourism industry. All collected data are qualitative.

Theoretical Frameworks regarding Shangrila's Tourism and Local Agency

The anthropology of tourism emerged as a distinct field in the mid-1970s (Long 2004). Since then, the anthropological focus on tourism has followed two directions: one addresses tourism as a symbolic means of expressing and maintaining human identity; the other emphasizes the social, political, economic and environmental effects that results from touristic modes of production (Lett 1989: 277). For the symbolic approach, some famous theories include MacCannell's "staged authenticity" and Urry's notion of the "tourist gaze" and his description of tourism as a way of experience (MacCannell 1989; Urry 1990). The other approach that views tourism as socio-cultural constructions explores concepts of postmodernity, consumer culture, leisure, and technology (Caplan 1996 cited in Long 2004). As opposed to addressing tourism from a single approach, I will take account of the holistic perspective and analyze state-sponsored tourism in Shangrila as a complex system, in which the host and the guest are both involved, and political, economic and social environments interconnect (Burns 1999: 29). In the anthropology of tourism, Malcolm Crick categorized three dimensions of enquiry: including semiology, political economy, and social and cultural change (Selwyn 1996 cited in Burns 1999: 84). This paper will carefully consider political economy and socio-cultural changes in Shangrila in relation to the responsive local involvement and development. Theories regarding national imaginary, cultural commodification, and authenticity are also discussed.

Modern China's National Imaginary

Firstly, to understand modern China's national imaginary is significant for Western audiences to make sense of the political environment over Tibetan cultural preservation in Shangrila. Traditionally, China's foreign relations were built on the concepts of Chinese World Order and culturalism that are distinct from European ideas of international relationships among equal sovereign nation-states (Townsend 1992; Fairbank 1968; Harrison 1969: 2). Fairbank organized the graded and concentric Chinese World Order into three levels: the central Chinese empire where Han people and Confucianism prevailed at the highest, the surrounding areas within Confucian influence the lower, and the barbarian rest of the world the lowest. Culturalism, which was exercised as well throughout the Chinese diplomacy, conceptualizes that the boundaries of Chinese cultural community were determined by the Confucian principles (Harrison 1969: 2; Fincher 1972). In other words, the Chinese cultural community welcomed all people who deferred to Confucianism. The theory of culturalism justified Chinese imperial rule over non-Han groups and occasional non-Han imperial rule over the Han (Townsend 1992). The culturalism was nevertheless accompanied by a certain degree of Han ethnic nationalism because of Han's dominance in culture, population, and military power over Chinese territory (Townsend 1992; Harrison 1969: 2).

From the late 1800s to the early 1900s, China had experienced an identity crisis when the Qing dynasty, ruled by Manchus a non-Han group, collapsed and the country became a dwarf in front of the Western armies. The crisis severely challenged the traditional China's foreign relations, and catalyzed the modern Chinese nationalism with a strong ethnic sentiment against Manchus' rule and Western imperialism. After 1949, the PRC was established as a multi-national country with the officially acknowledged Han nationality and fifty-five minority nationalities. The government strives

to portray modern Chinese nationalism as state nationalism that theoretically endows equal rights and obligations to and create a sense of nationhood among all PRC citizens (Townsend 1992). Nonetheless, a set of institutionalized attitudes and historical precedents inherited from the traditional China's foreign relations by the government fails to completely fulfill state nationalism and accommodate the European style of foreign relations (Fairbank 1968). In addition, the fact that the Han nationality remains as the main participant in China's affairs also stimulates contradictions between the PRC's definition of citizenship and its inability to abandon or suppress some Han ethnic nationalism (Townsend 1992). State nationalism can be achieved only if there appears a new Chinese nation that fully incorporates multi-nationalities, ensures equal rights and obligations to, and receives political loyalty from all its members (Dreyer 1976; Townsend 1992). With imperfections, the government endeavors to improve the official policies for the benefit of minority nationalities, and advocate images of the PRC as a multi-national and harmonious family. In this research, I adopt the Chinese government's official declaration to treat the PRC, or China, as a multi-national state.

According to Cornelius Castoriadis, an institutionalized society has its source from the social imaginary, of which the symbolic characteristic links up with the economic-functional component and keeps the society survived (Castoriadis 1987: 131). Castoriadis uses imaginary social signification to illustrate the social imaginary's function in a society: significations are like "the final articulations the society in question has imposed on the world, on itself, and on its needs, the organizing patterns that are the conditions for the representability of everything that the society can give to itself." (Castoriadis 1987: 143) The concept of the PRC as a multi-national state and that all fifty-six nationalities possess absolute equal status and rights is imaginary. However, when the government casts this imagination on its people, the people will reconceptualize and reorganize the

social patterns, creating an imaginary social signification and accommodating the reality to what the imaginary social signification depicts. In Chinese society, the official imagination of China as a multi-national state does work as a coherent deformation of the system of subjects, objects and their relations; as the curvature specific to every social space; and as the invisible cement holding together real, rational, and symbolic odds that constitute a society (Castoriadis 1987: 143).

Many situations have already changed since Chinese Communist Party's first march into Tibet in 1950. In this paper, Shangrila will be treated as an open field that facilitates diverse cultural practices and intercultural communications. In spite of my research's focus on Tibetan tourism and cultural preservation, Diqing Prefecture and Shangrila are not a monolithic region with one distinctive set of claims to Tibetan culture or national identity (Yeh and Coggins 2014: 9). In fact, there are 25 minority nationalities in total in Diqing. The modern minority nationalities should not be treated as outsiders to a cohesive entity called "Chinese culture" (which stereotypically implies Han culture) nor subjects that are being simply assimilated into that entity (Mueggler 2010). In Diqing where Han nationality only makes up 11.01 percent of the population, different nationalities actively interact with each other in a flexible cultural, social, and economic field. In the context of my research, individuals of Tibetan nationality in Shangrila selectively appropriate extraneous cultural and economic elements and arrange them into a coherent set of imaginations to suit Tibetan values and desires. By doing so, Tibetan nationals incorporate themselves into modern China's national imaginary, but nonetheless react against it by establishing their self-consciousness and cultural identity.

