

Cultural strategies of development: implications for village governance in China

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Abstract Since the early 1990s, culture has come to be recognized as a significant regional development resource in China. This paper raises the question of whether cultural strategies of development have ameliorated or exacerbated the government's increasing inability to provide for the public's basic needs. Specifically, it asks: what are the implications of China's cultural strategies of regional development for local-level governance? Three case study villages in Guizhou are examined, each revealing different ways that villages have engaged state development strategies, each with different outcomes. I argue that cultural strategies of development in China introduce a capital logic that greatly influences village governance. Cultural strategies create economic value where none before existed and thus initiate new struggles over ownership among villagers, state actors and entrepreneurs. The privatization of cultural resources has presented new challenges to village governance even while it has been promoted as both an answer to the fiscal challenges faced by many rural communities and a key to the establishment of a new kind of rural citizen.

Keywords Culture; development; governance.

Introduction: the entrepreneurial model

Since the early 1990s, culture has come to be recognized as a significant regional development resource in China. On 10 January 1990, *People's Daily* printed a speech by Minister of Culture Li Ruihuan titled 'Some questions relevant to enhancing the outstanding elements of national culture' (*Guanyu*

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hongyang minzu youxiu wenhua de ruogan wenti). According to Guo Yingjie, this speech was the Party's green light for the development of national and local folk cultures, resulting in the rapid publication of many books, magazines and encyclopedias on regional folk art, opera, dance, acrobatics, painting and calligraphy. In his speech, Li also instructed that 'cultural sites and relics, ancient texts and manuscripts were to be preserved, protected and restored; that new buildings, especially libraries, museums, theaters, schools, parks and bridges should contribute to a 'physical environment that exhibits distinct national features' (Guo 2004: 31). Guo interprets Li's speech and its implications in the context of the Party's post-1989 turn to traditional culture, part of a broader effort to rekindle nationalism and shore up its legitimacy within and control over an alienated society. But the new regionalist renaissance initiated in part by Li's speech can also be interpreted as part of a broader 'cultural turn' in regional development strategies, one in which cultural resources have come to be viewed as possessing equal if not greater economic potential than traditional factor endowments typically marshaled by local governments in their development planning.

In addition to the Party's efforts to rekindle national pride in the wake of widespread post-Tiananmen malaise, the cultural turn in 1990s regional development was also a direct outcome of the state's fiscal decentralization. With central government revenues in a dramatic free fall because of a dysfunctional tax system inherited from the planned economy, fiscal responsibilities were increasingly devolved to local governments (see Oksenberg and Tong 1991; Wong 1991; Wong *et al.* 1995; Lardy 1998; Wedeman 1999). This resulted in a new entrepreneurial outlook on the part of many local governments as revenue generation came to be regarded as the primary function of the local state. In this climate of entrepreneurialism, local culture is being viewed increasingly as not just a resource for pride, nationalism and Party legitimacy, but as a viable and even dynamic economic sector capable of significant revenue generation, particularly in situations where the local state's capital investment resources were limited. As Minxin Pei (2003) has noted, however, this entrepreneurialism has not reversed the declining effectiveness of the Chinese state to fund public services at the local level. The turn to culture raises the question of whether cultural strategies of development have ameliorated or exacerbated the government's increasing inability to provide for the public's basic needs.

Examples of the cultural turn in China's regional development abound (Feng 1999a; Oakes 2000; Goodman 2002). At a provincial scale, there have been efforts to reconstruct provincial identity by mobilizing regional cultural symbols in the hope that a popular sense of regional cultural identity will somehow translate into a vibrant commercial economy, increased investments and increased revenues. Prominent examples include the rise of Nanyue culture in Guangdong (Lary 1996), Chu culture in Hubei (Friedman 1994), merchant culture in Shanxi (Zhang 1998) and Anhui (Zhou and Li

1998), and Gan culture in Jiangxi (Feng 1999b). Municipal, district and county governments have also been involved in exploiting cultural resources for development purposes. Often this simply involves turning a local specialty product into a 'culture' in order to laden its exchange value with symbolic capital. Thus, counties throughout China have been promoting themselves as hearths of such things as 'Hunan lotus culture', 'bamboo weaving culture', 'paper-cut culture', 'bamboo shoot culture', 'liquor distilling culture', 'tea culture', and so on. These examples illustrate the way that culture is often viewed in simple instrumental terms, as a mere label meant to enhance the value of an export product. Yet cultural strategies of development often mean much more than this.

While there remains a great variety of ways in which local governments approach culture as a development resource, there is consistency in the view that the culture industries represent an enormous untapped resource for many places. Thus, while local governments are increasingly interested in promoting local culture for development, they are hoping to rely on a growing commercial sector in order to develop these resources. This entrepreneurial approach to development – which could be characterized in terms of a public–private partnership in the development of cultural resources – is remarkably similar to that taken by many North American cities. The 'entrepreneurial city' emerged in the context of a broader transformation in the United States political economy whereby public goods provision was transferred to the private sector. Despite being widely viewed as a withdrawal, or shrinking, of the state *vis-à-vis* the market, this 'neoliberal revolution' in fact saw a growth in collaboration between government and private actors. As argued by critical geographers, the concept of the 'entrepreneurial city' suggested that North American urban governance had transformed from a system of managerialism and public oversight to one of market boosterism. Cities, it was argued, were privatizing formerly public industries and services (such as education, utilities and public transport), and turning to the private sector to promote urban economic growth (Logan and Molotch 1987; Jonas and Wilson 1999). One particular criticism of urban entrepreneurialism argued that it ceded to the private sector the public spaces within which urban street democracy was thought to thrive.

Culture necessarily played an important role in urban entrepreneurialism because turning cities into economic growth machines meant emphasizing their unique place-based amenities and endowments. Thus, in addition to being redefined as entrepreneurial rather than managerial, city governments were seen as deliberately fostering a cultural economy. Cities sought to attract culture industries to invest in the urban labor market while at the same time helping to produce and improve the city's image. In an age of flexible accumulation, mobile capital and geographically expanding labor markets, cities now competed with one another for exposure in a globalizing economy. Place-based attributes like local cultural distinctiveness thus became

important in distinguishing one city from its competitors. Logan and Molotch (1987: 294) argued that municipal officials were 'in the business of manipulating place for its exchange value'. Selling places, however, was not at all a risk-free prospect. David Harvey (1989) argued that North American cities became market players and that they assumed the financial risk of private investment. Entrepreneurialism was a risky undertaking in terms of urban governance because development projects became 'such a focus of public and political attention that they divert concern and even resources from the broader problems that may beset the region or territory as a whole' (Harvey 1989: 8).

