

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

The Culture Governance on tourism project in Post-reform
China, a case study from Miao Dong Cultural Park in Kaili,
Guizhou

verfasst von | submitted by
Ruiqi Luo

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science (MSc)

Wien | Vienna, 2025

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 664

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium DDP Urban Studies

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Ana Dresler M.Sc.

Abstrakt

Diese Studie nutzt die theoretischen Rahmen der Cultural Governance und der kritischen Stadtforschung, um kulturelle Steuerung im Tourismus im postsocialistischen urbanen Kontext Chinas zu untersuchen. Im Mittelpunkt steht dabei der Fall des Miao-Dong-Kulturparks in Kaili, Provinz Guizhou. Auf der Grundlage einer ethnographischen Fallstudie werden drei zentrale Fragestellungen behandelt: (1) Wie Miao- und Dong-Kulturen von staatlichen Akteuren in Politik und Planung diskursiv konstruiert und mobilisiert werden; (2) wie kultureller Raum innerhalb des Parks symbolisch und kommerziell konfiguriert ist; und (3) wie offizielle Narrative und räumliche Strategien lokale kulturelle Praktiken beeinflussen.

Der Miao-Dong-Kulturpark wird konzeptualisiert als ein Produkt kultureller Steuerung, das gleichermaßen durch staatliche Politik, Marktkräfte und lokale Place-Making-Praktiken geprägt ist – und nicht lediglich als eine ethnische Tourismusdestination. Die Studie argumentiert, dass Stadterneuerung und die Entwicklung des Kulturtourismus in Kaili nicht rein marktorientiert sind, sondern ein spezifisches Governance-Modell widerspiegeln, das „postsocialistische“ und „neoliberale“ Logiken miteinander verknüpft. In diesem Modell agiert der Staat zugleich als aktiver Planer und Unternehmer, indem er das Immaterielle Kulturerbe (ICH) als Instrument zur Förderung urbaner Modernisierung und wirtschaftlicher Entwicklung einsetzt.

Gleichzeitig offenbart die Untersuchung die inhärenten Spannungen und Komplexitäten einer solchen Steuerung. Offizielle Diskurse betonen einerseits die ästhetische Logik des ICH (als historischen und ethnischen Eigenwert), während sie andererseits dessen instrumentelle ökonomische Logik (als Ressource für Tourismus und Wachstum) hervorheben. Der frühe, „unvollendete“ Zustand des Miao-Dong-Kulturparks in Kaili verdeutlicht diesen inneren Widerspruch und die Grenzen einer ausschließlich ökonomisch-instrumentalistischen Logik kultureller Projekte.

Darüber hinaus zeigt die Studie, dass sich diese Steuerungskomplexität auch auf der Mikroebene manifestiert, wo lokale Akteure keineswegs passive Rezipienten offizieller Narrative sind. Interviews und Beobachtungen mit lokalen Kunsthandwerker:innen und Bewohner:innen belegen eine starke Handlungsfähigkeit: Kunsthandwerker:innen verhandeln ihre Doppelrolle als kulturelle Hüter und profitorientierte Individuen, während Bewohner:innen den Parkraum durch alltägliche Praktiken neu definieren und ein gescheitertes kommerzielles Projekt unerwartet in einen lebendigen öffentlichen Freizeitort transformieren.

Durch die Einbettung des Kaili-Falls in breitere theoretische Debatten leistet diese Forschung einen Beitrag zu einem differenzierteren Verständnis kultureller Steuerung in China. Sie zeigt, dass Steuerung kein linearer, top-down gesteuerter Prozess ist, sondern ein dynamischer Zyklus, der durch das Nebeneinander

relationaler und nicht-relationaler Interaktionen geprägt ist. Er entwickelt sich durch Konflikte und Synergien zwischen staatlicher Planung, Marktmechanismen und lokalen Praktiken. Über den Einzelfall hinaus erweitert die Studie die Diskussion über Heritage-Politik, urbane Transformation und Steuerungsmodelle in postsocialistischen Kontexten und bietet Erkenntnisse, die auch in internationalen Debatten über das Zusammenspiel von Kultur, Ökonomie und Stadtentwicklung relevant sind.

Schlüsselwörter: Kulturelle Steuerung; Tourismus; Urbanisierung in China

Abstract

This study adopts the frameworks of cultural governance and critical urban studies to examine cultural governance in tourism within China's post-socialist urban context, focusing on the case of the Miao-Dong Cultural Park in Kaili, Guizhou Province. Drawing on an ethnographic case study, the article addresses three main questions: (1) how Miao and Dong cultures are constructed and mobilized discursively by government actors in policy and planning; (2) how cultural space is symbolically and commercially configured within the park; and (3) how official narratives and spatial strategies affect local cultural practices.

The Miao-Dong Cultural Park is conceptualized as a product of cultural governance shaped jointly by state policy, market forces, and local place-making practices, rather than merely an ethnic tourism site. The study argues that urban renewal and cultural tourism development in Kaili are not purely market-driven but reflect a distinct governance model intertwining "post-socialist" and "neoliberal" logics. In this model, the state acts as an active planner and entrepreneur, leveraging intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as a tool to promote urban modernization and economic development.

However, this research reveals the inherent tensions and complexities of such governance. Official discourses simultaneously valorize the ideal aesthetic logic of ICH (as intrinsic historical and ethnic value) and its instrumental economic logic (as a resource for tourism and economic growth). The early "unfinished" state of the Kaili Miao-Dong Cultural Park exemplifies this internal contradiction, highlighting the limitations of relying solely on economic instrumentalism to drive cultural projects.

The study further demonstrates that this governance complexity manifests at the micro level, where local actors are not passive recipients of official narratives. Interviews and observations with local artisans and residents reveal strong agency: artisans negotiate between their dual roles as cultural custodians and profit-seeking individuals, while residents redefine the park's space through everyday practices, transforming a failed commercial project into an unexpectedly vibrant public leisure area.

By situating the Kaili case within broader theoretical debates, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of cultural governance in China. It highlights how governance is not a linear, top-down process but a dynamic cycle characterized by the coexistence of relational and non-relational interactions. It evolves through conflicts and synergies among state planning, market mechanisms, and local practices. At a wider scale, the article expands the discussion on heritage politics, urban transformation, and governance models in postsocialist contexts, offering insights that resonate beyond China and speak to global debates on the intersections of culture, economy, and urban development.

Keywords: Cultural Governance; Tourism; Urbanization in China

摘要

本研究以文化治理和批判性城市研究为理论框架，旨在探讨中国后社会主义城市背景下的旅游业中的文化治理，以贵州省凯里市苗侗风情园的案例为焦点。通过民族志案例研究，文章讨论了三个问题：(1) 苗侗文化如何被政府在政策与规划中建构与动员；(2) 文化空间在园区中如何被符号化和商业化；(3) 官方叙事与空间策略如何影响地方文化实践。

苗侗风情园被视为国家政策、市场力量与地方营造实践共同塑造的文化治理产物，而非单纯的民族旅游景点。文章认为，凯里的城市更新与文化旅游发展，并非纯粹的市场行为，而是一种独特的“后社会主义”与“新自由主义”交织的治理模式。在这种模式下，国家扮演了积极的规划者与企业家角色，借助非物质文化遗产（非遗）作为工具，推动城市现代化与经济发展。

然而，本研究揭示了这种治理模式所固有的张力与复杂性。官方话语中既推崇非遗的理想审美逻辑（将其视为历史与民族认同的内在价值），又强调其工具性经济逻辑（将其作为旅游与增长的资源）。凯里苗侗文化园早期的“烂尾”状态，正是这一矛盾的集中体现，揭示了单一依赖经济工具主义推动文化项目的局限性。

研究进一步显示，这种治理的复杂性同样体现在微观层面。地方主体并非被动接受者，而是展现出能动性。通过访谈与观察，本研究发现手工艺人们在文化守护与经济逐利之间不断协商，而居民则通过日常实践重新定义文化园的空间，将一个失败的商业项目意外地转化为一个公共休闲场所。

通过将凯里的案例置于更广泛的理论语境中，本文为深入理解中国的文化治理提供了新视角。研究指出，文化治理并非单向度的自上而下过程，而是一个动态循环，在国家规划、市场机制与地方实践的冲突与协同中不断演变。更重要的是，本文超越了“文化保护”与“经济发展”的二元对立，展示了二者在后社会主义城市转型过程中的交织与再生产。由此，本研究不仅深化了对中国语境下文化治理与城市变迁的认识，同时也为全球关于文化、经济与城市发展的交叉议题提供了具有比较意义的理论启发。

关键词：文化治理；旅游；中国城市化

Preface

“Each typical space is brought into being by typical social relationships that, without the distorting intervention of consciousness, express themselves in it. Everything that is disowned by consciousness, everything that would otherwise be intentionally overlooked, contributes to its construction. Spatial images are the dreams of society. Wherever the hieroglyphics of any spatial image are deciphered, there the basis of social reality presents itself.”

On Employment Agencies: The Construction of a Space
by Siegfried Krakauer

This reflection by Krakauer has deeply shaped the way I approached the subject of this thesis. His insistence that space is neither neutral nor merely physical, but rather the crystallization of social relations and unconscious forces, resonates strongly with the questions I bring to the study of cultural governance and urban transformation in contemporary China. The spatial landscapes I encountered in Kaili—the unfinished facades of the Miao-Dong Cultural Park, the lively yet improvised practices of artisans and residents, and the ambivalent atmosphere of urban renewal—are not simply settings in which social life unfolds. They are social texts in their own right, images that condense both the dreams and contradictions of a rapidly changing society.

This thesis grows out of my personal encounters with those spaces and the people who inhabit them. My initial curiosity was sparked by the paradoxical position of ethnic minority cultures in China’s national imagination: celebrated as heritage, yet often commodified; preserved as tradition yet mobilized as an economic resource. When I first visited Kaili, I was struck by the striking dissonance between official narratives of cultural prosperity and the unfinished, underused, or re-appropriated spaces that those narratives had materialized. The Miao-Dong Cultural Park, in particular, stood out as a compelling case in which the tensions between aesthetic ideals, economic imperatives, and lived practices became especially visible.

In approaching this case, I chose to adopt the dual framework of cultural governance and critical urban studies. This choice was not only methodological but also reflective of my attempt to reconcile two different sets of questions. On the one hand, cultural governance allows us to trace how state policies, planning discourses, and market rationalities produce new cultural forms and meanings. On the other hand, critical urban studies provides the conceptual vocabulary to examine how space, power, and subjectivity are co-constituted in contexts of urban transformation. The convergence of these perspectives proved fruitful for capturing the hybridity and contradictions of China’s postsocialist city-making, where neoliberal logics of commodification intermingle with strong state-led planning.

The fieldwork in Kaili brought both challenges and surprises. Ethnographic research in a rapidly transforming urban environment requires not only observation but also

patience, empathy, and a willingness to engage with ambiguity. The “incomplete” status of the Miao-Dong Cultural Park was initially frustrating: it seemed to resist neat categorization, neither a successful tourism site nor a completely abandoned space. Yet it was precisely this ambiguity that revealed the underlying dynamics of governance. The park’s liminal status became a window into the contradictions of state ambition, market failure, and local reappropriation. Interviews with artisans illuminated their complex negotiation between cultural custodianship and livelihood; conversations with residents highlighted their creativity in reimagining space in ways unintended by official planning. In retrospect, what seemed incomplete was, in fact, deeply generative.

Writing this thesis has also been an intellectual journey of grappling with the complexities of cultural governance as a concept. I came to see governance not as a static structure but as a dynamic cycle, marked by moments of conflict, negotiation, and unexpected synergy. Cultural governance, in the Chinese context, is not reducible to a top-down imposition; nor can it be romanticized as grassroots resistance. Instead, it operates in the shifting interstices where state strategies, market forces, and local practices intersect. The Miao-Dong Cultural Park serves as a vivid microcosm of this process, where policies of intangible cultural heritage, entrepreneurial urbanism, and everyday acts of place-making all converge, clash, and coevolve.

This work is also situated within my broader intellectual engagement with questions of modernity and tradition. The paradox I encountered in Kaili—that cultural heritage can be simultaneously valorized as timeless identity and instrumentalized as economic capital—is not unique to this case, but emblematic of broader global debates on heritage, tourism, and development. Yet in the Chinese postsocialist context, this paradox acquires a distinctive form. The state’s entrepreneurial role, the invocation of “national rejuvenation,” and the dual appeal to aesthetic authenticity and economic utility produce a governance model that is neither wholly neoliberal nor entirely socialist. It is this hybridity—this uneasy coexistence of different rationalities—that I hope to illuminate through my analysis.

At a personal level, the writing of this thesis has been inseparable from the relationships that sustained me throughout the research process. From the artisans and residents in Kaili who welcomed me into their workshops and homes, to the friends who listened patiently to my doubts and anxieties, to my supervisor who consistently challenged me to refine my arguments—this work is the result of many forms of generosity and trust. The “dreams of society,” to borrow Kracauer’s phrase, are not only expressed in spatial images but also in the human connections that make research possible.

Finally, I see this preface not only as a reflection on the path that brought me here, but also as an invitation to the reader. The following chapters do not offer a definitive account of Kaili’s cultural governance, nor do they claim to resolve the tensions I describe. Rather, they are an attempt to open up those tensions to critical reflection,

to show how they are lived, negotiated, and reimagined in everyday spaces. If there is a lesson to be drawn, it is that cultural governance is best understood not as an abstract structure but as a lived process, one that is always unfinished, always contested, and always open to new possibilities.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Ana Daniela Dresler, for her generous support, guidance, and insightful advice throughout the entire process of writing this thesis and always kept me on the right track.

I am also deeply thankful to everyone who helped and worked with me during my fieldwork in Kaili. This thesis would not have been possible without your kindness, hospitality, and willingness to share your experiences and thoughts with me. Your openness and patience not only enriched my research but also left me with lasting memories of warmth and generosity.

To my lovely friends, Alyssa, Shiori, Shellyn, Carlotta, Eva, Amalia, and Valeriya, for always listening to my concerns and doubts calmly and patiently, for your warmth and encouragement, and for the many memorable moments and sparkling conversations we shared, which often inspired me in unexpected ways. Special thanks to Elien for the thoughtful discussions, for easing my stress, and for reading and providing detailed feedback on my thesis with such care.

To Ai, Even, Ruifan, Wenxiao, Meipan, Fangfang, and Jasper, thank you for your companionship and friendship, for sharing joy, love, as well as vulnerabilities, and for making me feel at home even while far away. Your presence has been a constant source of comfort and grounding throughout this journey.