The Political Economy

The theory of political economy functions as a larger social, economic, and political

framework of local cultural preservation agency. According to Foucault, population is the central

concept that facilitates governmentality. Government is supposed to address their interest on the

population as an entity and serve for "the welfare of the population, the improvement of its

condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc." (Foucault 1991: 100) In other words,

governmentality means to improve well-being of a population by calculation and production of

knowledge about the population as a whole without comprehensive understanding of individual

interests and aspirations. In addition, Foucault asserts three inseparable elements in the development

of governmentality: government, population, and political economy. The population emerges first as

a datum, a field of intervention, and an objective of governmental techniques; the economy later is

isolated as a specific sector of reality; and the political economy lastly functions as the science and

the technique of government's intervention in economy (Foucault 1991: 102). Governmentality and a

population's well-being can be fulfilled only with all of the three elements. In Shangrila, political

economy is used by government as a strategy to guarantee the social stability and improve the well-

being of the population as a whole.

Authenticity

The concept authenticity also requires discussion when one attends to tourism and socio-

cultural changes happening in Shangrila's society.

In his theory of authenticity and staged authenticity in tourist settings, MacCannell adopts

Goffman's structural division of social establishments as "front" and "back" regions. "Front" and

"back" regions are classified based on social groups' interactions: those who perform in social

activities appear in the front and back regions; those who are performed to appear only in the front

region; and outsiders are excluded from both regions. Built up from Goffman, MacCannell theorizes

that tourists are able to discover authenticity when they make accidental incursions into the everyday life of the host society (MacCannell 1973). In the concept of staged authenticity, front regions are often decorated to appear as back regions, or back regions are remade to be opened to outsiders. What is being shown to tourists is not the institutional "backstage," it is a staged back region, a kind of living museum for which MacCannell has no analytical terms (MacCannell 1973). In Shangrila, things happen a little bit differently. Cultural preservation activists actively break the structural division between "front" and "back", open up local society's back regions, and engage tourists in daily activities for a continuous period instead of one random peek. In this context, tourists are introduced to authenticity not in tourist settings but in the host society's everyday experience. Throughout this process, the identity of a tourist somehow has been transformed into an inner participant in local daily settings and ways of life, as will be discussed more carefully in a later section of this paper.

Shangrilazation in Sino-Tibetan Borderlands

Shangrila is viewed as a paradise in the general public's eyes. This imagination is rooted in both James Hilton's Lost Horizon and Chinese traditional conceptualization of The Peach Blossom Spring, a Chinese version of utopia. In the Chinese story, The Peach Blossom Spring perpetuates and hides away from good and evil and human transgressions. Shangrila, nevertheless, projects itself into an accessible county in Diqing and remains present and susceptible to the knowledge of good and evil, actual good and evil, and human transgressions (Berger 2013: 73) from the outside world. In this section, ethnic complexity, the political economy, and globalization will be analyzed as historical and social backgrounds for socio-cultural changes and responsive Tibetan cultural preservation in Shangrila.

Socio-political Intersections in History and Ethnic Complexity

Since ancient time, Diqing has been a place located at Sino-Tibetan borderlands with high ethnic complexity. The Sino-Tibetan borderlands are historically mapped as a vast peripheral zone between ancient Chinese and Tibetan imperial polities, with its diverse populations and tribal power dynamics largely impacted by competitive territorial claims of these two regimes (Yeh and Coggins 2014; Coleman 2002). Because of this special geography, various ecological, cultural, and political zones have continuously interacted throughout Sino-Tibetan borderlands (Yeh and Coggins 2014). Dokar Dzong Old Town in Shangrila, for example, has functioned as an important trading town on Tea Horse Road, an ancient trade network that penetrated Sino-Tibetan borderlands and connected China Proper to Tibetan Plateau (Herron 2011). After the incorporation of Sino-Tibetan borderlands into the PRC, those cultural, political, and economic interactions have remained and even intensified because of the new national boundary, the political economy of tourism, and globalization.

The concept of minority nationality that I have mentioned throughout this paper was finalized in the Ethnic Classification Project that took place during the first decade of the PRC (Yeh and Coggins 2014: 11). Over 400 names of nationalities were registered national-wide after the initial policy called "names shall be chosen by those who bear them." (Fei 1981; Mullaney 2010) However, the Communist officials quickly realized the overwhelming number of national names and organized ethnologists and linguists to create an official taxonomy of Chinese people along ethnonational lines (Mullaney 2010). Fifty-six nationalities had been classified from 1950 to 1987. Yunnan, the province where Diqing is located, contains twenty-six of them. By the end of 2017, the Diqing prefecture government censused nine nationalities that possess populations above one thousand, in which Tibetans make up 35.99 percent of the prefecture's population, Lisu 30.3 percent, Naxi 12.65

percent, and Han 11.01 percent (Diqing Statistical Bureau 2017). In Shangrila, urbanized areas where tourists and business people congregate often facilitate more intercultural communications than rural villages where most ethnic groups tend to reside with their own peoples.