Since the emergence of entrepreneurial cities in North America, culture has become a key focus of international development on a much broader scale. Culture is now recognized throughout much of the world as a vital partner in the generation of economic value chains. Disputes over the treatment of the 'culture industries' have taken up a greater and greater share of WTO negotiations, and this was true in the case of China's WTO accession as well. And culture has become central to the development agenda promoted by UNESCO, as evidenced by its promotion of the 'World Decade for Cultural Development' (1988–97). Culture is now regarded as the key to sustainable economic development. As noted by Michael Keane (2004: 82), 'This kind of cultural development is based on the vision of a future in which national governments deliver basic public services such as telecommunications, health, and education, while facilitating the conditions for value-adding knowledge-based industries based upon sustainable development models' (see also Matarasso 2001; Yúdice 2003). We also see here a belief that cultural strategies of development are a vital part of a larger package of 'good governance' on the part of the state.

If cultural strategies of development are indeed comparable between local governments in China and those in North American cities, then the following question presents itself: what are the implications of China's cultural strategies of regional development for local-level governance? Asking this question, of course, implies several others. What is the role of the state in China's cultural strategies of regional development? To what extent does the entrepreneurial city model match China's regional political economy? Have cultural strategies of development in China resulted in the privatization of formerly communal cultural resources? If so, has the privatization of culture had any impact on the state's provision of basic welfare? Or, have cultural strategies in fact succeeded in generating a stronger sense of local identity? Has cultural development resulted in stronger social networks and community ties, resulting in more effective local self-governance? This paper represents a preliminary attempt to address these questions by looking at the ways cultural strategies of development in Guizhou province have influenced village governance. I examine three case studies, each revealing different ways that villages have engaged state development strategies, each with different outcomes. The paper thus raises an additional question

to those above: how do cultural strategies – which are typically thought to emerge from and predominantly benefit urban regions – relate to *rural* communities? In a situation where public money seldom flows down to the villages, do cultural strategies improve village access to welfare provision? That is, do cultural strategies contribute to the kind of governance outcomes hoped for by UNESCO, or is culture a resource that only continues the diversion of funds towards revenue generation and away from basic needs?

By examining the cases of three villages which have engaged Guizhou's incipient cultural economy in different ways, I argue that cultural strategies of development in China introduce a capital logic that greatly influences village governance. Cultural strategies create economic value where none before existed and thus initiate new struggles over ownership among villagers, state actors and entrepreneurs. The privatization of cultural resources has presented new challenges to village governance even while it has been promoted as both an answer to the fiscal challenges faced by many rural communities and a key to the establishment of a new kind of rural citizen. As revealed in the case studies, villagers have responded to these challenges in a variety of ways. And while it is clear that cultural strategies are undoubtedly reshaping villager subjectivity in significant ways, they often do so at the cost of new kinds of social polarization.

It should be noted at the outset that this paper does not propose a definitive analysis of China's cultural economy. Its focus is rather on the implications for governance of the local state's development strategies in which the cultural economy figures prominently. The notion of a 'cultural economy' is often associated with two broad arguments in the social sciences: first, that there has been a broad 'cultural turn' in economic knowledge and, second, that the value of economic goods is increasingly dominated by symbolic or cultural properties (du Gay and Pryke 2002). Of the former argument – that culture is regarded as an increasingly important way in which we understand the economy – there is little dispute. But the latter claim remains highly debated. Thus, while Scott Lash and John Urry (1994), Allen Scott (2000) and Sharon Zukin (1995) all argue that the political economy of North American cities has undergone a cultural turn accompanied by the rise of a 'symbolic economy', Daniel Miller (2002: 173) has argued that there is no convincing evidence of such a shift and that the assertion that the economy is now more cultural than before represents 'a sleight of hand through which a shift in academic emphasis is presupposed to reflect a shift in the world that these academics are describing'. Regardless of whether China's economy can be said to have undergone some sort of 'cultural turn' in any empirical sense, I argue that the local state nevertheless *behaves* as if this is in fact the case. The cultural economy in China is thus very real in a policy sense, if not in an economic sense, and such policy has specific material outcomes at the local scale. Describing these outcomes is therefore the primary objective of this paper.

Cultural strategies of development in China

As Jing Wang (2003) has observed, culture is now treated in China as an economic sector subject to regulation through state policies and promotion through state entrepreneurship. In 2001 the 'culture industries' (*wenhua chanye*) were officially recognized among those economic sectors in which there would be a withdrawal of state capital, to be replaced by private investment. Then at the 16th Party Congress in 2002, according to Wang, a distinction was made between public cultural institutions (*wenhua shiye*), in which the state was to maintain dominance, and commercial cultural enterprises (*wenhua chanye*), from which the state would gradually withdraw. The latter included higher and professional education, sports and entertainment industries, audio-visual production, exhibitions, performance industries and tourism. The former, non-commercializable sectors, included compulsory education, institutions responsible for the preservation of national cultural artifacts, libraries, museums and cultural work stations.

The Party's decision represents an attempt to define the boundaries of what is acceptable behavior on the part of local governments in terms of commercially developing cultural resources. After more than a decade of relatively unregulated cultural strategies, the Party was perhaps increasingly concerned about the blurring of market and public interests in the field of culture. In this light, the 2002 decision can be seen as an attempt to put the brakes on the increasing privatization of cultural resources as a result of local governments pursuing cultural strategies of development. As with many other aspects of China's reforms, the state finds itself trying to balance its ideological preference for control of public goods while recognizing the benefits of market incentives to spur regional economic growth.

China's culture industries have come to be regarded by local governments as a powerful resource for a host of objectives, from poverty alleviation to industrialization to revenue generation and attracting external investment. Cultural development has become a buzzword of local state economic policy. 'Culture', Wang (2001: 71) argues, 'is a top agenda item for public policy makers, city planners, and both the central and local states'. Culture is a site where political and economic capital can now be accumulated in China: 'The state's rediscovery of culture as a site where new ruling technologies can be deployed and converted simultaneously into economic capital constitutes one of its most innovative strategies of statecraft since the founding of the People's Republic' (ibid: 71-2).