Finally, to my parents and family members, for always encouraging me to chase my adventures, to wander between different places, and to pursue the knowledge that I am curious and passionate about. Your unconditional support and trust have been the foundation that allowed me to undertake and complete this work.

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Analysis framework of culture governance system in tourism context (Wu & Sun, 2020).
- Figure 2. Location of Kaili. Made by the author.
- Figure 3. Map of Kaili City and administrative villages, showing urban and rural settlements; starred area indicates the central urban area. Source: Kaili City Territorial Spatial Master Plan (2021–2035).
- Figure 4. Dong Men Street in central Kaili, showing the juxtaposition of traditional and modern architecture. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 5. Landscape of Kaili. Source: Qiandongnan Civilization (<http://qdnwm.gov.cn/>)
- Figure 6. Location of Miao Dong Cultural Park (white textbox) and downtown Kaili (red dot).
- Figure 7. Entrance of Miao Dong Cultural Park. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 8. Tourist guide map of Miao Dong Cultural Park. Translated by the author.
- Figure 9. Main Miao Dong-style Wind and Rain Bridge near the park entrance; also serves as a screening venue. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 10. Wind and Rain Bridge in the park, symbolizing Miao and Dong architecture, embedded in Kaili's urban landscape. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 11. Left to right: Sama Altar sculpture; statue of a Miao woman greeting visitors; photo frame with ethnic unity inscription. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 12. Previous local embroidery market, informal and unmanaged. Source: <https://m.huxiu.com/article/2000339.html>
- Figure 13. Guide map of Xiu Li Tao ICH Market. Translated by the author.
- Figure 14. Interior of Xiu Li Tao ICH Market, showing well-planned stalls. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 15. Tourist-oriented products at market stalls. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 16. Museum-cum-sales shop established by an ICH bearer, displaying awards and certificates. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 17. Rehearsal for a stage show led by a dance teacher. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 18. Backstage of "Village Fashion Show," with staff controlling lights and sound. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 19. Left: artisan demonstrating handicraft making; Right: market stall. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 20. Vendors combining factory-made products with old embroidery pieces for sale. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 21. Visitors using the space under the Wind and Rain Bridge for leisure. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 22. Artisan trying on traditional Miao clothes at the park; nearby villagers sell similar items. Photograph by the author.

- Figure 23. Old streets in downtown Kaili, serving as traditional costume market and local bazaar. Photograph by the author.

List of Tables

- Table 1. Structure of Land and Property Rights in China
- Table 2. Multi-level Cultural and Tourism Policy Documents in China (Central–Provincial–Prefectural–Municipal). The table of original documents titled in Chinese is attached in appendix.
- Table 3. Discursive Categories and Keywords in the Analysis of Miao Dong Cultural Park, made by the author.

Table of Content

ABSTRAKT	1
ABSTRACT	3
摘要	4
PREFACE	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
LIST OF FIGURES	9
LIST OF TABLES	10
1. INTRODUCTION	13
1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	15
1.2 STRUCTURE	16
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	16
2.1 REVIEW THE URBANIZATION OF CHINA	17
2.1.1 <i>Brief history of urbanization of China from Maoist period to Reform</i>	17
2.1.2 <i>Neoliberalism and post socialist urban transformation</i>	20
2.1.2.1 <i>Urbanization of Post-reform China</i>	20
2.1.3 <i>Phantom Urbanism?</i>	24
2.1.4 <i>Conclusion</i>	25
2.2 CULTURE GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE TOURISM	26
2.2.1 <i>Culture Governance</i>	27
2.2.2 <i>Cultural Governance in Post-reform China</i>	27
2.3 <i>Conclusion</i>	33
3. RESEARCH GAP	34
4. METHODOLOGY	34
4.1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: CULTURE GOVERNANCE AND CRITICAL URBAN THEORY	34
4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH: CONSTRUCTIVIST AND INDUCTIVE REASONING	35
4.3 RESEARCH METHOD: ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY	36
4.4 DATA COLLECTION	36
4.4.1 <i>Policy and Planning Document Analysis</i>	36
4.4.2 <i>Ethnographic Fieldwork and Observation</i>	39
4.4.3 <i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	40
4.5 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS CORE ANALYTICAL METHOD	40

5. POSITIONALITY	44
6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	45
7. CASE STUDY	45
7.1 CONTEXTUALIZATION: KAILI CITY	45
7.2 CASE SPECIFICATION: MIAO DONG CULTURAL PARK	51
7.2.1 <i>Miao Dong Cultural Park</i>	51
7.2.2 <i>The Xiu Li Tao Intangible Culture Heritage (ICH) Market</i>	54
8. FINDINGS	56
8.1 CULTURE GOVERNANCE: NATIONAL NARRATIVES AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION	56
8.1.1 <i>The Politicization of Heritage: ICH, National Unity, and Cultural Confidence</i>	56
8.1.2 <i>Developmentalism and the Logic of Capital: Culture as an Engine of Growth</i>	57
8.1.3 <i>Institutionalized Discourses and Technologies of Governance: Regulating Culture and Cultural Subjects</i>	57
8.2 <i>Official Narratives and the Disjuncture of Local Practice</i>	59
8.3 RECONSTRUCTION OF MIAO AND DONG CULTURAL PRACTICES	61
8.3.1 <i>Spatial Symbolization of Miao and Dong Culture in the Cultural Park</i>	61
8.3.2 <i>Curating Xiu Li Tao ICH Market</i>	64
8.4.1 <i>Performance of the Culture</i>	72
8.5 REFLEXIVE APPROPRIATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS	76
9. DISCUSSION	78
10. CONCLUSION	80
11. LIMITATIONS	82
11.1 LANGUAGE	82
11.2 TIME AND FINANCE	82
11.3 DATA COLLECTION	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY	83
APPENDIX	89

1. Introduction

In 2015, Bi Gan's debut film *Kaili Blues* (Lu bian ye can, 路边野餐) won the Best New Director Award at the 52nd Golden Horse Awards. This remarkable achievement not only established Bi Gan as one of the most innovative voices in contemporary Chinese cinema but also unexpectedly placed the relatively obscure city of Kaili, located in southeastern Guizhou Province, on the cultural map of both domestic and international audiences. Through its dreamlike cinematography—misty and humid landscapes, lyrical long takes, and disjointed yet poetic narratives—*Kaili Blues* constructs an imagined topography that is simultaneously enchanting and melancholic. The film interweaves intimate portraits of human longing with visual traces of urban decay, abandonment, and desolation, thus producing a spatial imaginary that oscillates between nostalgia and despair. Yet while this cinematic rendering powerfully evokes an “aesthetic Kaili,” it cannot adequately capture the complexities, contradictions, and lived realities of Kaili as a social, cultural, and urban formation. The lived city extends far beyond its cinematic representation, enmeshed as it is in broader processes of urban transformation, cultural governance, and economic restructuring in postsocialist China.

Kaili itself presents a striking series of tensions that challenge the singular image portrayed on screen. On one level, the city has been officially branded and discursively framed as a “city of ethnic minority culture,” a title that functions both as a symbolic marker and as an urban development strategy. Miao and Dong traditions—songs, dances, embroidery, handicrafts, and annual festivals—are elevated as emblematic cultural resources, showcased in state narratives, promotional campaigns, and tourism infrastructures designed to attract domestic and international visitors (Kendall, 2015). This emphasis highlights the centrality of minority culture to Kaili's urban identity and economic future, suggesting a continuity between heritage preservation and cultural development. On another level, however, Kaili is deeply enmeshed in the broader trajectories of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and marketization that have characterized China's post-reform era. Real estate projects proliferate across the urban landscape; expansive boulevards and modern high-rise residential compounds dominate the skyline; the imposing scale of the Economic Development Zone presents an image of modernity, prosperity, and ambition. This stark juxtaposition between “ethnic city” imagery and the tangible infrastructures of modernization produces a complex, multilayered urban narrative—one that reveals not only different constructions of place but also the entangled logics of state governance, market rationalities, and local agency (Oakes, 1999; Ma & Wu, 2005; He & Wu, 2009; He & Lin, 2015).

Within this contradictory landscape, the “Miao-Dong Cultural Park” stands out as a particularly illustrative and revealing case. Situated in Kaili's Economic Development Zone, the park was jointly initiated by local government officials and real estate developers, signaling the convergence of political ambition and market capital.

Designed in the style of a “theme park,” the project seeks to condense and package Miao and Dong cultures into a consumable form that is accessible to tourists. Its architecture, performances, and curated displays are intended to provide visitors with an immersive yet highly orchestrated experience of minority heritage. On the surface, this initiative is justified as a measure to safeguard and transmit intangible cultural heritage; it is framed as a cultural preservation effort that serves both educational and identity-affirming purposes. At the same time, however, the park functions as an economic and political instrument. It is explicitly embedded in strategies of urban modernization, real estate speculation, and regional tourism development, intended to stimulate economic growth and enhance the symbolic capital of Kaili as a rising city in Guizhou Province. Thus, the park is more than a simple tourism destination. It is a site where cultural governance takes shape through the intersection of state planning, market strategies, and social participation, and where the production and reproduction of space becomes inseparable from questions of identity, economy, and power (Zhang, Liang, & Bao, 2021).

The academic literature on ethnic tourism in China has generated a substantial body of scholarship that is crucial for contextualizing the Kaili case. Scholars have explored issues of “heritage politics” (Wu, Zhang & Liu, 2022; Zhu, 2015; Oakes, 2016), interrogating how the designation of heritage sites and intangible practices is intertwined with questions of state legitimacy, minority representation, and global cultural frameworks. Others have investigated debates on “authenticity” and “performativity” (Wu & Zhang, 2021; Oakes, 1998; Kendall, 2017), examining how minority identities are staged, negotiated, and consumed within tourism encounters. Furthermore, a growing strand of research engages with Foucauldian notions of “governmentality” (Oakes, 2019; Oakes, 2017; Qian, 2017), highlighting how tourism becomes a mechanism for governing populations, shaping subjectivities, and legitimizing state projects. Collectively, this literature demonstrates that minority cultures are not simply preserved or displayed but are actively reconstructed, commodified, and instrumentalized under the dual pressures of state governance and market logics.

Nevertheless, an important gap persists in this scholarship. Much of the existing work tends to conceptualize “cultural preservation” and “economic development” as binary oppositions, treating them as conflicting forces that pull in different directions. This framing risks oversimplifying the dynamics at play, obscuring the ways in which preservation and commodification are frequently reconciled, co-constituted, and embedded within broader practices of urban development and governance. In other words, while cultural heritage initiatives may appear to be primarily about protecting traditions, they are often simultaneously economic projects; and while market-driven tourism projects are commonly framed as exploitative of heritage, they may also generate new forms of cultural expression, social negotiation, and local agency. The Kaili Miao-Dong Cultural Park, in its unfinished, contested, and evolving form, offers a crucial vantage point from which to rethink these dichotomies.

This paper, therefore, takes the Miao-Dong Cultural Park as a key site through which to analyze how ethnic cultural tourism has been institutionalized as a mechanism of cultural governance in post-reform China. It asks a set of interrelated questions: How are the tensions between cultural heritage preservation and commercialization staged, mediated, and normalized within specific projects of urban development? In what ways do socialist legacies—such as the state’s planning authority, its vision of modernization, and its ideological commitments—interact with neoliberal logics of market profit, entrepreneurial governance, and the pursuit of global competitiveness? How do local governments, motivated by performance evaluations and economic growth imperatives, align themselves with or diverge from the interests of real estate capital and tourism investors? And how do ordinary citizens—artisans, performers, and residents—respond to, appropriate, or resist these governance strategies in their everyday practices?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of cultural governance in contemporary China. It seeks not only to examine the contradictions inherent in the coexistence of preservation and commodification but also to show how these contradictions are embedded in broader spatial strategies, governance models, and local negotiations. In doing so, the paper highlights the evolving relationship between state, market, and society in the post-reform era, offering both empirical insights from Kaili and theoretical reflections on the hybridity of postsocialist governance. Ultimately, the study suggests that cultural governance is not a static structure but a dynamic process in which diverse logics, practices, and imaginaries collide, overlap, and transform one another.

1.1 Research Questions

This study examines the Miao-Dong Cultural Park project in the context of China’s post-socialist and neoliberal urban transformation. It approaches the park not simply as a site of ethnic tourism, but as a product of cultural governance, shaped by state discourses, market logic, and place-making practices. Drawing on frameworks of postmodern urbanism and post-Fordist cultural economies, the project is understood as part of an ongoing shift toward experience-oriented, symbolically coded urban development.

The research focuses on three interrelated questions:

- First, how are Miao and Dong minority cultures in Southeast Guizhou region discursively constructed and mobilized by national, provincial, and local governments in policy and planning tourism and heritage conservation?
- Second, how is cultural space symbolically encoded and commercially configured in the planning and design of the Miao-Dong Cultural Park?

- Third, how do these official narratives, spatial strategies, and political-economic dynamics affect the actual production and practice of ethnic culture at the local level?

These questions allow us to unpack the complex dynamics of cultural governance in contemporary China. By examining how minority cultures are discursively constructed, spatially encoded, and materially practiced, the study highlights the tensions between top-down state agendas and bottom-up local agency. Situating these dynamics within the case of the Miao-Dong Culture Park makes it possible to trace how broad political-economic strategies are translated into specific cultural spaces, and how such strategies are negotiated, reworked, or resisted by local actors. In this way, the research contributes not only to understanding ethnic cultural tourism in Guizhou but also to broader debates on the intersections of culture, governance, and spatiality in post-socialist contexts.

1.2 Structure

The structure of this thesis is organized as follows:

First, I review the relevant literature to provide a theoretical background for this study. This section situates the urban political economy within the Chinese context and examines how cultural governance is embedded in this process, thereby helping readers critically engage with the broader framework of my research.

Second, I turn to the specific research context of Kaili, Guizhou, where the case study is located. This chapter reflects on the urbanization and cultural landscape of Kaili in order to situate the discussion within its local dynamics. It then introduces the case of the Miao Dong Cultural Park, with particular attention to the Xiu Li Tao ICH market.

Third, I outline the methodology, including my positionality and considerations of ethnicity, and explain the theoretical lens and research methods employed in this study.

Fourth, I present the research findings and discuss them in relation to the existing literature, highlighting their contributions to a more meaningful conclusion.

Finally, I reflect on the limitations of this study and suggest possible directions for further study.