The Political Economy

The outside transgressions are mainly manifested in the political economy and opening of global market. The central government has enforced a policy called "Open Up the West" since 1999 to reduce the economic disparities between western interior regions, where many minority nationalities inhabit, and eastern coastal provinces (Kolås 2008). Sino-Tibetan borderlands as an important component of Chinese western regions therefore become a target of "Open Up the West" and submit to the central planning of economic development. The government's implication of political economy, taking form in state-sponsored tourism, has gradually developed a vast tourism zone in Sino-Tibetan borderlands and imposed significant impacts on Shangrila's socio-cultural and natural landscapes. Officially, the political economy acts as a government's intervention in local economy to improve the prosperity of the population as a whole. However, in many anthropological studies, this political economy is also interpreted as a range of techniques and micropolitics that create governable subjects and governable spaces in Sino-Tibetan borderlands for political stability (Coggins and Yeh 2014; Sofield and Li 1998; Kolås 2008). To accomplish "Open Up the West," the central and local governments fit their cultural policy in with economic policy and mark minority nationalities' cultural heritages as contributable to economic growth in the form of tourism development (Sofield and Li 1998). In this context, Shangrila's cultural heritages are viewed as renewable resources, available for endless reproduction, and "subject to the laws of supply and demand." (Coggins and Yeh 2014)

Globalization

The political economy of tourism is only one factor of socio-cultural change in Shangrila. Globalization occurs simultaneously with state-sponsored tourism and affects Shangrila's social, cultural, and economic landscapes. The transportation network among Shangrila, major Chinese cities and international departures has rapidly extended due to the explosive growth in tourism industry. In 1999, the Shangrila airport was built in the middle of pastures and farmhouses when ground transport to the provincial capital of Yunnan was still limited to dirt roads (Yeh and Coggins 2014). During the time when I was about to finish my fieldwork in the summer of 2018, the railway and paved highway from Lijiang, another famous tourism site in Yunnan, to Shangrila were still under construction and anticipated to be put in use in 2020. The widely expanded transportation network has accelerated the populational migration and information transmission rate between Shangrila and elsewhere in the world. The introduction of modern technology by globalization also helps to intensify intercultural communications between local people and the outside world.

Since early 1980s, global commercial opportunities and private enterprises have been brought into Diqing by "Reform and Opening Up" policy (Kolås 2008). Until 2018, four decades of indulgence in global market have transformed this regionally peripheral and economically marginal Shangrila into an integral part of the international economy and a susceptible recipient of any miniscule global disturbance. In my research, many cultural preservation activists perform international business with people around the globe. For example, Kelsang Phuntsok and his Khampa Caravan Adventure Travel Company receive tourist groups from mainland China and international student groups from the West for educational tours every year. In the spring of 2018, Kelsang organized homestay and community service tours in Tibetan rural villages for student

groups from Lakeside School, Seattle, United States. Cili Dolma, the general manager of Arro

Khampa Company, cooperates with American designers in their handicraft poverty reduction projects

to synthesize Tibetan traditional aesthetics and modern fashion on their products. Other activists that

work on preservation of Thangka painting, black pottery, Tibetan embroidery, architecture, and

music, all have been interacting with business partners, tourists, learners, and even anthropologists

from other parts of China and the globe. Some of them are internationals themselves.

Socio-cultural Changes on Shangrila's Traditional Landscapes

The formidable trend of globalization and large inflows of tourists into Shangrila nevertheless

cause tremendous change on local society. The traditional social structure that is based on

agriculture, Tibetan Buddhism and its values, and social equity have gradually languished due to

continuous confrontation with impacts from state-sponsored tourism and global commercial

activities. Palden Namgya, the director of Shangrila Association of Cultural Preservation (Thangka

Center), said to me during the interview:

> Tibetan is a nationality that has faith in Buddhism. People did not value self-benefit that
> much because of Buddhist spirituality. Nowadays, through different incomers, different
> experiments in tourism, a lot of competitions of money happens. People try their best to take
> benefits for themselves. Gradually this Buddhist spirituality and our traditional culture have
> been influenced, and people become bad, isn't it? They defraud. There is a lot! It also
> happens in Thangka painting. In Thangka Center, we all use traditional mineral pigment, and
> strictly follow instructions on Utterances on Image-making and Iconometry [a Buddhist
> scripture]. This is a completely traditional method, a standard [process of painting] Thangka.
> But because of tourism, in many tourism sites people find a way to sneak around—an
> authentic Thangka need many times to paint—they copy it. Copying a Thangka is fast, and
> you only spend several hundred RMB. This copying will fool those tourists immediately.
> They will pay thousands and tens of thousands RMB for a fake copy. Like this, in Shangrila,
> our traditional culture is a little bit destroyed!

Palden's comments only partly demonstrate the negative impacts brought to local society by tourism

and globalization. In the general Shangrila region, one can observe emphasis on economy over

culture, inequity, and transformation of social structure because the local government lacks careful

planning in sustainable development, oversight for official subsidies and market regulation in tourism industry.

Under the political economy of state-sponsored tourism, development is interpreted heavily in economic terms. According to Burns, if the traditional structure of production is regarded as incompatible with economic growth, resources will be shifted away from agricultural production to the "modern" manufacturing, industrial, and service sectors. The switch of mode of production will cause rapid urbanization, introduction of consumerism, neglect of rural development, and economic and thus social gap between the rich and the poor and between modern and traditional methods of production (Burns 1999: 139).

Inequity

The lack of governmental planning of sustainable development and oversight lead to huge economic inequity in the general Shangrila region. The government has released policies to privatize formerly state-owned enterprises and "marketize" the labor force since the early 1980s (Kolås 2008). The political economy situates the local government's favor on enterprises that have the most capital to invest. People without money and personal connections to governmental authority therefore are placed under disadvantage and do not possess much space to improve their economic well-being (Kolås 2008). Moreover, a large number of job seekers that flow into Shangrila's tourism market further decreases locals' economic mobility. One local informant told me that the new-constructed Flower Alley in Shangrila's Dokar Dzong Old Town requires 80000 RMB as an entry fee to own a small shop in the Alley. Apparently, the high threshold has hampered many locals' first step into the industry. According to Kelsang, the tourism industry contributes 96% of the GDP of Shangrila. Nonetheless, in rural villages where most of the global businesses and touristic activities do not exist,

Tibetan people do not have the capacity to participate in and utilize the tourism industry as a method to increase their income. Sadly, few government officials pay careful attention to the economic inequity that is happening in Shangrila and conduct field research in villages to address this problem. Many Tibetan potters complain that government officials even rely on their personal connections to issue official titles and distribute subsidies to outstanding folk artists in the Intangible Cultural Heritage program, a policy focusing on preservation of Shangrila's intangible cultural heritage. However, no governmental oversight is exercised on recipients' budget and their actual spending of these subsidies. There is also not much room available for the public's opinion on who is eligible to those titles and subsidies.