At the local level, Wang (ibid.: 86) cites the so-called 'Guangdong phenomenon' in which the Guangdong Provincial Institute of Cultural Development Strategies launched numerous cultural programs and festivals in 1994, 'utilizing culture to promote business'. Recognizing the growing power of the symbolic economy, the local state started taxing cultural industries around this time, while making donations to cultural institutions tax deductible. At the same time, a growing awareness 'of the worth of signs (both written and

visual) – logos, trademarks, design patents, and brand names (the so-called invisible assets) – and no less important, the image-capital of a city’ (ibid.: 87).

Yet cultural strategies do not necessarily mean a straightforward instrumental approach to ‘culture’ as an economic field, in which x investment yields y output and revenue. Cultural strategies are also viewed as a broader governance mechanism. Local states thus find themselves asking the following question: ‘How might cultural programs be developed to encourage populations to be more resourceful and self-regulating?’ (Keane 2004: 80). The use of culture as a governance tool was, significantly, pioneered by the private sector which for some time now has been undergoing a ‘cultural turn’ of its own in terms of enterprise organization. Firms now emphasize their ‘corporate culture’ as the key to success in the marketplace. The beauty of culture, argues Stuart Hall (1997: 235), is that:

rather than constraining the conduct, behavior and attitudes of the employees by the imposition of an external regime of social control, [culture] endeavors to get employees subjectively to *regulate themselves*. The strategy is to get the subjects to align their own personal and subjective motivations and aspirations with the motivations of the organization, to redefine their skills and capacities in line with the personal and professional job-specifications of the firm, to internalize organizational objectives as their own subjective goals. They will use what Foucault calls the ‘technologies of the self to ‘make themselves up’, to produce themselves – in du Gay’s terms – as different kinds of enterprising subjects. Regulation through the medium of ‘culture change’ – through a shift in the ‘regime of meanings’ and by the production of new subjectivities, within a new set of organizational disciplines – is another, powerful, mode of ‘governing *by* culture’.

Deployed by the state, therefore, cultural strategies potentially achieve more than just economic outcomes. They can be instrumental in creating new subjectivities which contribute to the state’s desired governance outcomes. At the village scale, cultural strategies are meant to create enterprising subjects along the lines of the corporate employees discussed here by Hall. At the urban scale, as Wang (2001) has argued, they seek to create consuming subjects whose demand for leisure culture will draw them to the products offered by their enterprising rural counterparts.

In part, this means that cultural strategies are aimed at generating public enthusiasm and participation in development by cultivating a sense of regional identity and cultural pride that will translate into popular support for the local government and enterprises engaged in commercial development and market expansion. Thus, according to an ‘official’s manual’ on cultural development written by Zhou Shangyi and Kong Xiang (2000), popular

enthusiasm for the local government's selected cultural symbols is fundamental to a locality's ability to attract and generate economic development.

Zhou and Kong cite Walter Benjamin and note that China has entered the age of industrial mass production and that because of this the culture industries have become a major sector of the economy. 'Mass replication' of culture is now possible through the increasingly commercialized film, broadcast and print media, and advertising sectors. Rather than signaling the demise of local cultural distinctiveness, Zhou and Kong see the industrialization of popular culture—the rise of commercial culture industries—as an important opportunity for the promotion of a locally flavored symbolic economy. This makes it very important, they argue, to recognize and understand regionally-specific culture in China, because for them culture has become *the* fundamental element of economic development. The primary role of the local state, they claim, is to create symbols around which a local cultural identity can be formed and mobilized. Producing images and cultural symbols has thus become *the* new field of local governance. If done well, the production of local cultural images and symbols can spur commerce, enrich development, and attract investment and human capital (ibid.: 21). In particular, cultural development is seen to lead to new types of economic activity: the service sector, the entertainment industries and the hi-tech sector. This is particularly important to localities whose capacities for income generation have been limited by an economy dominated by low-priced primary goods such as agricultural, forest or mineral products. The key to this is the local government's ability to select and promote the right symbols and produce the kind of space attractive to external investment. While the state can no longer plan the economy, Zhou and Kong assert, it can develop partnerships with the private sector in which the state provides the culture, and investors provide the capital.

It is significant to note that Zhou and Kong advocate precisely the same approach to development that Sharon Zukin critiques in *The Cultures of Cities* (1995; see also Zukin 1991). The symbolic economy of culture, she argues, produces new kinds of spaces and new kinds of symbols, and its production system is increasingly formed by public-private partnerships, such as the BIDs (business improvement districts) in New York City, which act to displace the public goods provisioning functions of a depleted municipal government. The public spaces of modernist urbanism—city squares, green parks, neighborhood playgrounds—are thus replaced by privatized spaces meant to look 'public' but in fact oriented toward consumption and tightly regulated to keep non-consumptive uses to a minimum: shopping malls, festival markets, pedestrian streets.

As revealed in the title of a collection of essays on the decline of urban public space in North America, the model for these cultural strategies is Disney (Sorkin 1992; see also Wilson 1992). And it is therefore ironic that Disney World and Disneyland should idealize 'public space' with their 'Main Street, USA' and other versions of nostalgic simulacra. The Disney-theme

park model of an America that never was has become a competitive development strategy for city planners throughout the US – dubbed ‘new urbanism’ – promoting the reclaiming of cities for the people. The strategy, according to Zukin, is straightforward (and reminiscent of Zhou and Kong’s advice for local officials in China): develop a visual image of the city, market it as the city’s symbol, pick an area of the city to reflect this image—waterfront commercial complex, beaux-arts train station, street of red-brick shops, whatever—and turn it all over to a private company to manage. Disney World pioneered this approach as ‘America’s urban laboratory’ for festival marketplaces, shopping malls, museum displays, ski resorts and planned residential communities. And Disney’s phenomenal success makes the simulacra of the symbolic economy very real.

Zukin’s argument is that the cultural economy of themes, symbols and aesthetics is fundamental to establishing social order. Disney World is a ‘landscape of power’ which orders space and subjectivity, reining-in the unruliness of spontaneous place-making. Here, *visual* images of culture play a particularly important role, for they are easily commodified, lend themselves well to mass reproduction, and are called upon to define new spatial identities. Visual culture is a ‘euphemism for the city’s new representation as a creative force in the emerging service economy’ (Zukin 1995: 268). Similarly, Zhou and Kong stress the importance of the local state’s selection of a clear and concise *visual* symbol of local culture. Visual symbols, they point out, are easily marketed and readily recalled by locals and outsiders alike; they both attract external investment and offer a sign around which new enterprising and consuming subjectivities may be given meaning.