2. Literature Review

To better situate the analysis of the Miao-Dong Cultural Park as a state-led tourism project embedded in the dynamics of China's urban political economy and cultural governance, this literature review is organized around three interrelated themes.

The first section sets the macro-structural context by examining the trajectory of urbanization in contemporary China. I begin with a brief historical overview of state-led urban development during the Maoist period (1949–1978), before turning to the post-1978 era of Reform and Opening-Up, when China's urban transformation

accelerated under market-oriented policies (Ma & Wu, 2005; Wu 2024). This period has been interpreted by scholars not only as a shift toward neo-liberalization, marketization, government decentralization (He & Wu, 2005; Yan & Bramwell, 2008) yet scholars also stress that these processes have entailed not a retreat but a reconfiguration of state power through new modes of urban governance (Yep, Wang & Johnson, 2019). At the same time, critical debates (Pow & Neo, 2013; Visser, 2019; Sorace & Hurst, 2016; Harvey, 2021) point to the contradictions of rapid urbanization, such as spatial inequality, rural–urban migration, and the commodification of land and culture. These contradictions form the broader structural conditions within which ethnic cultural projects are conceived.

Building on this macro context, the second section turns to the conceptual lens of cultural governance, tracing how the notion emerged in Euro-American contexts (Bennett, 1998; Yúdice, 2003) and its adaptation within Chinese governance practices. Special emphasis is placed on how cultural governance is mobilized in ethnic minority regions in China, where culture functions both as a resource for development and as a target of regulation and representation (Oakes, 1998; Chio, 2014). Here, culture is not merely symbolic but becomes embedded in governance strategies that link identity, heritage, and political economy. By foregrounding cultural governance, this section provides the theoretical vocabulary to understand how the state frames and manages culture in urban development schemes.

The third section narrows the focus further to the regional and empirical domain of ethnic tourism in Guizhou's Qiandongnan prefecture and other minority autonomous regions. Here, cultural governance is not only a top-down strategy but also a process of negotiation, as local actors, entrepreneurs, and residents interact with state-led initiatives. Studies on ethnic tourism and heritage-making in Guizhou have shown how projects designed for modernization, rural revitalization, and economic growth also produce tensions around authenticity, commodification, and local agency (Oakes, 1998; Chio, 2014; Nyíri, 2006). This discussion sets the stage for analyzing the Miao-Dong Cultural Park, situating it at the intersection of national urbanization strategies, evolving cultural governance frameworks, and the lived negotiations of minority communities.

2.1 Review the urbanization of China

2.1.1 Brief history of urbanization of China from Maoist period to Reform

Wu (2024) comprehensively theorized the urban development in China, based on different historical and conjunctural moments, he illustrates the political economy of urbanization in China respectively as 'economizing urbanization' under the Cold War, market-oriented reform amid globalization and neoliberalism, 'planning for growth' under the world factory, and state-led financialization to manage the global financial

crisis. Following this path, I'll provide detailed exploration of each period so to understand the complicated situation of urban development in China.

In the year of 1949, the Chinese Communist Party declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China, a nation that employs socialist ideology and philosophy in particular Marx and Lenin, as well as a nation functioning through socialist political system with the feature of centralized power structure, state ownership of the means of production such as land, factories and natural resources, and highly controlled planned economy (The Central Government of PRC, 1955).

Under the influence of the Cold War and economic isolation, socialist crisis management became a necessary strategy for the Chinese government. As a result, military competition, national defense, and heavy industry were prioritized at the national level (Ma & Wu, 2005, p. 236). This strategic emphasis led to an industrialization-oriented urbanization process in Maoist China. During the planned economy era, the state adopted a segmented administrative approach to urban designation—“cutting out” areas with concentrated non-agricultural populations and industrial activities to form cities and towns. These administrative units were aligned with the functional logic of industrial urbanism (Tian, 2014), meaning that urban residents were predominantly factory workers and industrial personnel. Urbanization, industrial production, and daily life during this period were tightly integrated and organized through the work-unit system (*danwei*), which served as the basic organizational and distributive mechanism under the planned economy (Ma & Wu, 2005, p. 236).

During the Maoist period, China's national development strategy prioritized industrialization without urbanization. Mao Zedong and the prevailing political ideology emphasized the alliance between workers and peasants, while remaining wary of urban middle classes and intellectuals. Urban-rural division thus reflected a political suspicion of “capitalist urbanization” and embodied the revolutionary logic of “encircling the cities from the countryside.” Peasants were encouraged to remain rooted in rural areas, and aspirations toward urban life were discouraged. Even though there were above 30 million peasants move to cities during 1949 to 1957, it is because of the need of labor force for massive, planned industry construction (Tian, 2014).

At the same time, the countryside was expected to support urban industrial development due to the heavy-industry-first strategy. Rural surplus products and labor were administratively transferred to cities to meet the demands of industrialization. To control large-scale population movement and stabilize the allocation of resources, the household registration system (*hukou*) was established. This system categorized citizens as either rural or urban residents, institutionalizing a strict urban-rural divide and preventing uncontrolled rural-to-urban migration (Chan & Zhang, 1999; Solinger, 1999).

During Mao's period, especially during the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), China underwent radical political and social campaigns aimed at rapidly transforming the country's economy and society along socialist lines. The Great Leap Forward sought to accelerate industrialization and collectivize agriculture through the establishment of people's communes and ambitious steel production targets. However, it resulted in widespread economic disruption and one of the deadliest famines in human history (Dikötter, 2010; Dikötter, 2016). The Cultural Revolution aimed to enforce ideological purity by targeting "bourgeois" elements and consolidating Mao's political control, but it caused severe social chaos, disrupted education, and further undermined economic productivity (MacFarquhar & Schoenhals, 2008).

By 1978, China's per capita GDP remained extremely low—estimated at under 156.66 US dollars (World Bank, 2024)—while neighboring regions such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea were experiencing rapid economic growth and industrialization, highlighting China's relative economic backwardness (Naughton, 2007).

Mao died in 1976, and in the subsequent years, Deng Xiaoping gradually emerged as China's paramount leader. Unlike the earlier emphasis on "class struggle as the guiding principle" (*yi jie ji dou zheng wei gang*), the new leadership shifted the country's focus toward "economic construction as the central task (*yi jing ji jian she wei zhong xin*)," marking the beginning of China's reform and opening-up era (Vogel, 2011). The Reform and Opening-up policy fundamentally aimed to stimulate the Chinese economy by leveraging market forces to build what came to be known as the socialist market economy with the emphasize on four modernizations of agriculture, industry, education and science technology of national defense (Xinhua News Agency, 2009).

Domestically, economic reforms were initiated by transforming the people's communes into the Household Responsibility System. Under this system, land remained publicly owned, but individual rural households were granted the rights to contract and manage plots of land. Farmers were allowed to make their own production decisions and, after fulfilling state quotas (primarily in the early years), they could retain or sell the surplus on the market for profit. This system decentralized agricultural production, enhanced farmer incentives, and dramatically increased agricultural output and rural income. It began as a grassroots initiative—famously in Xiaogang Village, Anhui Province—and was later endorsed and institutionalized by the central government (The Communist Party of China Central Committee, 1983).

Alongside this, the government relaxed central planning and control over the economy, increasingly relying on market mechanisms to regulate economic activities.

Externally, the country adopted an open-door policy; in 1979, the central government officially approved Guangdong and Fujian provinces as the first regions open to foreign trade, allowing for more liberalized international commerce (People's Daily, 2022). During the 1980s, China had seen a quick growth of small business in countryside and counties (He & Lin, 2015).

In summary, before the reforms, the state monopolized investments, production, distribution, and circulation by internalizing the market within the planned economy. After reforms, the state allowed the market economy to transcend the plan, effectively externalizing the market. Overall, the government adjusted the points of intersection between state and market according to changing circumstances. In other words, through policy interventions, the state significantly reconfigured its relationship with the market, triggering a new wave of urban growth and development (Ye, Yang & Wang, 2015). Scholars such as Harvey (2005) also interpret this reform as a neoliberal turn, with Chinese cities transforming into engines of economic growth.

2.1.2 Neoliberalism and post socialist urban transformation

In this section, I'll explain the neoliberal feature of urbanization in China after 1978, how these features influence the urban and suburban development, and redevelopment of China as well as what challenges the urbanization of China brings up to offer a political economy background of contemporary China.

2.1.2.1 Urbanization of Post-reform China

Urbanization in China is primarily a late 20th and early 21st-century phenomenon, influenced by political economy and spatial transformation (He, Li & Wu, 2006) and it is shaped heavily by the dynamics between state, market and society (He & Lin, 2015). The core idea was to stimulate competition among state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to enhance efficiency, foster innovation, and drive development. Unlike Russia and several Eastern European countries that adopted a "shock therapy" approach—referring to the rapid liberalization, mass privatization, and overnight dismantling of central planning—China opted for a gradualist reform strategy (Harvey 2005). This approach preserved key elements of the socialist legacy, such as the dominance of state-owned banks, partial control over capital markets, and the continued operation of many SOEs which are directly controlled by central government at national level, particularly in strategic sectors like infrastructure, military, essential energy and heavy industry (Naughton, 2014).

While market pricing mechanisms were gradually introduced, a more fundamental institutional transformation occurred through decentralization of political and economic power. The central government delegated significant fiscal and administrative authority to local governments, particularly at the provincial and municipal levels (Qian & Weingast, 1997). Although the central state retained a

strong guiding and redistributive role, local governments became the principal actors in urban development, responsible for managing tax revenues, local budgets, and implementing development strategies. The relationship between local and central governments in China may reflect a dual process of strong central statism and local state autonomy (Shin, 2014). This decentralization created a new dynamic in center-local relations, sometimes marked by tension and competition.

For example, local governments often prioritize short-term economic growth to meet performance targets—such as GDP growth rates—leading to issues like excessive land conversion, environmental degradation, and regulatory arbitrage. In many cases, local interests diverged from national development goals, contributing to fragmented urban governance and regional disparities (Oi, 1992; Lin, 2009). At the same time, the competition arises significantly between cities in China, particularly in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), attracting the fund from central government, or various index of city ranking (Pratt, 2011).

From the late 1980s to the 1990s, development zones gradually became the dominant spatial structure on the urban peripheries of Chinese cities (Cheng, Liu, He, & Shaw, 2017). These zones were primarily industrial in nature, as Chinese cities leveraged their comparative advantages in low land and labor costs to build manufacturing capacity (Wu, 2018). This attracted a large influx of foreign investment and led to the rise of export-oriented industrialization, with urban growth driven by manufacturing-centered development and spatial expansion (Zou, 2021). Wu (2024) refers to this as the "world factory model," characterized by the integration of local development strategies with global economic circuits.

In China, land is publicly owned, but there is a clear distinction between land ownership and various forms of land rights:

- Urban land is owned by the state.
- Rural and collective land is owned by village collectives.

Despite public ownership, land use rights can be transferred, leased, or mortgaged, forming the basis of China’s land market since the 1988 constitutional amendment and the 1990 Land Administration Law (Wong, 1991). Specifically, China’s land rights system is characterized by a “bundle of rights” framework, which includes:

Category	Ownership	Right of Use	Right of Operation
Land	Urban land: State-owned Rural land: Collectively owned by village entities	Use rights can be obtained via allocation, transfer, or lease (e.g., 70 years for residential use)	Especially in rural areas, land operation rights can be leased, subcontracted, or transferred

Housing	Physical structure privately owned	Based on the term of land use rights beneath the property (e.g., 70 years for residential land)	Property can be rented, sold, or mortgaged, subject to land use limitations
---------	------------------------------------	---	---

Table 1. Structure of Land and Property Rights in China

In practice, land use rights for urban construction land are auctioned or granted to developers (often through local land bureaus), generating substantial revenue for local governments. This mechanism has enabled them to finance infrastructure, repay bank loans, and support industrial development without direct central transfers or formal debt issuance (Zhu, 1999).

In short, local states, as the landowners, capitalized on land value appreciation to finance development, by using lands as collateral to raise funds from the banks. Land sales generated short-term revenues, which in turn supported long-term industrial and urban development. This mechanism—known as land-based finance (*tu di cai zheng*)—became a cornerstone of China's urbanization and fiscal strategy (Lin, 2014).

The 2008 global financial crisis marked yet another critical juncture for China's economy. Faced with a downturn in external demand, numerous factories shut down, resulting in widespread unemployment among workers. To rescue the economy, the central government adopted fiscal stimulus measures, notably allowing local governments to raise debt financing (Wu, 2023). This policy shift triggered a distinctly Chinese form of financial expansion or financialization. Local governments embarked on massive infrastructure construction projects to create jobs, exemplifying what Harvey (2002) terms the “investment in built environment as a spatial fix.” Unlike earlier development zones focused on manufacturing, these new urban developments or new towns prioritized infrastructure investment and real estate development as primary sources of land revenue (Zou, 2021). From 2008 to the present, this financialized entrepreneurial state model has become firmly established (Wu, 2024).

2.1.2.2 From growth machine to state entrepreneurialism

To understand the local political economy outlined in the previous section, the concept of the growth machine provides a valuable analytical framework. Originally proposed by Harvey Molotch (1976) in the context of U.S. urban politics, the growth machine thesis posits that coalitions of local elites—including politicians, planners, landowners, and developers—work collectively to promote land-based economic growth, thereby enhancing urban land values for shared benefit.

In post-reform China, similar coalitions emerged amid broader neoliberal reforms such as housing privatization, SOE downsizing, public welfare retrenchment, and land financialization (Hsing, 2010; Zhu, 1999). These local alliances, composed of political leaders, planners, developers, and media actors, drove up land values and

turned urban development into a key fiscal strategy. As a result, the local state ceased to function primarily as a social welfare provider (He & Wu, 2009). However, this trajectory does not imply that China has fully embraced neoliberalism. Rather, China exhibits a "neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics" (Harvey, 2005), where the state remains a dominant actor. Urban expansion in China is largely state-driven and policy-led. National plans, such as *14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National High-Tech Industrial Development Zones* (Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China, 2022), explicitly define political and economic strategies for industrial innovation, development of regional integration, urban growth. The action of local government is guided by those official documents from central state, although with their own autonomy.

Furthermore, contrary to conventional growth machines where planning serves market interests, in China, planning is a central instrument of state power, shaping urban space not merely to support growth, but also to maintain political stability and social cohesion (He & Wu, 2009; Wu, 2018).