Emphasis on economic growth over cultural preservation

Under the circumstance of strong emphasis on economic growth, local people's attention on and consideration of their cultural heritage decrease. Cultural commodification and mass duplication of religious arts and original folk arts are widespread in Shangrila's tourism market. A Tibetan potter declares that nowadays many local people do not value workmanship: a large portion of black potteries is manufactured. This manufactured portion does not represent good quality because machines are not able to press the dirt and solidify potteries tightly enough. In Dokar Dzong, one can easily find that Buddhist Sutras written in gold with a gorgeous frame and a label of breathtaking price are displayed in glass showcases. This commercial behavior on sacred objects significantly violates the traditional Buddhist doctrine that focuses on believers' faith and piety. Another example of commodification and secularization of Tibetan Buddhism is the ticketing system of the Ganden Suntseling Monastery. Despite the monastery originally as a holy place for Buddhist pilgrimage, the ticketing system and other vendor activities occurring within the monastery secularize this sacred

space and, in some degree, degenerate it to a mere commercial site. Local people, as a result, do not present as much respect as they did to the monastery. According to participants in my research, the most unethical commercial operation is the opportunistic behavior to blow up the price in Shangrila's real estate market. Particularly in Dokar Dzong, extra-local investments on the real estate are usually made when the housing price is high and withdrawn when the price drops and the market looks doomed.

Tourist trap is another downside that challenges market regulations and sustainable development in tourism industry. Entering into 2020s, Chinese younger generation starts to dominate the domestic tourism market and actively seek for dive-in cultural experience, but many elder people still choose to travel in groups organized by travel agencies. Frequently, local tour guides in cooperation with these travel agencies premeditate compelled shopping for tourist groups in designated Tibetan souvenir shops, from which they are able to gain a fair amount of dividends. Counterfeit Thangka paintings mentioned above by Palden also exposes an inside perspective of tourist traps in Shangrila. In Dokar Dzong, architecture styles actually diversify if one notices a variety of intricate Tibetan reliefs and hollow-out carvings on those wooden beams. Because of mass tourism, these culturally significant architectures become hosts of souvenir shops selling mass produced products that can be found in any tourist site in China. In addition, a fire in 2014 burnt out most of the ancient wooden architectures and expelled many Tibetan artists, musicians, and activists who used to congregate in Dokar Dzong and cared for Tibetan cultural preservation. Nowadays, Dokar Dzong, with reconstructed Tibetan architecture and generalized souvenir shops, is a vacant replica of its past splendor.

With overarching emphasis on economy in Shangrila's society, local participants in tourism

industry, whether consciously or unconsciously, tend to exercise generalization of Tibetan culture in order to accommodate tourists' expectations. Instead of displaying correct cultural representations of Tibetan people, they produce a standardized Tibetan image. A stereotypical Tibetan figure is depicted as tall and strong, a talent dancer and singer, and a generous drinker. There are also other rumors expanded from local tour guides: a Tibetan man can wed two wives; all Tibetan boys are named Tashi, a word that means good fortune; and all Tibetan girls are called Dolma (Tara in English), a savior-goddess in Tibetan Buddhism. Throughout decades of experience in the commercial market, locals' desire for money is strong. Generalization of Tibetan culture and reinforcement of stereotypes are viewed as an essential strategy to extract money from tourists because local participants in tourism industry believe that this distortion of Tibetan culture is able to satisfy tourists' curiosity and quest for pleasure. Local tour guides working in mass tourism normally do not make an effort to educate tourists about Tibetan ways of life, arts, and learning in a serious way. One can observe an obvious tendency to cater to the restlessness of modern society resulting from desire and avarice. One of my interviewees stated: "They are catering to the restlessness of modern society. In fact, our Tibetans, authentically, in order to live and survive on a plateau like this, you need to meditate and calm your heart down, we are not fickle people. But if you are to accommodate the restless heart of tourists, it is not good for both sides [the host community and tourists]."

The Transformation of the Traditional Social Structure

The most far-reaching change of local society by tourism is the transformation of traditional social structure. Local life style has enormously changed due to the developing service industry and secularization of Tibetan Buddhism. The decline of traditional value has been the most urgent issue preservation activists are concerned about. In traditional rural villages, neighborhoods were closely

associated and collaborated with each other. Sense of collectivity was a significant force to bond villagers together to fulfill agricultural production, such as farming, animal husbandry, and housing construction. Since the early 1980s, the introduction of tourism and opening of global market have stimulated the development of service industry and largely urbanized Shangrila's social landscape. Younger people tend to leave rural villages and work in service industry and urban areas. The individual lifestyle created by modern alienation makes the younger generation gradually lose their sense of community and collectivity, which is an essential framework that supports Tibetan traditional value. The younger generation, therefore, cannot inherently understand the concept of life and death as well as the interconnected relationship among humans, animals, and nature from a traditional Tibetan and Buddhist angle. The decline of traditional value is also demonstrated by the fading of morality in religious sacred places. Informed by my local connections, many Buddhist monks in the Ganden Suntseling Monastery do not spare a thought for fulfilling their responsibility as a monk to study classical scriptures and philosophy. Instead, they are zealous in showing off and competing with one another for luxury. More unethically, some monks privatize donations from pious believers who are experiencing predicaments and wish to use donations to gain help from Buddhist deities. Other manifestations of the decline of traditional value include counterfeiting, tourist trap, and decrease in Tibetans' respect to the monastery that I have mentioned above.

> One of my interviewees told me,
>
> I have been to a lot of places because of business, and I have known some international luxury brands, like Burberry, LV... But in fact, our Tibetan [culture] is the most valuable and authentic. I dare to say that in our Tibetan history that lasts more than a thousand years, we have always been playing with the concept of brand…However, because of the industrial development, [Tibetan culture and art] have been challenged. People don't realize [the preciousness of our wisdom and art].