Zukin (ibid.: 273) also notes the central role played by tourism, particularly in the early development of the cultural economy. Tourism naturally

fits the transience and image creation of a service economy based on mass media and telecommunications. On a local level, developing tourism works well with real estate interests and absorbs, to some degree, men and women in the workforce who have been displaced by structural and locational changes.

Nevertheless, Zukin continues, these kinds of cultural strategies like tourism represent a ‘worst case scenario’ for cities; they suggest the *absence* of new industrial strategies for growth in the hi-tech and knowledge sectors (Storper 1997; Scott 2000), but they are always available when a city has few other cards to play.

Zukin’s view of cultural strategies as a ‘worst case scenario’ stems from her belief that culture deployed by an entrepreneurial state not only leads to the erosion of the ‘public domain’ (Drache 2001) but in fact *masks* that erosion with the popular spectacle of consumable culture, thereby serving to enlist public support in the destruction of their own public spaces. The new subjectivities of cultural development, according to Zukin, regulate

themselves in the interest of capital. Cultural strategies, then, represent a Gramscian project of manufactured consent. Because of their ambiguous symbolic qualities cultural resources are freighted with ideological baggage. When public spaces are requisitioned in the name of cultural strategies of development, then, they no longer serve the interests of 'the public'.

Any application of this line of critique to the situation in China necessarily raises questions about whether such modernist dualisms as 'public' and 'private' or 'state' and 'market' can be translated at all. Western conceptions of an autonomous democratic civil society upon which much of Zukin's critique is based do not have easily identifiable equivalents in China, nor can a clear separation of state and society be delineated (Kraus 2000). China's traditional 'civil' institutions, such as lineage and temple associations, merchant and trade guilds, or even social networks of *guanxi* ties, cannot be seen as serving a social function autonomous of the state. Rather, they often serve as fundamental to *building* the state from the locality upwards (see, for a related argument, Fitzgerald 1995). Whereas Zukin sees in cultural strategies the violation of a public-private divide vital to free democratic governance, the Chinese context for such strategies is significantly different. In China today, when the state turns to the development of cultural resources, it does not necessarily imply the violation of a public-private divide, but perhaps the marshaling of civic resources upon which the state has often turned for effective governance at the local scale. At the village level, as will be discussed in the cases below, cultural strategies do not so much privatize existing 'public goods' or 'public spaces' but create new products and spaces which are immediately subject to struggles over ownership.

Nevertheless, the Chinese state's calculated policy approach to the development of leisure culture clearly reminds us of Zukin's point that if public space is to be ceded to private interests then a new consumer ideology of leisure is also necessary to fill this privatized space with seemingly public activity. The consuming subject inhabits with pleasure Zukin's new spaces of public-private partnership (shopping malls, theme parks, festival markets, pedestrian streets). Similarly, in China, the state has collaborated with the market to produce a new consuming subject in urban China by, for instance, shortening the work week to five days, implementing three national 'golden weeks' for travel and leisure, lowering interest rates so residents can spend more, and shifting entertainment into the realm of 'middle-class' consumers rather than elites (i.e. replacing the old *gongfei* banquet culture). The 'cultural economy', Wang (2001: 76) comments, is now 'the center of gravity of everyday life and is, therefore, the bull's-eye for public policy making'.

If the cultural economy marks a new ideology of everyday life in China, then it is also important to note the harmony between such strategies and a broader neo-conservative intellectual agenda of re-evaluating traditional, pre-revolutionary models of localism and community as fundamental to promoting China's 'unique' path toward modernization (see Lin and Galikowski 1999: 23-30; Wang 1998). 'Culture' has become a term laden with associations

of pre-revolutionary life, in which social hierarchies and polarization have become part of an organic system, a 'true path' to which localities feel encouraged to gradually return. This, at any rate, is the neo-conservative message which has been picked up loud and clear by my village informants in Guizhou. One village head, for instance, had this to say as he led me through his village, pointing out the ornate architectural features of the residences of former landlords:

Before liberation, this was a very cultured village. Over one-third of the households were landlords! . . . These days, Jiang Zemin and Deng Xiaoping consider the landlords the advanced representatives of economic progress. We should understand this. To me, they weren't landlords, they weren't exploiters. They were people who worked hard, saved their money, and advanced the village along with themselves.

Cultural strategies in Guizhou

What the village head made clear in the above quote is an important relationship between cultural strategies of development and understandings of governance in China. For him, the deployment of 'culture' as a development strategy clearly meant a revision of official attitudes toward the landlord class. It was only the landlords, after all, who 'had culture'. And it was the landlords who bequeathed the village with a cultural heritage, in the form of an attractive built environment, and a tradition of rituals and festivals which were now the village's primary development resource. In seeing a clear connection between 'culture' and 'landlords', then, the village head articulated an understanding of culture as the resource which the village had somehow lost under Mao, was now working hard to regain, and which would return the village to its former prosperity as a 'rich village of landlords'.

The specific case of this village – Ox Market Fort – will be discussed in greater detail below. But it is mentioned here to convey both the relationship between cultural strategies and village governance and the fact that 'culture' is regarded first and foremost in Guizhou as a resource laden with both untapped economic potential and unmistakable connotations of a negation of the Maoist project of state socialism. It is in this respect that culture signals an enterprising subjectivity of the reform era. An understanding of culture as a whole way of life does not precede an understanding of culture as both an economic sector and an ordering of society. More importantly, this understanding is shared by local intellectuals, officials and many villagers alike.

Like hundreds of localities throughout China, many counties and municipalities in Guizhou have been actively pursuing cultural strategies in order to jump-start commercial, service-oriented industries capable of restructuring local economies away from primary resource dependence. As with the rest of China, many of these are merely designed to market a specific product. Many localities promote their own drinking or liquor culture, others promote batik,

embroidery or silver jewelry cultures of ethnic minorities, and still others promote a variety of tea cultures. Some localities seek to promote distinctive performance traditions, such as 'exorcism drama culture' (*nuo wenhua*) in northeastern Guizhou. Other strategies are based more on ethnicity, such as the 'bronze drum culture' (*tongguo wenhua*) promoted in the Miao regions of southeastern Guizhou, or the 'fortress' (*tunpu wenhua*) culture of central Guizhou's Han villagers. And there are provincial examples as well, the most prominent of which is probably 'Yelang culture', named after the ancient kingdom which ruled the area during the late Warring States era.