In terms of land development, research on land mortgages reveals that the state's priorities lie more in broader developmental agendas and national initiatives—such as promoting industrial upgrading, urban expansion, reducing regional disparities, advancing urban–rural integration, revitalizing rural areas, protecting the environment, and preserving cultural heritage—rather than simply maximizing land profitability (Wu, Zhang & Liu, 2022).

Urban governance in China has increasingly transcended the local entrepreneurial model (Wu, 2020) and reflects geopolitical considerations, particularly at the scale of larger urban regions such as the Yangtze River Delta and the Greater Bay Area. As Wu (2003) argues, Shanghai's re-globalization after the reform era represents a strategic project of the post-socialist entrepreneurial state. The city was redefined as a national gateway to global markets and repositioned as a financial, economic, and trade hub—symbolizing China's return to the world stage. Through fiscal restructuring, industrial policy, and spatial planning, the central government has created market-friendly conditions while ensuring alignment with national goals. In short, the state employs entrepreneurial strategies to position cities as media of national strategy, using policies, discourses, and institutional arrangements to maintain control and influence over urban development amid marketization and globalization.

Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, urban development has become more closely aligned with national strategic priorities (Li, 2022). One prominent example is the State Council's directive issued in December 2017, *Guiding Opinions on Further Strengthening East–West Poverty Alleviation Cooperation*, which mobilized major cities to assist less-developed regions. Specific cases include Beijing pairing with Inner Mongolia, Shanghai with Yunnan, and Guangzhou and Shenzhen with various cities in Guizhou etc. These partnerships involve industrial cooperation, labor exchange, talent support, financial assistance, and the mobilization of social participation, which aims to achieve the national goal of poverty alleviation, and common prosperity etc.

In conclusion, China is an entrepreneurial state that centers on planning and uses the market as a means; through this model, the state pursues its political goals and national missions (Wu, 2018), which is very important to understand the phenomenal like symbolic projects, and paradoxical urban developments in China. I'll elaborate this more in next section.

2.1.3 Phantom Urbanism?

As explained in last section, the production of urban space in China is tightly aligned with national politics and become the extension of state power. Urban space has become a key ideological terrain for the state. Thus, Urbanization is no longer merely a process of economic growth or population concentration—it is now tightly bound to national strategies, political missions, and the pursuit of modernity and global identity. As Oakes (2019) argues, “the city” has become the dominant ideological form through which China imagines its future, enacts development, and expresses national aspirations. The spatial transformation of cities is thus not only functional but deeply symbolic, aligning with Gramsci’s idea of “common sense”—where urbanization becomes the unquestioned path to modern civilization embedded in national planning and official discourse in China. The national ideology never disappears; before the reform, it was consistent, emphasizing collectivism, class equality, and public ownership, but after the reform, it became fragmented and diverse (Zhang, 2010).

The logic of urban development in China is not primarily driven by market supply and demand but rather by state-led strategic imperatives—this forms the very foundation of speculative urbanism (Wu, 2020). This government-oriented trajectory includes:

- Local governments, in order to align with national plans and secure policy or funding support, often adopt a "build first, attract investment later" approach, despite lacking the economic base or population size to sustain such development.
- Projects are not propelled by endogenous urban needs but are instead motivated by performance evaluations, image-building, and political signaling.

China has numerous city-ranking schemes such as “National Central City,” “Civilized City,” “Smart City,” and “Eco-city,” where evaluations emphasize construction scale, urban appearance, landmark projects, total investment, etc. To win these titles or gain administrative upgrades, local governments often prioritize “visible achievements” over sustainable or locally relevant outcomes (Visser, 2019). Harvey (2021) concludes this as “mindless urbanization”—prioritizing speed, spectacle, and accumulation over social cohesion and ecological balance—has resulted in “creative destruction” (Harvey, 2007) including, commodified urban space, cultural erasure, and spatial alienation.

More specifically, it leads to the proliferation of ghost cities, unfinished real estate projects, monumental architecture, and spectacular landmark planning. These are not merely planning failures, but the result of a state-led developmental model in which the city becomes a strategic space for achieving national modernity and participating in the global order, often resulting in spatial planning that disregards local social structures and cultural logics (Oakes, 2019).

As shown in research of Ordos, a new city built in inner Mongolian, local governments often pursue city-building for political visibility rather than demographic or economic demand, resulting in massive vacant infrastructures, which results in the formation of ghost city (Yin, Qian, & Zhu, 2017). Sorace and Hurst (2016) conceptualize this as “phantom urbanization,” where aesthetic spectacle—rather than utility—becomes the primary goal. Local officials are incentivized by the political economy of performance metrics and land-based financing to engage in urban expansion, even when it yields no immediate material return. Zhang (2006) similarly observes that demolition and reconstruction in cities like Kunming serve to erase the past in favor of showcasing modern, globalized urban images.

This process reflects China’s entrepreneurial governance model, where cities are tools of geopolitical strategy, platforms for international integration, and carriers of state narratives (Zhang, 2012). National and local governments use urban form to signify progress, attract capital, and consolidate legitimacy. Yet as Visser (2019) points out, in such brand-making processes, citizens are largely glossed over. The city is portrayed as an abstract entity—improving quality of life (for whom?), enhancing cleanliness and culture (for whom?).

Ultimately, the urban development in China functions as both symbol and instrument: it reflects the ideology of modernization while operationalizing political control.

2.1.4 Conclusion

The development of urbanization in China has evolved from a functional urban system under the planned economy to a phase characterized by marketization, performance-driven governance, and cultural commodification after the reform and opening-up. During the Mao era, urban structures were defined by the danwei (work unit) system and rural-urban segregation, with cities serving as vessels of the state apparatus. After the reform, cities became engines of growth driven by local governments. Since the early 21st century, urban landscapes have emerged as tools of “soft power” in inter-city competition, reflecting the logic of state entrepreneurialism and symbolic spatial governance, and extending state ideology and political strategies. Under the pressure of performance evaluations and investment-driven anxieties, projects such as “cultural parks” often exhibit spatial formalism and social hollowing, sometimes resulting in so-called “ghost cities” or “shell projects (project only has surface without inner content) as mentioned in the last section. The Miao-Dong Cultural Park exemplifies such an urban spatial phenomenon, the Disneyization turning of tourism space in China, which reflects a tendency whereby, driven by the pursuit of spatial performance and economic indicators, the authenticity and social value of culture are diluted or overlooked (Zhang, Liang, & Bao, 2021).

Together, these three strands of literature provide a conceptual and historical foundation for understanding how the Miao-Dong Cultural park operates as a site where discourses of development, ethnicity, and urban transformation converge.

2.2 Culture governance and Culture Tourism

To further understand how urban landscapes became tools of political strategies, the aspect of culture comes into sight. Since the reform and opening-up of China in 1978, culture has become increasingly entangled with local development, ethnic tourism, and state governance. In particular, the experience economy has emerged as a significant channel of capital accumulation in contemporary China. Among its most prominent forms is cultural-led initiatives, which define culture broadly—as heritage, art, or a lifestyle involving leisure, shopping, food, and entertainment. The move toward postmodern consumerism, which values difference, aesthetics, and symbolism, helps explain many cultural business strategies and influences how urban space is shaped and transformed. As the economy shifts to post-Fordism and cultural trends turn postmodern, people seek urban spaces that differ greatly from those of the Fordist era (Harvey, 1987).

Culture tourism has been strongly promoted in national development plans such as *the National Tourism and Leisure Outline (2013–2020)* and the *14th Five-Year (2021–2025) Plan for Cultural and Tourism Development*. Under this national framework, numerous urban development projects have been launched, along with large-scale investment in the built environment—transportation, accommodation, heritage parks, and leisure facilities—to support the creation of "memorable" and "authentic" tourist experiences. The case, Miao Dong Cultural Park is such kind of state-led culture tourism urban project.

In recent years, scholars have proposed thinking through tourism (Qian, 2025) as a productive lens to examine broader processes of political economy, spatial transformation, and governance innovation in post-reform China. Tourism is not only a site of consumption but also a space where social imaginaries, state-society relations, and ethnic representations are constantly reconfigured. As explained earlier, the urban development in China is affected by market-economic growth, state-political control and national ideology, society. The governance in culture tourism project emerges as a big research topic. It generally entails two interconnected meanings. First, the governing of culture refers to the standardization, commodification, and instrumentalization of cultural elements—transforming them into productive forces with economic and social utility. Second, governing with culture implies the deployment of culture as a governance tool, through which new mechanisms of statecraft, social control, and identity formation are enacted (Qian, 2025).

As this study focuses on the Miao-Dong Cultural Park project as a case situated at the intersection of cultural governance and ethnic tourism. In this section, I'll review the theory of culture governance, including the origin of the concept and localized development of cultural governance in China.

2.2.1 Culture Governance

The concept of cultural governance emerges from a confluence of critical traditions in cultural studies, political theory, and Foucauldian analytics of power. It marks a significant shift in how scholars conceptualize the relationship between culture and power, moving beyond oppositional frameworks of cultural resistance to examine how culture itself functions as a mode of governance.

The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, particularly through the work of Stuart Hall, foregrounded culture as a contested terrain where meanings, identities, and social relations are negotiated and often resisted (Hall, 1997). However, this early focus on resistance and ideological struggle was later complemented—and in some cases challenged—by a more institutional and systemic approach to culture, especially through the work of Tony Bennett.

Bennett (1995, 1998, 2002, 2006) advocated for a “socialized” cultural studies, redirecting attention from solely oppositional practices to the institutional, policy-driven, and administrative dimensions of culture. Deeply influenced by Michel Foucault’s theory of governmentality, Bennett reconceptualized culture not merely as a site of ideological contestation but as a technological assemblage through which modern societies organize populations, regulate conduct, and shape subjectivities. Foucault’s notion of governmentality—a neologism combining “government” and “mentality”—refers to the rationalities, techniques, and knowledge systems by which conduct is directed, not only by states but by a wide array of institutions, professionals, and discourses (Foucault, 1991). Within this framework, power is not simply repressive but productive, operating through mundane cultural mechanisms such as education, media, museums, and heritage policies. Bennett extends this logic to show how culture itself becomes an apparatus of government, both in its institutional form and in the symbolic resources it deploys.

In parallel, Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony provides a foundational influence on cultural governance thinking. Gramsci argued that political power is sustained not just through coercion, but through the consensual manufacture of cultural and moral leadership. Cultural governance, in this sense, can be seen as a contemporary articulation of hegemonic processes—whereby meanings, values, and identities are shaped to align with dominant socio-political and economic interests (Hall, 1997; Schmitt, 2023).

However, cultural governance goes beyond the Gramscian concern with ideological consent by foregrounding how culture operates as a mode of rule—as a set of discursive and material practices that regulate bodies, spaces, and conduct. It includes both the governing of culture, e.g., through policies that standardize, instrumentalize, or economize cultural resources and governing with culture, in which culture becomes a medium of social ordering, identity formation, and symbolic control.

2.2.2 Cultural Governance in Post-reform China

Cultural governance has long been a fundamental mode of political control through education in China, with deep roots in Confucian statecraft, where shaping moral behavior and harmonious social relations was central to governance. Later,

Influenced by the modern history of the being oppressed since 1840 Opium war, Mao Zedong's 1940 proclamation: "We must not only transform a politically oppressed and economically exploited China into one that is politically free and economically prosperous, but also turn a China ruled by old culture—and thus rigid and backward—into one ruled by new culture, and therefore civilized and advanced." Since the late 20th century, the Chinese state has undergone a significant transformation in its approach to national governance—from a class-struggle-based political regime in the Maoist era, to economic-centered reforms under Deng Xiaoping, and more recently toward a cultural turn in governance (Hu, 2012). This shift was formally signaled at the end of 2013, when Xi Jinping proposed the modernization of the "national governance system and governance capacity (Gong, 2025)." Subsequently, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of PRC further emphasized the strategic goal of building China into a "socialist cultural power" by 2035 (Xi, 2025), positioning cultural governance as a central pillar of national development.

2.2.2.1 Governance of Culture for economic growth

The post-reform era has seen a dramatic transformation in the logic of urban governance. With the rise of marketization and globalization, cultural governance in Chinese cities has increasingly aligned with consumerist urbanism, where public space is reimagined for tourism, consumption, and middle-class lifestyles. Urban regeneration projects often invoke "heritage" and "tradition" to justify commercial redevelopment, leading to a shift from politically mobilized urban space to aesthetically governed, consumption-driven spatial imaginaries (Qian, 2019). This shift is particularly evident in the cultural-led development of suburban areas.

For instance, Thames Town in Songjiang, Shanghai, was initially planned as a high-end residential community with aspirations toward creative industry development. However, facing declining occupancy rates, local government and development companies repositioned the area as a themed, British-style consumer destination. Despite early rhetoric of cultural policy focused on cultural production, the project quickly evolved into a consumption-oriented space dominated by leisure, shopping, and tourism. Similarly, the Polar Ocean World in Lingang, Shanghai—framed as a cultural tourism initiative—offers standardized, entertainment-driven experiences with little connection to local culture. These cases illustrate how cultural governance in Shanghai primarily serves entrepreneurial urban strategies and land-based fiscal objectives. Culture becomes instrumentalized—not to nurture local cultural ecologies or foster inclusion—but to repackage urban space for investment, consumption, and value extraction (Li, 2020).

This pattern is not unique to Shanghai. In many Chinese cities, the apparent "cultural turn" in urban redevelopment often conceals deeper political and fiscal imperatives. Cultural-led urban renewal is frequently deployed as a strategy to obtain profitable commercial land-use rights under the guise of heritage preservation or cultural

revitalization. Such projects are often most prominent in cities or districts with limited access to new land quotas, where redevelopment becomes the main lever for local economic growth. As seen in Guangzhou, many so-called cultural regeneration initiatives primarily serve commercial interests while invoking culture as a symbolic justification (Jiang & Lin, 2025). The extent and scale of such projects often depend on ongoing negotiations between state actors, developers, and existing land users, highlighting how cultural governance operates within a broader framework of land commodification and fiscal pragmatism (Qian, Feng, & Zhu, 2012)

Similarly, in Xinxing County, Guangdong, Qian (2017) examines how the Ecological Tourism Industrial Park (ETIP) commodifies Zen culture as a symbolic narrative to support state-led spatial and economic restructuring. Here, “Zen” becomes a floating signifier, framing natural elements like hot springs, valleys, and tea plantations as sources of spiritual renewal. These landscapes are reinterpreted as part of an idealized, harmonious rural aesthetic that caters to urban middle-class desires for order, comfort, and lifestyle consumption. Cultural governance in this context legitimizes top-down development agendas while marginalizing everyday and grassroots expressions of cultural life. More than a site of cultural infrastructure, ETIP offers a curated vision of public culture for affluent consumers and reinforces the state’s cultural authority in the aftermath of reform-era liberalization.