The words uttered above by this interviewee imply a common underappreciation of traditional

culture by Tibetan people in Shangrila. Some hand-made traditions, like traditional hand-woven woolen cloth, are devaluated compared with manufactured commodities, such as Nikes or Adidas, from eastern China and the West.

The decreasing confidence in traditional culture and the alienation from a social structure that is based on sedentary agriculture also cause younger people's disinterest in Tibetan tradition. Young people usually present more interests in Chinese and Western pop culture. For example, the traditional Tibetan style of wedding ceremony was partly wiped out by its Western counterpart because of young couples' pursuit of western dressing code and ceremonial formula. It is common that the elder generation will often criticize the younger for their fickleness and desire for money. A Tibetan potter declares that,

> Nowadays young people couldn't stand solitude. They have been to places other than Shangrila since young age. They are used to moving and playing around, eating, and wearing new clothes. If they come to learn how to make black pottery, they are in troubles. Feel lonely and bored. I had a university student here who stayed two weeks and ran. They don't think it is fun. They don't trust our teachings. They are all fond of working in big cities. Too much loneliness for them, they feel one day like one year.

Based on my observation in the general Shangrila region, it is also common that fewer Tibetan younger people who have received higher education dedicate their career and life to inheriting "old" Tibetan craftsmanship.

Preservation activists' comments on socio-cultural changes and inheritance of Tibetan traditions

Many negative examples seem to give readers an impression that the political economy and globalization only surrender local society to adversity. Shangrila seems to be placed under the overarching structure of mass tourism, in which local people and community have no say about the production of fake cultures and inauthentic images (Burns 1999: 127). But everything has two sides. The positive comes with the negative. Since the 1980s, the central government has welcomed

Tibetan refugees who had fled the country, as well as second-generation Tibetans born in India or

Nepal, back to China (Kolås 2008). A founder of one of the cultural preservation organizations in my

research is actually a second-generation returnee born in India. With great English skills, returnees

usually operate companies that cater to Western tourists and manage to forge alliances with

international NGOs and other global actors (Kolås 2008). Therefore, they become one of the

spearheads in Shangrila that promote "responsible tourism" and "sustainable tourism." The state,

NGOs, and common people have also become increasingly engaged in the physical and symbolic

transformation of Shangrila's landscapes throughout the decades (Yeh and Coggins 2014). Rapid

developments in governance, technology, and ideology also have catalyzed myriad local responses

and innovations that are both manifested in and enabled by changes in rural and urban landscapes

(Yeh and Coggins 2014).

Having gone to an English Training Program in his university, Kelsang always dreamed of

owning an NGO that is dedicated to Tibetan traditional culture. Several-years participation in Tibet

Poverty Alleviation Fund, an international-funded NGO, however, allows him to realize the sensitive

politics in Tibet and NGOs' reliance on outside funding. It was common that an NGO project with an

idealistic mission could not be exercised in reality after assiduous design and long-term planning

because of the politics and its disconnection with modern industry. These issues also happened

throughout Dolma's thirteen-year dedication to the non-profit sector in Tibetan cultural preservation.

In 2016, Dolma finally decided to switch to the for-profit and become a general manager of Arro

Khampa Company to take charge of the handicraft poverty reduction project. When I asked her why

did she switch from the non-profit to the commercial, she replied,

> It was hard…we were not free and independent, we could not provide livelihood to ourselves,
> we relied on outside funding and survived on blood transfusion…If we rely on outsiders, the

communities behind us also rely on outsiders. But the thing that we want to protect and inherit belong to ourselves, not outsiders. Personally, I think why shouldn't we use market, connect with market, and find out: can we be self-sufficient? Can we use our nationality's special [things/culture]…Why shouldn't we benefit ourselves from this? I think it is decent! I wish the communities we are helping can become more and more confident. We can feel that uh this thing of mine, we can share it with more people, and I can benefit from that.

From Dolma's perspective, a Tibetan spirituality, value, aesthetics and interrelationship among peoples and nature are the cores to be preserved rather than stagnant physical forms. A completely conservative method which pays its whole attention on stale material forms cannot survive in modern society. It occurs in my research that many preservation activists believe in this statement. They are flexible with and welcome the adaptation to and incorporation into modern mode of production and aesthetics without altering Tibetan traditional value. Preservation activists regard Tibetan culture as well-preserved if the root of Tibetan identity, the traditional value and wisdom that help them to survive and thrive on the highest plateau on the earth, are not mutated. In a developing and changing society in which younger people receive new styles of education, innovative experiments on cultural preservation are necessary to transmit correct cultural representations to the general public, raise the Tibetan younger generation's interest, and improve locals' well-being.

In Yamashita's 2003 study about Balinese tourism, he described culture as a "hybrid entity which is consciously manipulated, reconstructed and consumed." Different from the old definition of culture that fits in with the standard pattern of a specific region and people that are isolated from the rest of the society (Yamashita 2003: 4), culture now is viewed as dynamic, always changing and evolving by anthropologists. According to Fairchild, culture is transmitted by process of teaching and learning, and the essential part of culture can be found in patterns embodied in the group's social traditions: including the knowledge, ideas, values, standards, and sentiments (Fairchild 1967: 80). In Shangrila, preservation activists seem to separate Tibetan traditional culture into two layers: the

surface layer with fixed material forms of traditional Tibetan production and the inner core that focuses on classic social teaching and learning. Although the inner core is nevertheless entangled with the surface layer and can be influenced when the surface layer is going through the transformation, preservation activists find their way to manipulate the state-sponsored tourism into a niche in which a modern mode of production can function as a substantiated carrier of intangible Tibetan spirituality, value, and aesthetics.

The official director of the Intangible Cultural Heritage program explained why tourism would happen during the interview: "Tourism happens because peoples that reside in different regions and grow up in different cultures have the curiosity to explore the unknown world. In reality, tourism occurs as a spatial movement of humans that come from diverse cultural backgrounds. It originates from human's cultural consciousness." Shangrila's Tibetan preservation corresponds with this definition of tourism and treats tourism as a way for tourists to broaden horizons, break stereotypes, and learn what the host culture wishes them to learn. Except for the government's Intangible Cultural Heritage program as a guiding and uniting force in local cultural preservation, preservation activists utilize people-centered development to bridge the Tibetan traditional value with modern society and cooperate with the local government for the more powerful assertion.