It may be surprising, then, to note that Guizhou has in fact been relatively slow to pursue cultural strategies of development at a provincial scale. In a recent collection of brief essays marking the 590th anniversary of Guizhou's founding, the problem of identifying a suitable regional culture for Guizhou was explicitly addressed (*Kouxiang Guizhou Lishi Zhi Men* 2003). Guizhou was established for military reasons, rather than emerging as a distinct socio-economic or cultural entity. It was a frontier region with no economic base, and no dominant cultural system or coherent society. Nearly six hundred years later scholars and officials still struggle with the question of how to construct a regional culture to aid Guizhou's development. Recounting a long history of outside – mostly military – influences, due to its strategic location and 'crossroads' position between Sichuan, Yunnan, Guangxi and Hunan, the book argues that if Guizhou has a regional culture, it ought to be called a 'highway culture' (*tongdao wenhua*). Guizhou, then, is seen here as a province of immigrants, and its culture is a unique mixture of transplanted peoples who brought their customs along and reshaped them accordingly.

It is perhaps for this reason that *tunpu* 'fortress' culture of the central region around Anshun has grown in popularity since the late 1990s. The *tunpu* people are the descendents of early Ming soldier-settlers sent to conquer Yunnan, garrison the frontier and guard the post road. Local scholars and officials have increasingly been involved in promoting *tunpu* culture as a symbol of those who came to 'open the road' and create Guizhou. *Tunpu* thus marks the crucial moment in Guizhou's provincial history (Yan and Gao 2002a; Jiang 2004). *Tunpu* heritage is Guizhou's heritage. The *tunpu* people are the 'pilgrims' of Guizhou; their villages—unique in architecture and ritual practice—are the Jamestowns and Williamsburgs of provincial history. *Tunpu* was thus ripe for mobilization as a cultural strategy, helping to develop a tourism-based commercial economy for the central region of the province. That *tunpu* represents Han folk culture was also important. For many local scholars, this was a significant aspect of their interest in the context of the 1980s 'roots searching' movements and general post-Cultural Revolution malaise. *Tunpu* revealed how the Han had not lost touch with their cultural roots in spite of all the turmoil of the recent decades. *Tunpu* could also be valuable in the current drive toward modernization, as a reminder of Confucian Han culture and values as China becomes increasingly urban and 'Westernized'. It was increasingly recognized, therefore, that *tunpu* culture

could be developed as a tourism resource for urban Han eager to get back in touch with their roots.

By the year 2000 interest in *tunpu* had climaxed into a kind of folk culture fever in Guizhou. In addition to the spate of research articles and monographs, dozens of popular books were published about *tunpu*, many of them very well produced with high quality photographs (GSLWYZZ 2001; Anshun Shi Wenhuaaju 2002; Zheng 2002). Some were large-format 'coffee-table' books identifying *tunpu* as Guizhou's folk culture *par excellence*. In 2001 eight *tunpu* villages received state-level recognition as national heritage protection sites. And in 2002 one *tunpu* village—the case of Azure Dragon discussed below—turned itself into a pay-at-the-gate heritage theme park, run by an enterprising local with the cooperation of the township and county governments. By 2003, the second-best selling book in the province was *600 Years of Tunpu*, by two well-known Guiyang journalists (Yan and Gao 2002b). The book offers a compelling narrative of folk roots for an urban population eager to think of Guizhou as culturally distinctive and worthy of cultural pride.

When a district government in Anshun sought to promote the commercialization of the rural economy, it thus invented a new festival centered on *tunpu* culture. The festival, named 'Canola Flower Festival' (*youcaihua-jie*), was timed to occur during the peak blooming – in early spring – of the region's chief winter cash crop to attract tourists and help villagers to understand the value of their crop in a new 'cultural' way. As a district official told me, *youcaihua-jie* is meant to inculcate in villagers a 'culture of commerce' as well as encourage them to take a broader view of their development resources. Canola, she said, produces value twice. Farmers have no trouble understanding the market value of pressed vegetable oil, which is negligible, but it is harder for them to grasp the value of the blossoms as a commercial resource. This entails an understanding of the symbolic economy, and the goal of the festival, she said, is to introduce farmers to this economy and teach them that, ultimately, it holds far greater potential for income generation than what they will ever get from just selling canola oil. The festival thus represents not simply an instrument for income generation, but for new subject formation as well, generating in farmers an enterprising attitude toward symbolic resources.

In addition, the district government along with several counties and townships have been promoting other aspects of *tunpu* cultural tourism – such as a 'mountain song festival' – as a means of introducing the symbolic economy to villagers. The state-level heritage designation status awarded in 2001, for instance, means that local leaders must convince villagers that their old houses and indeed the very space of their village itself as a 'cultural landscape' hold commercial value simply by virtue of the way they look to outsiders. Farmers are encouraged to think of preserving the village environment as part of their 'jobs' in the new cultural economy. *Tunpu* tourism introduces a commerce of aesthetics which is said to hold the key to

poverty alleviation and future prosperity for all in the community because it promises both income generation and a new attitude on the part of villagers. Yet, the case studies below reveal that such an attitude is grasped more quickly by some than others, and that this makes a huge difference in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the effectiveness of village governance within the new cultural economy.

Lily Tsai (2002) has observed that state investment in rural industrialization and other revenue-generating schemes often has the effect of diverting resources away from public welfare projects. As the case of Ox Market Fort suggests below, cultural development can have the same outcome. But the issue is not simply the diversion of resources away from public welfare, but a more profound sense of alienation among villagers from the very resources around which a coherent and functional village society can be built and maintained. As the case of Jin Family Fort indicates, however, such cultural alienation is not always the outcome, but rather depends on whether village leaders act primarily on their own behalf or on behalf of the village. Thus, the primary issue is less whether public goods are becoming privatized but whether villagers can collectively maintain control over the privatization of newly developed cultural resources. The cases below suggest that because of the model adopted by the local state – one which puts private entrepreneurs at the center of cultural development – the deck is stacked against the likelihood that villagers will be able to maintain such collective ownership. This, then, suggests that while cultural development may indeed be producing a new enterprising subject that is self-governing, the more common outcome is merely a regulated subject that has no independent position in village governance.