Taken together, these cases reveal that cultural governance in contemporary China is increasingly shaped by instrumental rationalities. Rather than fostering pluralistic cultural life, it is often deployed as a strategic tool for urban entrepreneurialism and political legitimation. As Pow and Neo (2013) argue in their critique of eco-city development, aesthetic appeal and economic returns are frequently prioritized over equity, justice, or inclusion.

2.2.2.2 Governance with culture for a better society/nation?

Cultural governance in China is not merely an economic strategy to develop cultural industries, but a political logic aimed at enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of national governance itself (Xiao & Ning, 2023). Culture is mobilized as a governing technology—a means to shape subjectivities, values, spatial behaviors, and public morality—through both market mechanisms and ideological apparatuses. The development of cultural industries serves to translate political and social values into economic forms, thereby restructuring the mode of governance through the economy.

Historical examples, such as the “Municipal Reform Movement” (市政运动) in late Qing dynasty demonstrate how urban elites used spatial and cultural interventions (e.g., parks, festivals) to discipline public behavior and foster “civilized” citizens (Qian, 2019). As Wang (2024) shows, this early form of cultural governance treated folk religion, vulgar entertainment, and informal public life as governance problems to be solved through rebranded cultural events, spatial reorganization, and moral education. Similarly, during the Maoist era, cultural infrastructure and urban space

such as Workers' Cultural Palace, Revolutionary Monument, Revolutionary Model Opera were deployed as tools for ideological mobilization, imbued with strong symbolic power to express collective identity and revolutionary spirit (Cartier, 2024).

However, this top-down cultural governance is often characterized by a lack of meaningful public participation. Pow (2018) further explores how "eco-aesthetics" underpin China's ecological civilization agenda, revealing how state-led urban greening serves as a tool for cultivating compliant citizens while obscuring persistent socio-environmental inequalities.

A similar logic of cultural governance is evident in China's southwestern ethnic minority regions such as Guizhou and Yunnan, where our case is situated. In these areas, ethnic culture is framed both as a developmental resource and as a tool for reinforcing national unity. While ethnic minorities are nominally positioned as cultural actors, state-led initiatives emphasize two intertwined objectives: the modernization of local populations and the preservation of heritage as a symbol of the multiethnic Chinese nation. Rather than fostering bottom-up cultural revitalization, official narratives promote a curated version of minority identity—emphasizing traditional dress, festivals, and customs—intended to produce a sense of shared national belonging and maintain social stability (Choi, 2014; Nyíri, 2006).

The government seeks to shape national cultural identity in these regions through ideological guidance, improved education, and active participation. Local authorities aim to empower minority communities with access to information and resources, encouraging them to become responsible agents in regional cultural governance and to revitalize ethnic culture through a shared sense of identity and responsibility (Liu, 2021; Gong & Yu, 2024). And culture tourism became a tool to promote local modernity (Oakes, 1998).

Guizhou's provincial "historical cultural city" campaigns are emblematic of this paradox. It includes these criteria: 1. Closely related to Guizhou's civilization history or its modern and contemporary political, economic, cultural, and scientific development. 2. Witnesses the development process of the Communist Party of China and the People's Republic of China such as Long March. 3. Reflects major achievements such as Reform and Opening-up and the Western Development Strategy, a national initiative launched in 2000 aimed at accelerating economic and social development in the western regions (which are poorer compared to eastern coastal areas) of China, including Guizhou. 4. Highlights ethnic cultural diversity and integration (Guizhou Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, 2022).

This campaign aligns with Nyíri (2006)'s argument:

"In China, tourism development is guided by the state, and "scenic spots" (jingdian 景点) and theme parks are used to demonstrate China's heroic past and as tools of patriotic education and modernization - or as forms of "indoctrination." The tourist site is perceived as a product, and, as such, it is bounded, approved, rated, and consumed".

Heritage, in this context, functions as a governmental technology. Heritage discourse in urban projects—such as the Danzhai, a city in Guizhou, development—often centers on two narratives: economic development and improvement/order. Local leaders reframe village-based ethnic traditions as assets for tourism-driven growth, while simultaneously attempting to reshape citizens' behavior and moral character through spatial reconfiguration and aesthetic governance (Oakes, 2016). However, Oakes notes a disjuncture: while new built environments convey a sense of urban modernity, residents' everyday practices remain largely disconnected from the “heritagized” spaces they inhabit.

Urban modernization—celebrated by elites and intellectuals —often coincides with folkloric branding initiatives that commodify rural and ethnic imagery. Ethnic motifs, farming tools, and generic traditional facades dominate public spaces. Local history, ethnic culture, in many cities in Guizhou remained abstract and ungraspable for many residents. It had to be rendered visible, consumable, and legible through state planning.

The case of Tongren, another city in Guizhou, exemplifies this tension between state narrative and local agency. The city launched a “happiness index” campaign centered on building a culturally themed urban environment. While the discourse borrowed from global neoliberal vocabularies—such as well-being and citizen participation—the movement was ultimately a biopolitical project aimed at shaping governable citizens and reinforcing state power through construction of visible cityscape featured with ethnic symbols. Ethnic culture was repackaged through cityscape reconstruction, instead of promoting actual culture industry, and it ultimately is used not for local communities, but for urban elites and external audiences, visually homogenous environments that functioned as branding mechanisms for city competitiveness (Oakes, 2017).

In sum, while the rhetoric of cultural governance in southwestern minority regions echoes global discourses of creativity, well-being, and heritage preservation, its actual function is far more strategic. Culture is hollowed out and abstracted, transformed into a flexible, state-directed technology of governance. The main beneficiary of these “cultural city” projects is not minority culture itself, but the state's continued capacity to manage diversity, project order, and assert legitimacy in a rapidly transforming society.

2.2.2.3 The negotiated culture governance

Cultural governance in contemporary China operates through a dynamic negotiation among state objectives, social agency and market force. The two layers of culture governance discussed above reveal how culture is instrumentalized in Chinese urban governance. Fundamentally, officials are not concerned with the intrinsic value of culture, but rather with how it can be used to achieve governance and development goals.

As previously noted, once culture becomes entangled in China's standardized urbanization process, it functions more as a tool of governance than as a means to promote creative cities. This is not to say that the state lacks ambition in fostering innovation and development; rather, its primary interest lies in abstracting and

hollowing out culture, turning it into a resource for reproducing control and maintaining stability (Oakes, 2019). The rise of culture-led development is driven by the pursuit of economic growth, which in contemporary China is foundational to both local and national governments' legitimacy—a key factor in gaining public support. Similarly, efforts such as heritage preservation or cultural branding, often framed as promoting social prosperity and harmony, are rooted in this logic.

But why do these governance measures—intended to enhance legitimacy and public trust—ultimately result in negative outcomes like social injustice, exclusion, and cultural degradation, as previously critiqued?

To understand this contradiction, we must return to the CCP's fundamental logic and self-positioning in governance. The Party defines itself as representing the fundamental interests of the broadest masses, with communism as its ultimate ideal, and "serving the people" as the core principle of government (Mao Zedong, 1944). According to the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee, China's principal contradiction in the new era becomes "between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life." Xi Jinping has emphasized that "the people's aspiration for a better life is our goal," and that such needs must be met through high-quality development.

However, what constitutes "the people's interests" or "a better life," and what the people truly need, are not defined directly by citizens, but rather by the Party and government through their interpretations and judgements of social demands and interests. At the grassroots level especially, such interpretations are often highly subjective, shaped by individual officials' experiences, preferences, and local government agendas.

That said, this does not imply that cultural governance in China is entirely top-down. While policies and actions are driven by state interpretations of social needs, the process itself is complex and negotiated. Governance involves constant negotiation, and although cultural creativity may be mobilized to serve state-authorized goals, its actual outcomes are never entirely predetermined.

Crucially, cultural governance is not monolithic. Communities engage in tactical resistance, adaptation, and reinterpretation of state-imposed frameworks. In heritage contexts, Zhu (2015) observes how state "authenticity" standards—enforced via spatial segregation, emotional exile, and value transformation—provoke grassroots responses. Local actors are not passive recipients; they consume, question, and negotiate authenticity through everyday practices, such as subverting spatial rules or revitalizing traditions outside state-sanctioned zones. Similarly, Fraser's (2020) study of the Ewenki, a minority ethnic group in northeast China, reveals minority cadres acting as "heritage intermediaries," leveraging state resources for community-driven projects. This duality illustrates how governance simultaneously reinforces state control and enables "spaces for cultural autonomy and innovation."

Leisure spaces further exemplify this negotiation. State-designed parks, squares, and heritage sites promote "civilized modernity" but become sites of counter-narratives. Residents reclaim agency through informal occupations (e.g., guerrilla gardening), cultural assertions like square dancing (Oakes & Yang, 2020), and resistance to

commercialization. As Oakes (2019) notes, these spaces function as "governable" territories where state visions of order clash with "embodied practices of local modernity."

In tourism-centric heritage zones like The Honghe Hani Rice Terraces World Cultural Heritage Site in Yunnan, Wu and Sun (2020) identify a cyclical pattern: state and corporate actors deploy spatial restructuring, self-governance models, and reflexive subject-making to align culture with market goals, yet villagers resist through tactics like illicit vending or 合作社 (cooperative) bargaining. These struggles, however, risk reinforcing power imbalances when resistance is co-opted into "the weapons of the strong."

Cultural governance in China is thus characterized by negotiated tension: the state instrumentalizes culture for legitimacy and control, while communities navigate, contest, and reinterpret these frameworks. Outcomes are indeterminate, shaped by daily acts of resilience that transform governance into a dialectical process. As Zhu and Fraser underscore, local agency ensures that cultural governance remains a contested, evolving terrain—never fully top-down nor bottom-up.

2.3 Conclusion

Cultural governance, as traced from its theoretical roots in Gramsci, Foucault, and Bennett to its deployment in post-reform China, reveals a persistent duality.

On one hand, it serves as a sophisticated state technology—transforming culture into an apparatus for legitimizing authority, managing diversity, and pursuing developmentalist objectives (Oakes, 1998; Qian, 2025). Heritage, creativity, and identity become abstracted and repackaged as visual symbols, tourist commodities, and urban branding devices, often divorced from the lived realities they claim to represent (Oakes, 2016; Oakes, 2017).

On the other hand, the process is never fully closed: communities resist, adapt, and repurpose state frameworks in ways that reintroduce local agency into ostensibly top-down projects. In southwestern minority regions such as Guizhou, this dialectic is particularly sharp—where culture is mobilized to project both modernity and unity, but also contested in everyday practices that escape, subvert, or reframe official narratives (Fraser, 2020; Wu & Sun, 2020). Ultimately, cultural governance in China operates less as a harmonious fusion of culture and power than as a negotiated, uneven field of struggle, where the state's ambitions for order and growth continually meet the unpredictable creativity of social life (Oakes, 2019). This understanding of culture governance inspires this study to look at not only how ethnic culture is mobilized and shaped by official discourse in Miao Dong Cultural Park but also, how the governance is negotiated among state, market and society.

3. Research Gap

First, while much research examines cultural governance broadly, there is a gap in understanding how it functions specifically within ethnic minority regions like Guizhou, where official narratives are contested through everyday practices and social negotiations especially within culture tourism context. This study, as an empirical case study aims to contribute to research topics like how cultural governance operates as a contested, social process in minority urban spaces, filled with negotiations between state authority, local communities, and market forces (Oakes, 2016; Oakes, 2019; Oakes, 2020; Qian, 2017; Qian, 2025; Wu & Sun, 2020), and ultimately, provide more details to understand the complexity of culture governance in ethnic minority regions in Chinese context.

Second, this study adopts a perspective considering temporality. The Miao Dong Cultural Park underwent a prolonged and phased development—groundbreaking on 30 December 2009, initial completion by November 2011, and official opening on 23 July 2013—offering an opportunity to examine the effects of cultural governance on identity formation and power dynamics within the broader, continuous trajectory of post-reform urban cultural politics in China. This temporal depth enables a more critical exploration of change, continuity, and reconfiguration over time.

Third, the recent policy shift marked by the State Council's September 2023 *Several Measures on Unlocking Tourism Consumption Potential and Promoting High-Quality Development of Tourism* provides a relevant backdrop for re-evaluating the case. Since its opening in 2013, the Miao Dong Cultural Park has struggled with low visitor numbers and limited economic success. Its revitalization efforts were notably inspired by a bottom-up initiative—drawing on the local rural market tradition of ganji (赶集): a periodic local market or fair where villagers gather to buy, sell, and socialize—which, despite the project's state-led origins, reflects an openness to negotiation driven by both governmental and corporate aspirations for profitability. While the park currently remains in an exploratory and experimental phase since it has not found a sustainable stable profit model, these dynamics create a valuable empirical site for investigating how cultural governance is actively negotiated in practice, beyond purely top-down frameworks.

4. Methodology

4.1 Analytical Framework: culture governance and critical urban theory

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design to investigate how ethnic culture is constructed, encoded, and operationalized in the Miao-Dong Cultural Park in Kaili, Guizhou, under the broader context of post-reform China's cultural governance and place-based development. This study is grounded in theories of

culture governance in urban studies (Hall, 1997; Schmitt, 2011; Qian, 2024; Oakes, 2017; Pow, 2018; Pow, 2015) and urban political economy in post-reform China (Wu, 2004; He& Wu, 2009; Wu,2024) as well as critical urban theory (Harvey, 1978; 2005). Particularly, the below framework that is created by Wu and Sun (2020) is employed as a useful analysis lens for this study.