Local involvement to make and remake Shangrila

In sustainable development, there is a need for appropriate scale, equitable distribution of benefits, long-term accounting, and the state's support for regional and local initiatives (Burns 1999: 143). During the interview, the director of Intangible Cultural Heritage program expressed his wish for the local government to be a leading force and a strong financial and legislative backup for cultural preservation and sustainable development in Shangrila's society. Nonetheless, the inveterate

corruptions in governmental system and limp efforts in reform make these aspirations hard to be

fulfilled. The supports given by the government to cultural preservation is obviously deficient due to

the lack of oversight and market regulation. Tibetan preservation activists in Shangrila, under this

circumstance, therefore, function as a complementary force to the governmental action and strive to

develop and manage tourism as a local resource where local needs and priorities take precedent over

the goals of the tourism industry (Murphy 1985). In response to the negative socio-cultural changes,

the local agency adopts the form of "people-centered development" (Burns 1999) and treat tourism

as a package to improve locals' economic mobility as well as a system in which the host takes

control and facilitates appropriate intercultural conversations between the host and the guest. Tibetan

traditional value and Buddhist philosophy function as moral standards to prevent over-

commercialized and unethical behavior in this form of "people-centered development."

Convey correct cultural representation to the general public

Local preservation activists intend to transmit correct cultural representations to the general

public through providing tourists with educational lectures and chances to participate in everyday

experience of the host community. By doing so, tourists are allowed to not only observe but also dive

into Tibetan ways of life, arts, and learning.

Tibetan family homestay is a design of preservation activists to present the most holistic

picture and vivid experience of Tibetan culture to tourists. Every year, Kelsang provides educational

tours for student groups around the world. During the homestay, students stay and eat with Tibetan

villagers, conduct community service, and participate in daily agricultural activities and singing and

dancing gatherings. The agricultural activities cover everything a local villager will do to make a

living, such as cultivating crops and herding. Doing interviews with village elders about traditional

story-telling is also a crucial component of homestay programs for students. For general tourists,

Kelsang and other preservation activists provide homestays that focus on education of and

participation in Tibetan ways of life without community service and interview. Tourists usually stay

with local villagers for a shorter period of time, observe the village life, and participate in singing

and dancing gatherings. Education on Tibetan cultural norms will be provided before a homestay

starts. For example, appropriate dressing code, religious conduct, and deference to elders will be

announced on behalf of a deserved respect for villagers and a tourist's comprehension of a person's

social role in a Tibetan family and community. In singing and dancing gatherings, Tibetan villagers

will present folk music and skor bro, a type of Tibetan circle dance that usually appears in festival

rituals and rites of passage, to students and tourists and actively engage them in these traditional art

forms. The representation of music and dance, along with educational lectures about symbolic

meanings and traditional teachings that are embedded in these oral traditions, inform the general

public a meaningful and holistic perspective of Tibetan culture. A Tibetan spirituality, value, and

cosmology are made known to the public in these processes. By engaging in daily activities, students

and tourists are also introduced to Tibetan hard work and wisdom to survive and thrive on this

plateau.

"Experience it" program is another method for activists to deliver vivid cultural

representation of Tibetan art and artists to the public. In my research, activists exercise "experience

it" programs of Thangka painting, Tibetan jewelry, embroidery, leather carving, and black pottery

throughout the general Shangrila region. Tourists often receive brief educational lectures about the

historical and social backgrounds of traditional art forms and then take part in the making processes.

For example, in Thangka "experience it" programs, tourists will be informed of Buddhist legends

and spirituality in a specific Thangka that they want to experience. By engaging tourists in craft-making, activists aim to provide a vivid experience and allow the general public to understand local artists' hard work and enthusiasm on traditional craftsmanship.

In homestay and "experience it" programs, local society's back regions are selected from everyday experience and displayed in front of tourists, such as deliberate representations of traditional songs and dances in singing and dancing gatherings that usually appear in certain festival rituals and rites of passage. However, preservation activists don't regard these representations as negative staged performances since they are extracts of Tibetan ways of life. Most of the time, tourists just flow with daily life patterns of villagers and artists. In homestays, preservation activists build up close connection between villagers and tourists, through which local participants host tourists as dear friends from distant places instead of merely providing service in tourism industry. The commercial feeling is diluted in this context. One activist also stated the significant role of traditional modes of production in generating Tibetan social structure and value. By engaging tourists in traditional modes of production, the homestay and "experience it" programs accelerate intercultural conversations between the host and the guest, transform the identity of a tourist into an inner participant of a local ways of life, and educate tourists with correct representations of Tibetan culture.

Increase cultural awareness and appreciation from locals and tourists to Tibetan traditions

In Shangrila, Tibetan cultural preservation's effort to connect traditional culture with commercial market promotes Tibetan cultural image to the general public and raises both tourists' and locals' awareness and appreciation of Tibetan traditions.

Thangka Center, as a non-profit organization that is dedicated to the revival of Thangka art,

provides Tibetan youth from western China with four-year professional Thangka training. Palden, the director of Thangka Center, expressed the gradual influence of his organization on raising locals' and tourists' awareness and appreciation of Tibetan traditions,

> A stage like our organization allows local community to attain more knowledge [of Thangka art]. Before we came, despite other nationalities, many Tibetans here didn't know what Thangka is… what is in the painting? They couldn't even recognize Buddhist deities! Now it is better…they can ask us. We gradually influence people in our surrounding. They learn about Thangka art, Buddhist spirituality, they will also encourage others to learn…Tourists will also recommend us to their friends.

In this context, Thangka Center functions as an accessible resource for the local community and tourists to extract knowledge of Thangka art and its related Buddhist philosophy and legends. In addition to locals' random visits, schools also organize tours to Thangka Center for local students to learn about their traditional art and spirituality. Contrasted by unethical commercial activities in Shangrila's tourism market, Thangka Center's passion on cultural preservation moves many tourists and make them willing to donate and help for its mission.