***Tunpu* cultural development: three case studies**

As part of a broader research project on *tunpu* cultural development in Guizhou, I have been doing fieldwork in several villages in central Guizhou, since 2002. Fieldwork has been in collaboration with scholars at Guizhou Nationalities Institute, with the assistance of scholars at Anshun Normal and Vocational College and Guizhou Academy of Social Sciences. Three case studies illustrate three different village governance outcomes to the local state's promotion of *tunpu* culture as a development strategy. Each of the three villages is recognized by local governments – at municipal, district, county and township levels – as a key site of *tunpu* cultural tourism development. But each has undergone a very different process by which the commercialization of *tunpu* culture has affected village governance.

Azure Dragon: a tunpu culture theme park

From the local government's perspective, the village of Azure Dragon has been by far the most successful in turning culture into a commercial industry.² In 2001, a local entrepreneur named Jin Xiesong formed a joint-stockholding

tourism development company to promote *tunpu* cultural tourism in the village. He had been a cadre in the township government in the 1980s and then worked for the county Supply and Marketing Cooperative in the early 1990s. He was then sent to Shenzhen to open a window enterprise for the county and there he gathered information on tourism promotion and development. In 1999 he was back in Azure Dragon with a vision of the village as a theme park attraction like those he saw in and around Shenzhen. He recognized the village's natural advantages, located just off the planned route of a new Guiyang–Kunming expressway, as well as being the gateway to a provincial-level scenic area that already attracted a modest flow of tourists. He hooked up with a friend who had good relations with the Construction Bank and whose uncle owned the region's largest distillery. They rounded up a group of investors (none of whom lived in Azure Dragon itself), then turned to the county and township governments which provided some nominal investment but, more importantly, backed the project politically. The township provided some buildings it owned in the village rent-free and helped promote the project to higher levels. Jin also enlisted the support of the village elders association (*laonian xiehui*) and formed a village tourism association which was meant to provide a forum for villager involvement in the project. By 2001 tourists were arriving in the village where for a flat entry fee they were treated to a variety of cultural performances, displays and activities. By 2005, some three fourths of all foreign package tourists visiting Guizhou were being brought to Azure Dragon.

Azure Dragon is now regarded by the municipal government as the model for *tunpu* cultural development at the village level. It has emerged as a successful tourist site, attracting day tourists from the provincial capital (a mere hour away on the newly completed Guiyang–Kunming expressway) as well as tour groups from as far away as Nanjing, Hong Kong and Taipei. But its model status derives from the innovative partnership between Jin's company and the local governments at the township and county levels. As stated in an internal document from the municipal construction bureau strategizing future *tunpu* cultural development and circulated to village leaders in the region, "The agreed-upon model is "government + company + peasant households + peasant tourism associations". This model is based on that developed successfully in [Azure Dragon]". The Azure Dragon model embraces the idea of local government providing the institutional and political support while the private sector provides the capital and collects the profits. For instance, government support was necessary in order to relocate the primary school out of the old Confucian School (which is now a teahouse and exhibition center) and into a new building just outside the old village. The local government is also seen as providing the 'culture' since it maintains regulations on cultural preservation that benefit the company's profitability as a tourist site. While the preservation plan has been written by the company, it is enforced by the village committee and the township government, which promulgates regulations prohibiting any alteration of village houses

that threatens the integrity of the village landscape as a cultural resource for tourism development.

At the same time, the government helps with the company's efforts to develop new cultural resources. For *youcaihua*, for example, the company staged a temple fair (*miaohui*) and with the government's help brought together a variety of cultural displays and performances from throughout the area. The fair featured many ritual activities which typically only occur during Spring Festival or during mid-summer – times less convenient for tourism. The outcome was cited by local government officials as an example of the creative blending of commerce and culture that cultural development strives for. As one company official told me in 2004,

You could say that we [the company] have created a new temple fair, one different from a traditional fair. Ours is much larger in scale; it encompasses the whole township. Everyone comes. We have many activities: burning incense, 'carrying the bodhisattvas' [*tai pusa*], 'carrying the pavilion' [*tai tingzi*], 'carrying the big general' [*tai dajiangjun*]. We only started 'carrying the big general' last year, but it was also done in the past. But people didn't carry bodhisattvas at traditional temple fairs; we just started that last year too, along with carrying the big general. We put various cultural practices together. It's a kind of *tunpu* cultural development. We all came up with the ideas together, the business people, the government and the people in the town.

Azure Dragon's success, as this official's final words suggest, is also attributed to the community's support for the company. Indeed, villagers consistently conveyed to me their appreciation to the company for cleaning up the village, improving the streets and bridges and canals, and making the village appear 'civilized' and 'cultured'. This was an obvious 'public good' from which all villagers benefited.

However, there is also evidence that commercial success in tourism does not directly translate into good governance for Azure Dragon, or even economic benefits for villagers, despite the generally positive attitudes with which most villagers regard tourism development. First is the fact that while the company's commercial success has obviously benefited shareholders, villagers have expressed frustration that there is no mechanism whereby company profits are distributed to the village itself. The company has several responses to this frustration. It points out that villagers benefit from the 'clean and civilized' village that the company has created, and that the company provided funds for a new primary school. And while shares have not been offered to villagers, the company argues that villagers have a short-term investment perspective that justifies their being left out of the investment pool.

From the perspective of the villagers, there is no longer any distinction between local government and the company. The company pays the salaries of all the village leadership and has in some ways substituted itself for the

village committee in governing the village. While the company claims that some 400 villagers are members of the tourism association, very few villagers have any understanding of such an association or what its function might be. The few who are familiar with the association do not distinguish it from the company and, according to the actual members of the association interviewed, there had never been a meeting informing villagers of company decisions or seeking their input since the association had been founded in 2001. It is also significant to note here that the head of the association in fact earns a salary, which is paid by the company, and the association's office is located within the company headquarters.

But the loudest complaint of the villagers is not that their tourism association does not represent their interests, but that they have no control over the landscape in which they now live. The majority of villagers interviewed in Azure Dragon expressed frustration and anger over the 'contradiction' between the interests of the company and the villagers concerning the maintenance of their homes. Most villagers could not afford to maintain their old homes in the old style. Instead, they watched them steadily fall apart, unable to build a cheaper and safer cement block replacement because of the village's heritage preservation rules. Most complained that the cost burden of refurbishing houses for tourism fell to them, with the company reaping the profits and the government threatening punishment if houses were rebuilt without complying with preservation guidelines. In this respect, tourism has significantly increased the cost of living by requiring a higher standard of maintenance without providing any compensation toward meeting such a standard.