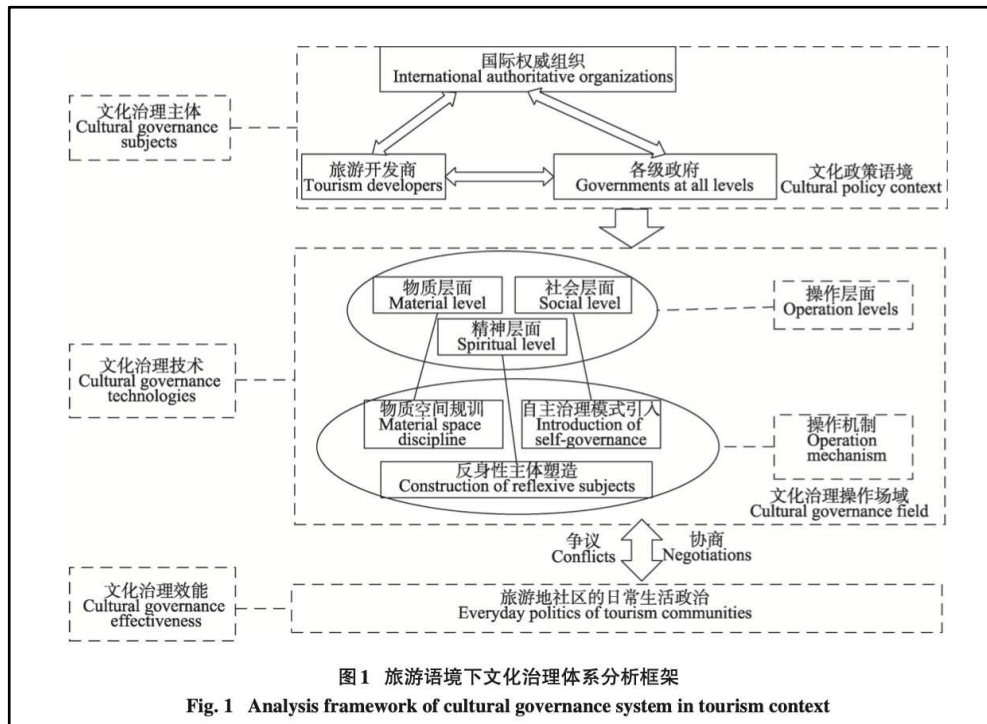


Figure 1. Analysis framework of culture governance system in tourism context, created by Wu and Sun (2020).

4.2 Research Approach: Constructivist and Inductive reasoning

This study is grounded in a constructivist epistemological orientation, which holds that reality is not fixed or objective but rather socially and culturally constructed through interaction, discourse, and interpretation. Social constructivism, as a sociological theory, challenges positivist notions of absolute truth, emphasizing instead the contingent and negotiated nature of knowledge (Burr, 2015). Constructivism's approach to power and knowledge is deeply influenced by Michel Foucault with the emphasis that knowledge exists in a historical and cultural context (Burr, 2015). Importantly, social constructivism provides a framework for understanding the constructed worlds that people inhabit (Flaskas, 1995), Keller (2018) further argues for a sociology of knowledge-based approach to the discursive construction of realities, which sees **discourse** as specific social processes of meaning-making, embedded in historical and institutional contexts. It moves beyond pure linguistics, emphasizing how knowledge is constructed, legitimized, and contested through communication. Based on that, this study examines the culture governance of Miao Dong Cultural Park through critical discourse analysis of various data including official documents, ethnography, interviews and other materials.

This study adopts a primarily deductive approach, using cultural governance as the guiding theoretical framework as shown above to analyze the planning, management, and commercialization of ethnic culture in Kaili. The framework informs the interpretation of policies, spatial strategies, and state-led initiatives.

Simultaneously, the study incorporates inductive elements during fieldwork, allowing insights to emerge from observations, interviews with artisans and residents, and the lived experiences of local actors. This combination ensures that the analysis is both theoretically grounded and sensitive to the complexities of local practice.

4.3 Research Method: ethnographic case study

Doing research by ethnographic case study means using ethnography to provide a holistic view and context of a social system, while case study enables researchers to deeper explore how phenomena or processes could be understood within their particular social, historical and spatial contexts (Walters, 2007).

Ethnographic case study is particularly suited to this study, as it allows for an in-depth, contextualized understanding of the complex interplay between local actors, cultural policies, and spatial practices within a bounded case (Simons, 2014; Schwandt & Gates, 2018). By doing ethnographic case study, researchers could focus on a program, event, or activity involving individuals rather than a group, looking for shared patterns that develop as a group as a result of the program, event, or activity (*Abalos-Gerard Gonzalez, 2011*).

The components of ethnographic case study in this study include policy discourse analysis, a one-month ethnographic fieldwork in the park, and semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders, which will be further explained in the following section.

By employing ethnographic case study, this study, instead of seeking objective truths, investigates how ethnic culture and development imaginaries are constructed, circulated, and contested by various actors in the context of post-reform China's political economy. This study seeks to unpack how meanings are produced and circulated, and how power operates through language, space, and planning. Accordingly, discourse is understood not simply as speech or writing, but as a form of social practice that shapes reality (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, critical discourse analysis is used as data analysis method, this will be detailed explained below.

4.4 Data collection

4.4.1 Policy and Planning Document Analysis

Policy documents at the central, provincial, and municipal levels were collected, including ethnic tourism development strategies, cultural industry guidelines, master plans of Miao Dong cultural park, brochures, promotional materials, and local gazetteers. These materials are used to analyze how ethnic minority culture is

framed and operationalized within official development and branding strategies. The documents for analysis are listed below.

Central-level Policy Documents

YEAR	DOCUMENT TITLE	AREAS COVERED
2025	Several Economic Policies on Promoting High-Quality Cultural Development (General Office of the State Council)	Culture + tourism, rural revitalization, industrial integration
2023	Several Measures on Unlocking Tourism Consumption Potential and Promoting High-Quality Development of Tourism	Tourism development
2023	Domestic Tourism Enhancement Plan (2023–2025)	Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism, smart tourism, cultural industry empowering rural revitalization
2022	14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development (General Office of the CPC Central Committee & General Office of the State Council)	Urban–rural cultural integration, urban cultural governance
2021	14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Industry Development (Ministry of Culture and Tourism)	Urban cultural resource development, cultural industry growth
2021	Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage (National Ethnic Affairs Commission)	Ethnic culture, ICH protection, cultural–tourism integration
2015	Opinions on Accelerating the Development of a Modern Public Cultural Service System (General Office of the CPC Central Committee & General Office of the State Council)	Urban–rural coordinated cultural development, public cultural services

Provincial-level Policy Documents (Guizhou Province)

YEAR	DOCUMENT TITLE	AREAS COVERED
2023	14th Five-Year Plan for Culture and Tourism Development of Guizhou Province	Ethnic cultural ecological tourism, winter tourism product systems
2023	Administrative Measures for the Recognition and Management of Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism Experience Spaces (Trial) (Guizhou Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism)	ICH tourism space management
2023	Standards for Administrative Discretion in the Culture and Tourism System (Trial)	Standardization of cultural–tourism law enforcement, market governance

2022	Implementation Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Qian Wei Ting Zi [2022] No. 38)	Integration of ICH protection and education, cultural ecological zone construction
2021	14th Five-Year Plan for New-type Urbanization of Guizhou Province	Urban regeneration, industry–city integration
2021	Implementation Plan for Urban Regeneration in Guizhou Province	Historic district renewal, cultural–tourism integration

Prefectural-level Policy Documents (Qiandongnan Prefecture)

YEAR	DOCUMENT TITLE	AREAS COVERED
2025	Implementation Opinions on Incentives for Attracting Tourists to Qiandongnan in 2025 (Trial)	Inter-provincial tourism cooperation, market incentives
2025	Reply of the Qiandongnan Prefecture People’s Government to Proposal No. 3076 at the Third Session of the 13th Guizhou Provincial CPPCC	Smart tourism platform construction
2023	Construction Plan for Qiandongnan Ethnic Cultural Ecological Protection Experimental Zone	Living heritage transmission, ecological protection zoning

Municipal-level Policy Documents (Kaili City)

YEAR	DOCUMENT TITLE	AREAS COVERED
2024	Implementation Plan for Promoting High-Quality Development of the Tourism Industry in Kaili City (2024)	Miao–Dong Cultural Park upgrading, cultural–tourism quality improvement
2023	Implementation Plan for Upgrading Kaili Miao–Dong Cultural Park	Spatial restructuring, cultural revitalization, financial support
2021	Policy Interpretation of the Implementation Plan for Urban Regeneration in Kaili City	Old community renovation, intangible heritage district development
2021	Kaili City Territorial Spatial Master Plan (2021–2035)	Spatial governance, industry–city integration
2018	Proposal on Strengthening the Excavation of Kaili’s Cultural Resources to Promote Tourism Development	Cultural resource exploration

Table 2. Multi-level Cultural and Tourism Policy Documents in China (Central–Provincial–Prefectural–Municipal). The table of original documents titled in Chinese is attached in appendix.

To better understand the historical, social, and cultural context of Kaili City, I conducted archival research at the Guizhou Provincial Museum, where I collected a series of local publications that provided valuable background information for my case study. These materials include: *Kaili Yearbook* (2002, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2020), *Qiandongnan Prefecture Gazetteer: Urban*

4.4.2 Ethnographic Fieldwork and Observation

Ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation were conducted in this study. As a qualitative research method rooted in anthropology, ethnography allows the researcher to engage with the field in a sustained and immersive manner, developing an in-depth understanding of local meanings, cultural practices, and everyday life (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

The embodied sensations, casual conversations, spontaneous interactions, and unspoken behaviors observed during ethnographic fieldwork are essential for grasping the tacit knowledge and affective dimensions that are often inaccessible through interviews or documents alone (Pink, 2009). These insights help illuminate how power, identity, and meaning are negotiated and performed in specific spaces and moments — particularly crucial for understanding complex socio-spatial processes such as cultural governance and ethnic tourism development (Salazar, 2012; Tian et al). Thus, ethnographic fieldwork and observation serve as a critical lens through which to interpret the lived realities of cultural commodification and the governance of difference in urbanized ethnic spaces in this study.

From 15 June 2025 to 15 July 2025, I lived in Kaili city for the one-month ethnographic fieldwork. I did my fieldwork not only in Miao-Dong Cultural Park, but also the urban areas of Kaili city as well as a surrounding village called Xiasi ancient town, where I encountered so many Informal conversations with tourists, performers, vendors, and staff.

In Miao Dong Cultural Park, non-participant observation was carried out at key performance sites, including cultural plazas, artisan workshops, and museum displays. Participant observation was carried out primarily in the Xiu Li Tao ICH market which serves as a place for selling and buying minority ethnic handcrafts locally made, attracting the tourists most. I engaged in embroidery practice as an apprentice with an old lady who was selling the souvenirs in the market during my fieldwork.

¹ The original titles in Chinese are: 《凯里年鉴 2002》、《凯里年鉴 2007》、《凯里年鉴 2008》、《凯里年鉴 2009》、《凯里年鉴 2010》、《凯里年鉴 2011》、《凯里年鉴 2012》、《凯里年鉴 2014》、《凯里年鉴 2015》、《凯里年鉴 2017》、《凯里年鉴 2020》、《黔东南州志：城建环保志》、《凯里市志 1991-2007》、《凯里国土空间总体规划 2020-2035》

As I was living at the city Kaili, I also did observation of the whole city and another site named Dongmen Street and Ximen street located at old downtown, at which concentrates local business and minority ethnic groups with various commerce and public space like parks and bazaars. This provides a comparative perspective and a boarder context for understanding the Miao Dong cultural park project.

The fieldnotes from above sites are all included in the critical discourse analysis.

4.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interview is one of the prime data resources of this study for the flexibility and depth it could open, which enables deeper insight into how urban actors perceive, experience, and shape urban processes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this study, by doing semi-structured interviews, I'm allowed to gain access to the meanings that different stakeholders assign to space, policy, and change (Elwood & Martin, 2000). Also, semi-structured interview is participant centered, which gives space for participants to express their own meanings rather than being confined to pre-coded categories, which is crucial in researching contested or plural urban spaces. By following their answers about culture heritage, Miao Dong Cultural Park and tourism etc, I was inspired to transcend my own understanding of the project and to explore deeper this case.

A total of 7 interviews with duration of 1 to 2 hours were conducted with a range of participators, including:

- one tourist from Shandong province
- the manager of Miao Dong Cultural Park
- the curator of a local contemporary art space who also owns a café inside the park
- the person who is in charge of the Village-T, a local fashion show event inside the park
- a professor who is teaching at Kaili University
- a person in charge of a local minority ethnic heritage preservation center
- one owner of the costume shop inside the park

Interviews were carried by me individually in person with different interview outlines, focused on perceptions of the project, cultural representation, governance mechanisms, and participation processes.

4.5 Discourse Analysis as core analytical method

In urban studies, the study of discourse gained prominence following the cultural turn in the social sciences (Dear, 1986; Gregory, 1994), which sought to address questions of how meanings are produced, circulated, and contested in the making of

urban space, and how language, symbols, and representations shape urban governance, identity, and spatial practices. Building on this foundation, this study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how different actors construct and assign meanings through urban-related discourses, including media narratives, policy documents, and everyday conversations. Rather than viewing the urban merely as a physical space, CDA allows the researcher to understand the urban space as a discursive and symbolic site — one that plays a role in shaping social perceptions, identity formation, and cultural expression. This approach helps shift the analytical lens from spatial form to the socio-cultural and political meanings embedded in space (Jacobs, 1993), which is very effective in the case of Miao Dong Cultural Park since it is a state-led tourism urban project which involves various stakeholders.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), proposed by linguist Fairclough (1995) is both a theoretical and methodological framework for studying how language sustains or challenges social power structures. Rooted in a constructivist epistemology, CDA views language as socially situated and inherently political, placing the dynamics of inequality and power relations at the center of analysis.

Drawing on Fairclough's model, CDA involves three interrelated dimensions:

- Description: the linguistic analysis of texts (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, structure).
- Interpretation: the analysis of discourse as a social process, focusing on how texts are produced and understood.
- Explanation: the analysis of discourse within broader socio-political structures, such as ideology, institutional power, and social inequality.

These dimensions correspond to a three-layer analytical framework:

- Textual level – analyzing the formal features of language.
- Discursive practice level – examining how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed.
- Social practice level – understanding how discourse is embedded in, and helps reproduce, existing social structures and ideologies.

Fairclough (1995) particularly emphasizes the importance of analyzing both the institutional conditions of production and consumption of discourse. Rather than focusing solely on authors or readers, CDA traces how texts are shaped by and contribute to broader political-economic systems, making it well-suited for critically investigating power-laden processes such as cultural governance and policy discourse.

The major goal of critical discourse analysis is to examine the connections between language use and unequal relations of power (Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997), which is

helpful to uncover and analyse the culture governance of Miao Dong Cultural Park and tourism in Kaili.

All interview transcripts, policy documents, and fieldnotes were imported into NVivo 14 for systematic coding. A five-tiered node structure was developed based on a critical discourse analysis framework, including themes such as “developmentalist discourse,” “cultural governance,” “commodification,” “local subjectivity,” and “governed modernity.” Passages were coded by paragraph, with attention to repetition, contradiction, and emotional tone. Comparative coding queries were conducted to examine discourse variation across actor groups and document types. Memos and analytic cases were created to trace shifting attitudes and discursive strategies among stakeholders.