The gradual influence also occurs in other homestay and "experience it" programs and Dolma's handicraft poverty reduction project. For the sake of extra income, more and more younger Tibetans are participating in singing and dancing gatherings that allow them to understand more about the charisma of and values imbedded in their oral traditions. On the other hand, tourists also learn to appreciate these traditional art forms and realize their cultural and social significance in a Tibetan traditional community. The appreciation from tourists, as a result, transforms the pure monetary relationship between the host and the guest and encourage locals to identify with and appreciate their own traditions. Younger people are also motivated to learn from elders. In Dolma's handicraft project, she wishes local handicraft makers can find their dignity and confidence through a transaction behavior. A transaction should contain an equal relationship between a seller and a buyer

in which a product is valued by its quality. The amount of money a tourist pays for a handicraft should be based on his or her acknowledgement on its quality and cultural significance instead of pity. Through this equal power dynamic, Dolma hopes local handicraft makers increase their confidence in traditional aesthetics and discover their potential to be creative and self-sufficient.

In present day Shangrila, local people gradually return to traditional rituals for celebrating life's transitions and religious festivals. Tourists also start to prefer everyday experience to gain a holistic perspective of the host community. With government's increasing emphasis on cultural preservation and local involvement, cultural awareness and appreciation from locals and tourists of Tibetan traditions are increasing.

Utilize tourism as a niche to improve local's well-being and preserve Tibetan cultural heritage: the balance between modernity and tradition

When I asked the "what can you do better" question during the interviews, many preservation activists expressed their wishes to have more efficacious intercultural communication and incorporation of modernity into Tibetan tradition. As a matter of fact, handling the delicate balance between modernity and tradition is the central issue preservation activists are tackling. They hope the local society can have the advantage to enjoy the benefits brought by modern technology and liberal perspectives, but still be able to preserve the traditional value that is the root of Tibetan identity. Following this ideology, preservation activists develop their unique style of "people-centered development" that shapes tourism as a specific hosting space of Tibetan traditional social structure and modern mode of production as a tangible carrier of Tibetan traditional value.

This theory is manifested in all of the programs designed by local preservation activists. The Tibetan family homestay programs intend to increase locals' economic mobility and eliminate

inequity to a lesser degree by introducing global business and touristic activities into rural villages. With the effort to connect rural communities with commercial market, younger people gain more employment opportunity and receive higher income without leaving their hometowns. Consequently, more and more Tibetan younger people are satisfied with and choose to stay in activists' homestay programs due to the benefits of acquiring a higher living standard and reviving their traditional culture. A niche is thus created, in which a traditional social structure and a sense of community and collectivity is preserved. Younger people can inherit a traditional Tibetan value, spirituality, and aesthetics better by living in a traditional social structure and feeling a sense of collectivity. The homestay's attempt to engage tourists in villagers' daily activities also opens a door for industrial experience and liberal perspectives to enter into local communities. Intercultural communication happens in various contexts, including daily interactions, agricultural activities, singing and dancing gatherings. In response to locals' sharing of their ways of life, tourists coming from diverse cultural, social, and professional backgrounds also share stories of other cultural traditions and knowledge of modern technology, health, and hygiene.

I was told in my research that many traditional art forms fade away because they serve less practical and symbolic use in modern society. An effort that contributes to the revival of traditional art forms but is disconnected to modern modes of production is a waste. In Thangka center, the organization invests a large amount of time and money to train students professionally in Thangka art. However, many students after graduation work in restaurants and hotels instead of Thangka-related industry for their lack of business skills and relatively small demand in domestic and international art market. In order to solve this problem, Thangka Center with other preservation activists design "experience it" programs as a buffer zone between newly graduated students and

commercial market in the real world, in which students can accumulate work experience, build up their business skills, and get a whole picture of working in tourism industry. After transition out of "experience it" programs, they can develop their independence and carry on Thangka art in their life and to future generations. "Experience it" programs in Tibetan embroidery and leather carving also collaborate with local schools to recruit students and provide employment opportunities to these students.

Many preservation activists working on traditional Tibetan craftmanship adopt creative thinking and innovative methods on their production in order to integrate modern techniques and aesthetics. For example, without altering the traditional making process, activists actively explore different possible external shapes and using contexts of black pottery, which was only used as brazier and cooking ware in ancient time. In modern society where people do not use fire to keep warm, activists design black pottery into teapots, censers, hotpots, or decorations for various modern lifestyles. Another example is Tibetan leather making that traditionally produced water containers or harnesses for traveling and herding purposes. Nowadays, preservation activists transform the craftmanship into leather carving and add religious symbols and story-telling into the carvings to promote Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan traditional value to the general public. It turns out that the story-telling and decorative carvings attract more tourists than the completely traditional forms because of their cultural significance and innovative aesthetics.

Besides all of the projects mentioned above, Dolma's handicrafts poverty reduction project contributes some very interesting and valuable ethnographic data to my research. Her project not only improves locals' living standard and facilitates cultural preservation and intercultural communication, but also somehow asserts Tibetan feminist rights, emphasizing Tibetan women's

social role, and improving their social status in the traditional Tibetan community. Focusing on

Tibetan women in rural villages, especially single mothers and the disabled, Dolma's project

provides opportunity for local women that do not have accessibility to labor market because of

disability or maternal responsibility to earn extra income. The project cooperates with the local

government to gain official subsidies for initial training and American designers to integrate modern

and Tibetan traditional aesthetics in their handicraft products. Local women in this project thus are

able to learn a useful skill to make themselves a livelihood and at the same time remain at home to

fulfill their maternal responsibility. In addition, in a traditional Tibetan family where a mother acts as

a crucial bond to link all of the family members, her happiness and positive life attitude is essential

to influence the entire family and transmit optimism to the larger community. The making process of

an intricately designed handicraft with diverse patterns and colors requires makers to have a

completely calm mind and careful attention to details. Tibetan women, through this process, are

allowed to feel solitude and tranquility, and think and reflect on their lives. According to Dolma, the

feeling of inner self, as a result, enables a woman to feel and understand her children and family.