Generally, villagers have been reticent to take their frustrations to the village committee for fear of being criticized for opposing tourism development and because the village committee is generally regarded as indistinguishable from the company itself. It is thus both ironic and disturbing that company officials have consistently stressed in interviews the importance of villagers sharing in the benefits of tourism development. Indeed, this rhetorical commitment to 'community tourism' has earned the company accolades from no less than the president of the World Tourism Organization, who visited Azure Dragon in 2003. The company has also been featured as a model of sustainable rural tourism for the rest of the province. Yet the shadow cast by the company's success has made the needs of basic village governance nearly invisible.

Ox Market Fort: the privatization of culture

Ox Market Fort is one of a cluster of eight *tunpu* villages to receive state-level status as a cultural heritage site in 2001. Since then, the village has seen a modest number of visitors, but has not developed a commercial tourism industry of comparable scale to Azure Dragon. Instead of a joint-stockholding company, tourism in Ox Market Fort is organized and promoted solely by

the village head, Wang Ji, who makes repeated trips to the township, district and municipal government offices to cultivate ties with potential sources of development grants for the village. Wang is widely known throughout the region and his efforts to promote his village have earned him feature articles in the provincial flagship newspaper *Guizhou Ribao* as well as features broadcast on Guizhou television station. He is indeed a tireless advocate and activist for Ox Market Fort, and his ties with local government have paid off considerably. The village has received several grants for restoration work, a parking lot for tour buses, bathrooms for tourists and a reception hall, and a newly built and paved road directly to the village from the township center. In addition, several grants have enabled the village to stage numerous festivals to attract tourists.

With about a quarter of the population of Azure Dragon, Ox Market Fort is not a large village. Its high profile in the township and district governments is well known throughout the region. Many comment that while Azure Dragon is a 'company-directed village', Ox Market Fort is called a 'township [government]-directed village' in reference to the number of grants that Wang has been able to collect. Nor is this surprising to many. Before the revolution the village was one of the wealthiest in the area, with a high portion of landlords and considerable influence in the local government. Its current success is regarded by many as a confirmation that China is returning to pre-revolutionary patterns of wealth distribution. Outsiders expect that the village's high profile has translated into a prosperous village overall.

Yet there is in fact widespread discontent and alienation in Ox Market Fort because Wang Ji is widely believed to be corrupt and few villagers have seen any direct benefits from government grants, tourists or any related activities. The widespread attitude of villagers is that '*tunpu* culture' is a village resource that has been privatized by Wang Ji so that only he benefits from its production and sale. The situation is similar to those documented in hundreds of cases throughout rural China, of collective assets becoming privatized and sold to the benefit of a few enterprising locals who are typically in positions of political leadership which enable them to capitalize on the economic restructuring associated with rural reforms (see Unger and Xiong 1990; Croll 1994; Muldavin 1997). Yet in this case the collective resource is not a fish pond or a grove of trees or a coal mine, but 'culture'. Wang could be regarded as the new 'landlord' of Ox Market Fort, but the only significant asset he owns is the village's culture.

Wang's 'ownership' of village *tunpu* culture manifests itself in several ways, from the perspective of others in Ox Market Fort. Visitors who come are usually given a personal tour of the village by Wang himself – whenever he isn't currying favor in the township or city, that is – which includes a well-practiced narrative highlighting the architectural features of village houses and lanes, village history and the history of *tunpu* people more generally. The tour is regarded as Wang's domain, even though some villagers profess that they would tell a somewhat different story were they introducing the village

to outsiders. The tour also typically includes a meal at Wang's house, a large two-story cement structure at the edge of the village with a large satellite dish on top. Villagers call it 'Wang Hotel', and it is the most visceral symbol and reminder of the personal enrichment Wang has enjoyed. Villagers widely suspect that the house was paid for by siphoning-off funds from government grants to the village.

Another aspect of Wang's 'ownership' of *tunpu* culture is his organization and staging of cultural festivals for tourists. Many in the village suspect that Wang had kept much of the money the village had received to stage the first *youcaihuaajie* in 2003 and so most refused to participate in 2004. Yet this is not merely an issue of corruption and embezzlement for many villagers. The problem is a more general sense of alienation from *tunpu* culture, which villagers regarded as Wang's exclusive business. Like the village coal mine that Wang owns and profits from, '*tunpu* culture' is widely regarded as Wang's private business, a business he has been able to develop as a result of his strong ties to government patrons. Such an attitude comes about because the whole *idea* of *tunpu* culture is a new and vaguely understood concept for villagers. *Tunpu* represents the new economy of the outside world to them, rather than the daily life practices and rituals of the villagers themselves. From the perspective of the villagers, the government's cultural strategies of development are really no different from any other commercial development strategy in which the focus is on industrialization and revenue generation rather than basic governance. 'Culture' is just another product to them, one which their village head has been able to successfully monopolize.

Wang Ji himself expresses a great deal of frustration with village suspicions of his corruption. Without his leadership, he claims, the village would be nowhere. He regards himself as an advocate for the village and that his fellow villagers just don't understand the way the new economy works. 'Knowledge', he says, 'is the key to success today. Not your skill in making things' – a remarkably prescient statement for a village head from Guizhou province! Yet the skill with which Wang has been able to turn the idea of cultural heritage and preservation into economic gain has created a sense of dispossession among fellow villagers and an attitude that culture is just another source of inequality. Several villagers, when asked, said that if they were in charge of village development, they would not focus on *tunpu* culture at all, so convinced were they that it could never benefit everyone equally. Instead, they said they would emphasize village scenery to attract tourists – nearby mountains and caves. 'Culture', for them, signifies a return to a pattern of governance that recognized the authority of traditional elites.

Jin Family Fort: a village association takes over

Jin Family Fort's cultural development has occurred by virtue of the fact that the village is host to the large annual festival of 'Carrying Wang Gong'

(*taiwanggong*), held on the eighteenth day of the first month in the lunar calendar. Wang Hua was a local official of Anhui who lived during the sixth and seventh centuries and whose loyalty to the Sui emperor earned him the posthumous title of Wang Gong. During the early Ming campaigns in Guizhou and Yunnan, in which a large portion of the soldiers came from Anhui, the army's successes were attributed to Wang Gong; he thus became the patron deity of many *tunpu* settlers following the campaigns. The Wang Gong cult remains popular in parts of Anhui, Jiangxi and Zhejiang, but the *taiwanggong* festival in Jin Family Fort is said to be China's largest celebration of Wang Gong. While the village has always celebrated *taiwanggong*, it was not until the late 1980s that the government officially declared its tolerance for the festival. By the 1990s, local officials were openly attending the celebration, which not only drew thousands of neighboring villagers, but many from other regions of China as well. The festival has come to be seen as an instrumental event in the promotion of *tunpu* culture. During the three-day event, local officials seek to organize related promotional events by which they might be able to sell the region to potential investors or encourage returning natives to donate funds for the development of their home town.