Category	Keyword	Example Expressions	Meaning	Analytical Lens
A. Developmentalist Discourse	Economic development goals	“Poverty alleviation and prosperity,” “Driving the economy,” “Industrial upgrading,” “Tourism-driven growth”	Culture is framed as a resource for economic development	Instrumentalization of culture; economic rationality prioritized; cultural alienation
	Spatial strategic language	“City calling card,” “Cultural cluster zone,” “Culture-tourism integration”	Cultural projects function as urban branding/spatial engineering	Symbolic economy; place-making mechanisms
	Project/performance thinking	“Project-led,” “Closed-loop formation,” “Market alignment”	Policies framed as engineered projects with performance indicators	“Political achievement–capital” logic dominates cultural values
B. Cultural Governance Discourse	Political disciplining language	“Guide the masses,” “Promote fine traditions,” “Transmit cultural genes”	Public participation is designed and directed	“Governance through culture”: culture as a governance tool
	National identity language	“Enhancing cultural confidence,”	Minority cultures serve national identity-building	Cultural nationalism;

		“Ethnic unity and progress,” “Consciousness of the Chinese national community”		symbolic sovereignty
	Institutionalized discourse	“Cultural policy,” “Intangible heritage list,” “Policy guidance”	Culture is categorized and standardized by institutions	Institutional orchestration of national discourse
C. Commodification & Staging Discourse	Performative language	“Dancing every day,” “Stage programs,” “Ethnic customs performance”	Ethnic culture becomes staged performance	Transformation from lived practice → market spectacle
	Commodity language	“Cultural-creative products,” “Intangible heritage commodification,” “Brand/IP creation”	Handicraft culture integrated into capital circuits	Market logic reconstructs culture
	Audience/tourist language	“For the tourists,” “Attract outsiders,” “Content visitors like”	Ethnic culture framed for external gaze	Reproduction of the tourist gaze
D. Local Subjectivity & Response Discourse	Negotiated language	“We have to cooperate,” “We must adapt,” “Not performing is not an option”	Local actors constrained but also compromising	Weak subjectivity; negotiated cultural politics
	Distinctive language	“We used to only dance at festivals,” “It wasn’t like this before,” “This	Skepticism/alienation toward staged culture	Tension between cultural rupture and memory

		isn't the same as ours"		
	Emotional language	"A bit embarrassing," "Also proud," "Can't avoid doing it"	Contradictory emotions and complex responses	Shame–pride– pragmatism dynamics
<i>E. Governed Modernity Discourse</i>	Civilization discourse	"Raising quality," "Civilized scenic area," "Standardized behavior"	Governance through disciplining cultural landscapes	Embodiment of state "disciplinary modernity"
	Enterprising discourse	"Entrepreneuri al subjects," "Village elites," "Cultural talents"	Locals transformed into developmental subjects	Construction of "self-disciplined subjects" in governance
	De- traditionalizing discourse	"Too rustic," "Needs to be adjusted," "Tourists don't understand the original"	Tradition adapted and re-coded for new aesthetics	Self-othering and adaptive recoding of culture

Table 3. Discursive Categories and Keywords in the Analysis of Miao Dong Cultural Park, made by the author.

5. Positionality

My positionality—shaped by personal background, training, and prior experience—inevitably informs the framing, methods, and interpretation of this study. Before entering the 4CITIES master's program, I studied audiovisual communication in Guangzhou (Canton), where my undergraduate project was a documentary on Dong culture in southeastern Guizhou, focusing on the experiences of Dong migrant workers navigating life between their home villages and the city. That project first made me critically aware of how ethnic minority identities are shaped and negotiated within China's political economy—particularly through uneven development between rural and urban regions, and between the wealthy coastal east and the mountainous interior west in post-reform China.

This study emerges from my long-standing concern with the intersection of cultural governance, state-led modernity, and internal coloniality in ethnic tourism projects. The case of Kaili in the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture—one of the most symbolically charged centers of state ethnic tourism in China—offers a

compelling lens through which to examine how minority culture is curated, commodified, and contested.

I was born in Xingyi, located in the Qianxinan Buyei and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, also in Guizhou. Although I am officially classified as Tujia, a minority ethnic group in China, my family has been highly assimilated into Han-dominated urban society: we live in cities, speak Mandarin at home, wear standardized modern clothing, and do not observe traditional Tujia customs or festivals. This hybrid subjectivity—ethnically “minority” but culturally “mainstream”—has led me to reflect on how ethnic identity in China is simultaneously essentialized and erased by institutional definitions of modernity.

As a researcher operating between insider and outsider positions, I am constantly aware of the reflexive tensions in these produces. My fieldwork, especially when engaging with both government actors and local artisans, required negotiating multiple positionalities—urban/rural, Han/minority, researcher/documentarian. Throughout this project, I have remained attentive to how my presence and interpretive lens may shape the field encounter and the reading of narratives. The analysis intentionally foregrounds not only the power dynamics embedded in official discourse, but also the internal contradictions and pluralities within local subjectivities—acknowledging that both domination and resistance can be ambiguous, negotiated, and contingent.

6. Ethical Considerations

All interviewees were sent a consent form on paper or gave verbal informed consent. Anonymity is preserved for all participants unless explicitly permitted. The study adheres to ethical standards in qualitative fieldwork, particularly in respecting cultural sensitivities and the representational integrity of minority voices.

All official documents used in the analysis are publicly accessible. Two internal documents related to the Miao Dong Cultural Park were provided by the park's manager, who was informed in advance that these materials would be used for research purposes only.

7. Case Study

7.1 Contextualization: Kaili city

In recent decades, China has actively promoted ethnic minority culture through tourism and heritage industries under the dual banners of economic development and cultural preservation. Ethnic tourism has emerged as a strategic sector, particularly in underdeveloped regions like Guizhou Province, which is home to a high proportion of ethnic minorities, including the Miao and Dong. These initiatives

are part of a broader project of “cultural governance” in which ethnic culture is selectively preserved, standardized, and commodified to fit the narratives of national unity and modernization. As Wu (2006) points out, cultural industries are becoming more and more important in global trade, and cultural investments not only bring considerable economic returns, but also have impacts on social governance and sustainable development.

Kaili, located in Guizhou Province in southwestern China, serves as the administrative center of the Qiandongnan² Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture³. It is a multi-ethnic city where Miao and Dong people form the dominant cultural groups. The city is home to 33 ethnic communities, including the Miao, Dong, Han, Bouyei, Shui, Yao, Zhuang, and Tujia etc. Ethnic minorities make up 82.6% of the city’s permanent population, with Miao and Dong being the largest groups. This demographic composition is strikingly different from the national average, where ethnic minorities constitute only 8.89%, while the Han Chinese make up 91.11% (State Council Leading Group Office of the Seventh National Population Census, 2021).

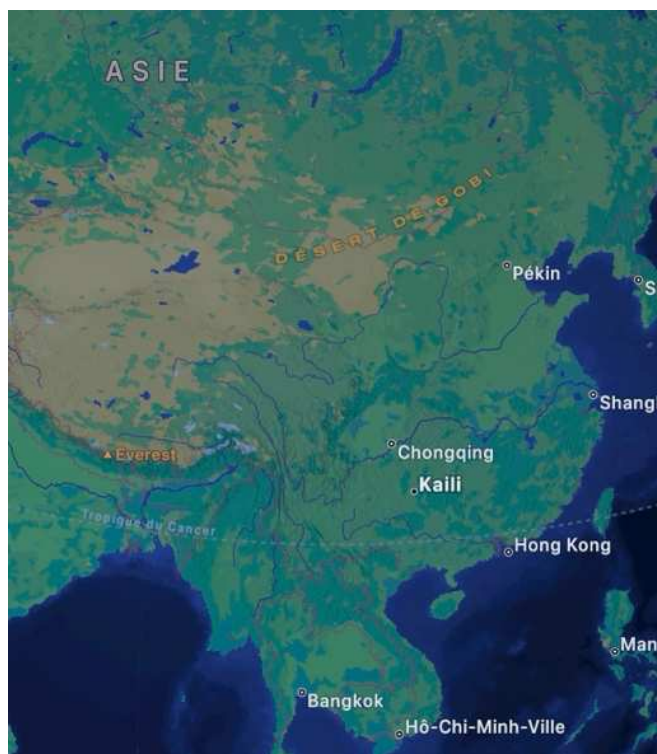


Figure 2. The Location of Kaili. Made by the author from Apple Maps.

² Qiandongnan (黔东南) refers to the southeastern part of Guizhou province.

³ China's Regional Ethnic Autonomy Policy (少数民族区域自治政策) grants certain administrative regions that are defined by the central government, such as Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, a degree of self-governance. These regions have the right to preserve their cultural heritage, use their own languages, and implement policies tailored to local ethnic communities, while still being under the broader framework of the Chinese central government.

There are 56 recognized national intangible cultural heritages in Qiandongnan Prefecture, since 2012, a few local laws and regulations have been issued, including the Regulations on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Guizhou Province, the Regulations on the Protection and Development of Traditional Villages in Guizhou Province, and the Regulations on the Promotion of the Inheritance and Development of Excellent Ethnic Culture in Guizhou Province. Miao Embroidery, Dong Embroidery, Batik and Silver Jewelry Techniques have been certified as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the State. These ethnic minority cultural skills have also been attracting tourists (Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture People's Government, 2024).

However, while people immediately think of ethnic culture when mentioning Guizhou, the urbanization process is not led by ethnic culture tourism but industrialization during Mao's period. Particularly, a project called Third Front Construction has intrigued the urbanization process of Kaili. The "Third Front" (sanxian jianshe) was a massive industrial and military infrastructure campaign launched by the Chinese government in the mid-1960s to relocate key industries to the country's interior for strategic security during the Cold War. Many elites from big cities like Beijing, Shanghai etc. were forced to relocated to inner cities in southwestern region like Guizhou, Sichuan, Yunnan to support industrial factories, among which were mostly heavy industry or for military use. Although Kaili was not one of the largest Third Front hubs, the initiative brought factories, transport links, and skilled workers into the region, embedding it within a broader network of inland industrialization. But most of these factories closed or relocated by the 2010s—leaving only a single operational plant. (Kendall, 2025; Oakes, 1999). Nevertheless, this historical past is being forgotten in official discourse and neglected in the city branding of Kaili as the local government has been trying to promote its ethnic feature to boost tourism economy since 80s and 90s.

Positioning between big cities and small villages, Kaili occupies an ambiguous space between urban and rural, as well as between the center and the periphery. As shown in the following figure, Kaili composed by both urban and rural areas. This ambiguity produces a paradoxical urban culture. And, the urban landscape presents a hybrid character, combining traditional rural ethnic features with modern high-rise buildings and wide streets.

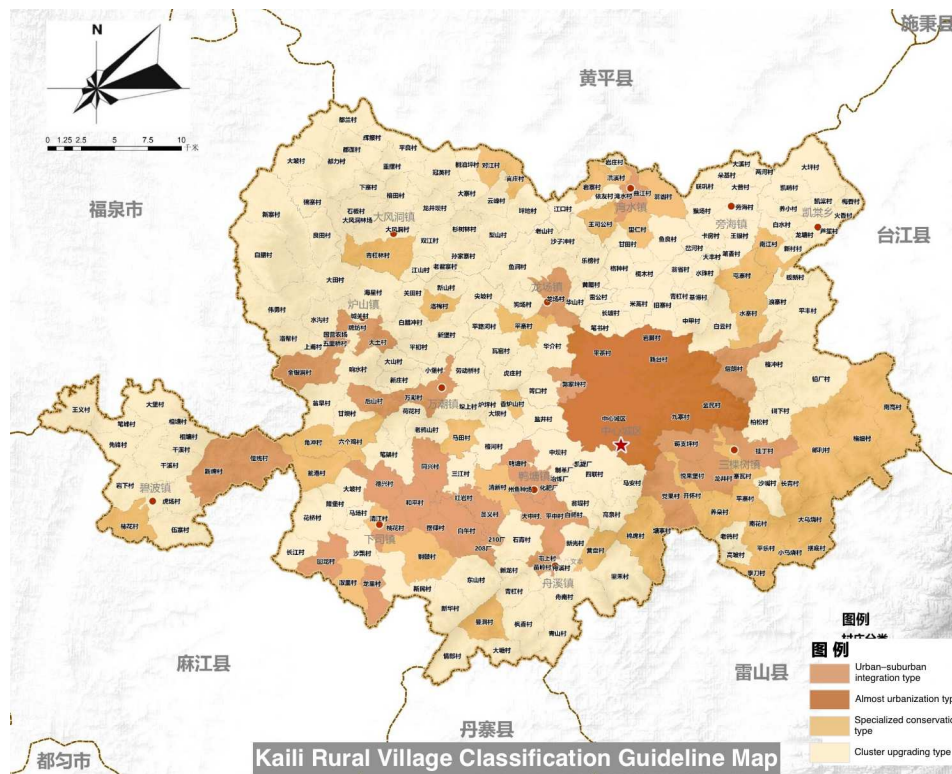


Figure 3. Map of Kaili City and its administrative villages, illustrating the spatial distribution of urban and rural settlements within the municipal boundaries, the stated area indicates the central urban area of Kaili while others all indicate different rural villages within the administrative divisions of Kaili city.

Source: Kaili City Territorial Spatial Master Plan (2021–2035)



Figure 4. Dong Men Street, located in the center of Kaili. Photograph by the author. This illustrates a juxtaposition of architectural styles: the gate showcases traditional local ethnic aesthetics, while the surrounding buildings are more modern. Notably, the gate itself was constructed more recently, highlighting a deliberate revival of ethnic style within a contemporary urban context.

As a mountainous region rich in ethnic diversity, Kaili has long been positioned as a cultural and touristic destination, marketed not only for its natural landscapes but also for its distinctive local traditions.

Local authorities emphasize Kaili's "original ecology" (yuanshengtai)—a pre-modern, ethnic, and rural aesthetic—framing it as the city's distinctive cultural identity to attract tourists. Such narratives have been materialized in public spaces, where ethnic motifs are incorporated into the design of statues, squares, bus stations, and other urban infrastructure (Kendall, 2015).