Dolma's field research finds out that the index of happiness of families that are taking part in

handicraft projects are generally higher than other families in the local community. More

importantly, doing handicraft also gives single mothers confidence to prove their ability to live well

without having a husband. Single mothers working in the handicraft project are often appreciated by

other people and their social status are somehow increased in local community.

The opportunity given by the local government to handicraft makers in this project to attend

exhibitions in Chinese major cities also facilitates intercultural communication. There is a mutual

studying of concepts of multicultural environments where local women acquire knowledge of

modern modes of production and outsiders are educated about Shangrila's traditional handicrafts.

Dolma said during the interview,

> You improve your economic condition, on the other hand your family becomes more
> harmonious and you are happy, this seldom happens. More money doesn't mean happiness.
> But through making handicraft, through this process you know about your culture, you get in
> touch with more people, you know about others' cultures. This [open and communicating]
> state, I really like it.

Cultural inheritance is another significant intention in the handicraft project. When doing a

business in commercial market, a handicraft maker needs to understand thoroughly about the

traditional value and aesthetics that are embedded in handicrafts in order to promote her products to

tourists. For example, the Ashtamangala series consists of handicrafts that illustrate a sacred suite of

Eight Auspicious Signs of Tibetan Buddhism. When making Ashtamangala handicrafts, Tibetan

women are required to figure out what is Ashtamangala; what constitutes eight auspicious signs; why

are they auspicious signs; and what are Ashtamangala's symbolic meanings in Tibetan ways of life.

During the ancient time, the sacred texts and images of Tibetan Buddhism only appeared in

monasteries that had restricted access to the common people. By adding religious elements into daily

objects, Dolma wishes handicraft makers and tourists to have access to learn about Tibetan

Buddhism and its traditional value. The animal series also allow locals and tourists to learn more

about the importance of animals in Tibetan traditional modes of production and the harmonious

cosmology between human and nature. A Tibetan woman's daily interaction with her family

members also carry out inheritance of traditional value, especially traditional story-telling attached to

handicraft motifs, through the family line. In Dolma's handicraft poverty reduction project, the

handicraft essentially functions as a carrier of Tibetan value, spirituality, and aesthetics, as well as a

bridge to transmit these core ideologies to tourists and the general public.

In all of the preservation activists' "responsible tourism" programs, the Tibetan traditional

value, spirituality, and aesthetics serve as a moral standard for Tibetan conduct in commercial

market. When the local government's oversight and market regulation are deficient, local

preservation activists hope to gradually resurrect traditional Tibetan ethics, a complementary social

regulation to legal system, and encourage local participants in tourism industry to perform

appropriate commercial behavior through their experience in homestay, "experience it," and

handicraft programs.

Conclusion

In my research, Shangrila's tourism is not a unidirectional power that are imposed by local

agency on tourists or by tourists on local society. It is a complex system, in which the host and the

guest both yield influence, and political, economic, cultural and social environments are intertwined.

In this system, the political economy of state-sponsored tourism and globalization, as the economic

and political aggressions from outside, have brought along many disruptive socio-cultural changes

into local landscape and threaten the survival of Tibetan traditional value in the local society.

However, with negative influence, these outside aggressions fortunately stimulate local awareness of

Tibetan identity and their unique traditions. Receptive to modern perspectives and unrestricted in

traditional socio-political boundary, Tibetan preservation activists negotiate with the overarching

structure of tourism and develop a form of "people-centered development" that prioritizes local

cultural and social well-being over economic growth in tourism industry. In this form of sustainable

development, preservation activists design "responsible tourism" programs and manipulate tourism

into a niche in which traditional social structure is preserved and modern modes of production serve

as substantial carriers of the Tibetan value, spirituality, and aesthetics. Under the formidable trend of

globalization and modernization, preservation activists try their best to incorporate the local society

into modernity and preserve Tibetan traditional culture as the root of their identity.

However, things do not always work out perfectly for everyone's satisfaction. Problems still exist in Shangrila's cultural preservation and tourism industry. There is a disconnection among different preservation organizations that lack a holistic understanding of Tibetan culture as a complex whole of elements and address their enthusiasm only on particular Tibetan traditions. Cultural commodification is another intricate problem that is hard to picture in Shangrila's social landscape. Brought up by Western scholars, the concept of cultural commodification is usually associated with the notions of race and colonialism in the United States. In the Far East where socio-political structures historically do not accommodate the concepts of race and colonialism, the westernized "cultural commodification" obviously is not applicable to the commodification of culture in Shangrila's tourism industry and cultural preservation. In my research, with preservation activists' unique perception of culture as flexible and evolving, "over-commercialization" seems to be a better descriptive and less controversial alternative for this phenomenon. In Shangrila, the vague balance between commercial behaviors and sacred knowledge in Buddhism has led to spiritual pollution and many mercenary behaviors at the expense of performers' conscience and recipients' well-being. As a result, all of the preservation activists in my research wish the local government can function as a leading force and a legislative and financial backup for local tourism and cultural preservation through establishing considerate oversight system and strongly enforcing market regulations.

If Shangrila is a chess game, then I am a pawn; I am also a chess player. I am an insider; I am also an outsider. In Shangrila, I have witnessed people that escape from urban restlessness to search for inner tranquility; I have witnessed people that escape from remoteness for urban life and technology; I have witnessed people that just flow with social transgressions; I have witnessed

people that grip their traditions and refuse to yield; I have also witnessed people that hide their faith and choose to take a detour to fight against the good and evil from social transgressions. In reality, Shangrila is not a paradise or The Peach Blossom Spring far away from worldly conflicts. It is a society with contradictory socio-political dynamics, sacred faith and hopes, and secular emotions and lusts. Everyone views a different "Shangrila" through their own way of conceptualizing the world.

This is when Shangrila goes back to imagination.

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