The fact that the festival represents a prime opportunity for migrant workers to donate some of their earnings directly to the village, has caused a shift in the local government's attitude toward the festival from reluctant tolerance to active promotion. The festival, in turn, has become the year's most significant fiscal event. The state's appropriation of the festival, however, has not led to the kind of alienation one sees in Ox Market Fort, nor has it occurred in conjunction with a partnership arrangement with a private company, as in the case of Azure Dragon. Instead, festival organization remains firmly under the control of the village itself, in the form of a seven-member '18th Association' which not only organizes the festival but is the most powerful voice representing the interests of the village to the government. The association's power is manifest in the central governance role that it plays in providing for basic village welfare, as well as weighing in on the key political decisions of the village committee. The association has become the body that local government must rely upon for the provision of basic welfare because of the financial resources it is able to muster. Ostensibly, the association collects donations (about 8,000 yuan annually) for the staging of the festival and the maintenance of the Wang Gong temple in the center of the village. But it also acts as a rural credit association by providing loans to villagers in need, and overseeing the fiscal needs of the village generally, such as infrastructure maintenance and improvement, healthcare and education provision. During the festival, a portion of the association's collections are also distributed to each household in the village in 'red bags'. This gives the association considerable collective authority; all important decisions involving village expenditures must, for instance, first meet its approval.

It is because of the fact that village governance is organized around the 'superstitious' cult of Wang Gong that the state has until only very recently kept its distance. This has seemingly been to the advantage of the village, which despite the disruptions of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution has managed to maintain the authority of the association for generations. And while villagers are happy to promote their festival for tourism – with increasing numbers of foreign and Chinese tourists participating each year – there is agreement among village leaders that future tourism development will be managed by a company initiated, financed and run by villagers themselves, in order to avoid the discontent that is increasingly apparent in Azure Dragon. Indeed, other villages in the region have made similar moves, collaborating with local scholars to formulate development plans that explicitly seek to *avoid* the Azure Dragon model while still *appearing* to follow the basic formula of having a private development company run the village's tourism business. Because Jin Family Fort's festival is such a spectacular cultural event, it has long attracted the attention of local scholars, and they play a significant role in advising the village on its development strategies. Indeed, without any assistance from the local government, the village held a conference several years ago to plumb the advice of local scholars.

Cultural strategies and the struggle for ownership

What is clear from the above cases is that the governance outcomes of cultural strategies at the village level depend greatly on the local contexts within which those strategies are played out. It should also be clear, however, that culture is not itself the key to sustainable development and 'good governance' outcomes that organizations like UNESCO hope for. When viewed from the distanced perspective of academics, officials and development practitioners, culture appears to have the potential to produce a new kind of self-governing, and even enterprising, citizen because – the argument goes – cultural strategies inject new empowering meanings into the practices of people's daily lives. *Tunpu* cultural development has indeed sought to transform villagers into enterprising subjects of heritage promotion and self-regulation, by promoting an entrepreneurial model at the village level. It is this approach which has, for instance, caught the eye of the World Tourism Organization, as a potentially sustainable model of rural tourism for developing countries. And clearly, as the case of Jin Family Fort indicates, cultural strategies have in many ways empowered villagers to govern themselves effectively and justly.

Yet Jin Family Fort's experience appears to be more the exception than the rule in central Guizhou. This is because – as revealed in the cases of Azure Village and Ox Market Fort – cultural strategies have produced not new empowering meanings for the formation of new subjectivities, but new *products*. It is the ownership of these cultural products that becomes the key issue in whether or not cultural strategies can improve village-level governance in China.

From this perspective, the argument – as advanced by Zukin – that a turn toward cultural strategies of development has resulted in the privatization of a formerly public domain tends to miss the key issues at stake in rural China. *Tunpu* culture is not a public good subject to privatization because it has itself been created within the process of privatization that continues to sweep across post-reform China (Qin 2003). Cultural strategies are producing new products rather than privatizing public goods. The challenges of cultural strategies lie not in preserving Zukin's public-private divide, but in insuring a just regime of privatization. Cultural development in Azure Dragon and Ox Market Fort has generated an entirely new logic of capital accumulation. The link between culture and sustainable development or 'good governance' proceeds on the assumption that culture is somehow different from other products. The case studies here suggest, however, that cultural production invites the same struggles over ownership as other forms of production. Thus, while cultural strategies are indeed shown here to be lucrative in terms of income generation, they only intensify the conflicts over privatization that have eroded village-level governance in China's reform era.

Even in the relatively successful case of Jin Family Fort, where *tunpu* cultural development has strengthened the ability of a local social institution – the 18th Festival Association – to substitute for the state in the provision of basic village welfare and public goods, cultural strategies have only made it easier for the state to withdraw from its fiscal responsibilities. The 18th Association now substitutes for the state at the village level, and one wonders if this is really the kind of governance model that should be promoted throughout China. Lily Tsai (2002: 26) has argued that community social institutions such as lineages and temple associations play an increasingly important role in village governance. The reliance on such institutions by village leadership can prove very effective in mobilizing resources for public projects that otherwise would not get addressed. However, Tsai also points out that this very reliance on community institutions can replace rather than complement formal governance. 'Fundraising', she argues, 'does not produce the same outcomes as governmental responsibility for public welfare'. Along these lines, one could argue that cultural strategies contribute to rural China's simmering governance crisis by encouraging the local state to redefine its role in terms of cultural production rather than welfare provision. Such an outcome can be seen in each of the three case study villages, where governance has come to be defined in terms of state investment in cultural development and little else.

Finally, it should be made clear that cultural strategies themselves are not to be condemned because of the challenges Guizhou villagers face in making them work. Culture remains the most significant development resource in rural Guizhou. But it needs to be viewed by the local state and other institutions as more than a product. We should not forget that culture is 'the means through which people create meaningful worlds in which to live' (Negus 1997: 101). Treating culture in these broader terms, rather than

the instrumentalism so often seen in the actual practices of cultural development, may begin to resolve the kinds of conflicts that have developed in places like Azure Dragon and Ox Market Fort.

Notes

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- 2 All names for places and people in the case studies are pseudonyms.

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