Official discourses frequently invoke the labels "the land of a hundred festivals" (baijie zhi xiang) and "an ocean of song and dance" (gewu haiyang), crafting an image of Kaili as a place where urban visitors can escape the pressures of modern city life and immerse themselves in an idealized version of rural ethnic culture. This representation suggests that local people live in perpetual celebration—singing, dancing, and marking festivals daily. As Kendall (2015) notes, through photography and other visual media, spectacles of minority dress and vernacular architecture are abstracted from lived time and transformed into timeless icons, producing the impression that life in Kaili is itself an "endless ethnic festival".

Tourists are thus drawn to experience vernacular architecture, indigenous cuisine, ceremonial rituals, and traditional crafts, all of which are framed as embodiments of "authentic" minority culture. Yet, as Harvey (1993) argues, the very notion of authenticity is a modern construct, born out of the dislocation caused by globalization and industrialization, which fuel a longing for the "authenticity of place." This longing reflects broader social anxieties in late modernity, while, as Cohen (1988) highlights, the pursuit of authenticity has become a central theme in the consumption patterns of mass tourism.

However, the "authentic" experiences presented to tourists are, in practice, often staged authenticity (Mac Cannell, 1973). In the Chinese context, Kaili has attracted particular attention as a paradigmatic cultural "stage" for the performance of minority identities. In studies on the representation and performance of China's ethnic minority cultures, Kaili has attracted broad attention as a typical cultural "stage." Schein (1997) use the term "internal orientalism" to illustrate how the ethnic minorities were exoticized and romanticized based on her empirical research in Kaili. Kaili's cultural strategy has, to some extent, fixed the image of minorities as the "Other," making it a key component of the national cultural industry and tourism development (Hind 1984). In this process, the role of minority women as cultural "icons" has been amplified, with their traditional attire and dances skillfully employed to attract visitors—underscoring the symbolic and commercial trends in minority culture (Schein, 1997). These phenomena reveal the complex tension in China's approach to cultural diversity and national identity, where ethnic cultures are both

protected as identity symbols and exploited as resources for consumption (Leicester, 2008)⁴.

At the same time, although the image of ethnic minorities and rural aesthetics dominates both official promotion and popular imagination of Kaili, the local government simultaneously promotes Kaili as a modern city characterized by cleanliness, hygiene, civility, and contemporary lifestyles.

Covering 1,570 square kilometers, with a permanent population of 715,200 by the end of 2024—82.6% of whom are ethnic minorities (Kaili Municipal Government, 2025)—Kaili's urbanization began in the mid-1990s and accelerated in the early 2000s through the state-led civilizing project. This campaign improved transportation, modernized infrastructure, and imposed new standards of hygiene and order, aligning with the ambition to transform Kaili into a tidy and marketable tourist destination (Guizhou Kaili Municipal Local Chronicles Compilation Committee, 2016).

Yet this process also generated an increasingly dense urban environment that sat uneasily with the rural qualities underpinning the city's touristic image. As the following image shows, the urban landscape of Kaili is very far from the rural aesthetics promoted in promotional touristic guides, instead very “urban”. As Kendall (2015) observed, Kaili's appearance, sounds, and atmosphere resemble those of other Chinese cities, with traffic, background music, and high-rise buildings dominating the scene.



Figure 5. The landscape of Kaili. Source : Qiandongnan Civilization <http://qdnwm.gov.cn/>

This creates a profound contradiction: while the city's branding highlights rural minority traditions to attract tourists, its rapidly modernizing built environment undercuts that very image. In everyday life, many residents describe themselves as "fake minorities," insisting that urban Kaili itself lacks distinctive ethnic customs—a view they attribute to the transformative effects of modernization (Kendall, 2017). For them, the city embodies modernity rather than ethnicity.

Ultimately, local residents embody a similar duality: while they take pride in their minority cultural heritage, they also distinguish themselves from surrounding rural villages by identifying as "fake minorities," a label that reflects their possession of modern urban lifestyles (Kendall, 2017). At the same time, they also take pride in a small-city lifestyle, see themselves as more modern than villagers yet less naïve than big-city tourists, whom they view as overly obsessed with "authenticity" (Kendall, 2017).

Since the mid-2000s, Kaili has been promoted as a site of perpetual festivity grounded in an idealized rurality. Yet local discourse complicates this image: while residents may embrace tourist branding, they deny Kaili's cultural authenticity by presenting themselves as "fake minorities." This stance both challenges China's ethnic classification system and reinforces an urban hierarchy that distances small-city residents from rural villagers and metropolitan tourists alike. The discourse of "original ecology (yuanshengtai)" thus simultaneously affirms and unsettles urban–rural boundaries, exposing the contradictions of identity and authenticity in Kaili's urbanization (Kendall, 2015).

7.2 Case specification: Miao Dong Cultural Park

7.2.1 Miao Dong Cultural Park

The following content is based on my fieldwork, as well as on internal materials provided by the manager of Miao Dong Cultural Park, which are not yet publicly available.

The Kaili Miao-Dong Cultural Park is located in the eastern part of Economic Development Zone of Kaili City. It sits along Fengqing Avenue, strategically positioned between several major scenic and cultural sites—east to Xijiang Qianhu Miao Village, south to Xiaogaoshan Scenic Area, west to Xiashi Ancient Town, and north to Kaili's urban center. Accessibility is a major asset: the park lies adjacent to the Kai-Ma Expressway and Gui-Guang High-Speed Railway, 40 km from Huangping Airport, 180 km from the provincial capital Guiyang, and only 1.5 km from the city's administrative center.



Figure 6. The location of Miao Dong Cultural Park, indicated by the white textbox. The red dot indicates the downtown of Kaili city, Qiandongnan is shown on the map since Kaili is the administrative center of Qiandongnan prefecture.



Figure 7. The entrance of Miao Dong Cultural Park. Photograph by the author.

Planned from 2009 and opened in 2013, the park transforms the rural land of Jinjing village into urban land, covers approximately 595 mu (around 39.7 hectares) with a total building area of 154,000 m², comprising 310 structures built in stylized Miao and Dong architectural forms. Landmark constructions include Dong-style Drum Towers and Miao-style Wind and Rain Bridges; alongside stilted houses and a monumental 280-step staircase carved with everyday life scenes of Miao and Dong people. Planned around the six elements of tourism—eat, live, travel, tour, shop, entertain—it

functions as a mixed-use cultural tourism complex integrating commerce, housing, cultural performance, leisure, and hospitality.

The park was awarded National AAA Scenic Area status⁵ in May 2014 and has since been listed among various state's city campaigns:

- “Guizhou’s 100 Key Tourism Scenic Areas”
- “Guizhou’s 100 Urban Complexes”
- “Guizhou (Kaili) Ethnic Handicrafts Trading Base”
- “Guizhou Provincial Modern Service Industry Clusters”
- One of Guizhou’s “Top Ten Cultural Industry Bases.”

The park is divided into 15 functional zones, including a health and wellness industry and care projects, Miao and Dong medicine museum, Miao and Dong lifestyle experiences, Miao and Dong medicinal health practices, ethnic culture exhibitions, ethnic specialty dining, Kaili embroidery and intangible heritage market, specialty tourism products, intangible cultural heritage displays and conference/exhibition center, specialty snack night market, leisure tea and beverages, recreational accommodation, microenterprise innovation and entrepreneurship, financial services, and cultural tourism information.

The specific zoning is illustrated in the figure below.

⁵ China’s A-level tourist attraction rating system is a national quality grading scheme that classifies scenic sites into five categories, from 5A (the highest) to 1A (the lowest). Established under the national standard GB/T 17775-2003: *Classification and Assessment of Tourist Attractions*, the system is administered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and evaluates attractions based on scenic value, infrastructure, service quality, and management.

- 1A–2A sites meet only basic requirements.
- 3A sites have distinct cultural or natural value and relatively complete facilities.
- 4A sites are of high importance, offering comprehensive services and standardized management.
- 5A sites represent China’s premier, “world-class” attractions, such as the Great Wall or the Forbidden City.

While the system has raised service standards and branding, it is often criticized for encouraging over-commercialization and homogenized development, raising questions about how to balance economic growth with cultural authenticity and sustainability.



Figure 8. Tourist Guide Map of Kaili Miao Dong Cultural park, based on official promotion material and translated by the author.

Currently, the park houses over 900 businesses, including:

- 16 ethnic restaurants
- 12 boutique hotels and guesthouses
- 7 educational/training institutions
- 3 museums and exhibition halls
- 614 embroidery, silverwork, and batik vendors
- 61 traditional medicine practitioners
- 6 types of specialty local product
- 130 other enterprises like architecture designing, planning studios, media and communication companies, some other technology related companies.

Its economic model combines real estate development, cultural tourism, and retail, supported by central, provincial, and municipal investment alongside private capital. While the park's official vision emphasizes cultural preservation and national unity, its operational logic prioritizes tourism-driven economic returns. It is linked to national policy narratives such as ethnic solidarity, heritage promotion, and poverty alleviation as there're many offices of relevant official departments in the park.

7.2.2 The Xiu Li Tao Intangible Culture Heritage (ICH) Market

The Xiu Li Tao Intangible Culture Heritage (ICH) Market is a key node within the Miao-Dong Cultural Park, which embodies the intersection of state-led cultural governance, tourism development, and local livelihood strategies. It provides a

microcosm through which to observe state intervention and planning, economic and cultural logics, local agency and negotiation.

The ICH Market, opened on 15 September 2023 (trial) and officially launched on 22 September 2023, is situated within the park's Guandong, Guanxi, Yudong, and Yuxi lanes, near a Wind and Rain Bridge. It inherits the legacy of a 40-year-old weekly morning market formerly held in a narrow alley on Kaili's outskirts, historically a hub for rural artisans—especially women—to sell embroidery, textiles, silverwork, and crafts.

The market hosts 710 vendors from Qiandongnan and neighboring areas (Yunnan, Guangxi, Hunan, Anshun, Liupanshui, Qiannan). It offers over 6,100 product varieties in nine categories, including:

- New and antique embroidery pieces
- Silver jewelry
- Batik textiles
- Wood carving
- Incense sachets
- Cultural and creative products

While some goods are handmade by local artisans, others are mass-produced by big factories elsewhere with ethnic motifs for the tourist market.

Although physically integrated into a planned tourism complex, the market retains elements of informality: vendors choose their spots freely, many display goods at ground level, and Fridays are peak trading days. Permanent stalls mix with temporary pop-up spaces, with older embroidered pieces often clustered together.

The market features nationally certified ICH inheritors⁶ who sell their works and explain their cultural context, enhancing its value as a heritage showcase. It also includes attractions like:

- Guizhou Village Stage Show, a nightly fashion-catwalk-style presentation of traditional dress, around three times a week.
- Miao-Dong Medicine Street, a weekend herbal market
- Ou Donghua Museum of Miao Costumes, offering curated exhibitions on Miao heritage

⁶ Based on Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. (2011). Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage. <http://www.npc.gov.cn/flcaw/userindex.html> : "intangible cultural heritage (ICH) inheritors" are officially recognized practitioners who safeguard and transmit traditional skills, crafts, and cultural practices. They may be designated at national, provincial, or local levels and are responsible for teaching, demonstrating, and promoting these heritage elements, often receiving financial and policy support to ensure the continuity of endangered cultural traditions.

Visitors can also participate in embroidery workshops, local cooking demonstrations, and other interactive experiences.

Based on the introduction by the manager of Miao Dong Cultural Park, since opening until 31 Dec 2024, the market generated approximately ¥45 million in revenue and attracted 400,000 visits. Promotional efforts involve 122 livestream influencers and 110 official or self-media outlets. Its clientele includes tourists from across China as well as international visitors from Malaysia, Australia, France, and the UK.

8. Findings

8.1 Culture Governance: National Narratives and Institutionalization

In Kaili, Miao and Dong minority cultures are reconfigured to align simultaneously with the state's vision of a "harmonious society" and the demands of modern consumer markets. In this process, state institutions at different levels, enterprises, and other social organizations assume distinct roles, each with their own interests. At the macro-level, the central state establishes broad policy frameworks that underscore the governance value and management of ethnic culture and intangible cultural heritage (ICH). At the provincial level, the government emphasizes cultivating values and discourses rooted in Miao and Dong culture—such as safeguarding ethnic traditions, transmitting heritage skills, and promoting modernization. By contrast, the Kaili municipal government, in alliance with state-owned enterprises and private investors, has been more proactive in pursuing economic development. Through investment attraction, industrial development, and product innovation, it seeks to harness the economic potential embedded in Miao and Dong cultural tourism.

8.1.1 The Politicization of Heritage: ICH, National Unity, and Cultural Confidence

At the national level, intangible cultural heritage is framed not merely as a repository of traditions, but as a political resource tied to state-building and ideological governance. Grand narratives link ICH to broader strategies of national development, unity, and identity.

As articulated in the *14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development* and the *Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage*:

"Intangible cultural heritage is an important component of China's excellent traditional culture, a vivid testimony to the continuity of Chinese civilization, and a fundamental basis for uniting national sentiment and maintaining national unity. Protecting, transmitting, and utilizing ICH is of great significance for extending historical lineage and strengthening cultural confidence."

This framing elevates ICH from a cultural resource to a political resource. By directly linking heritage protection to “national unity” and “national sentiment,” the state transforms ICH into an integral component of governance. Culture is thereby instrumentalized, serving as a vehicle for consolidating ideology and reinforcing the imagined national community.

8.1.2 Developmentalism and the Logic of Capital: Culture as an Engine of Growth

At the same time, culture and tourism are absorbed into the grand narrative of economic development and modernization. Policy documents repeatedly emphasize cultural “development,” “supply,” and “consumption potential,” thereby reimagining culture as an engine of growth.

Almost all major documents situate culture and tourism within the framework of modernization and economic advancement, highlighting objectives such as “promoting high-quality tourism development,” “building a socialist cultural power,” and “meeting people’s needs for a better life.” In this discourse, culture is recast as a driver of GDP growth and a functional component of the modernization project. Notably, the language of these policies is increasingly market-oriented and financialized.

Documents such as the *Guizhou Provincial 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural and Tourism Development*, the *2024 Implementation Plan for Promoting High-Quality Tourism in Kaili*, and the *Recommendations on Expanding the Role of Kaili’s Cultural Resources for Tourism Development* emphasize “expanding the supply of quality cultural products” and developing “key forms of cultural-tourism integration.” Some explicitly call for deepening “culture-finance cooperation,” promoting “tourism asset securitization products,” and incorporating “cultural and tourism infrastructure into REITs pilots.” This reflects a shift from cultural value to capital logic: project success is measured less by social meaning than by profitability in financial markets.

Such discourses reveal a developmentalist rationale in which cultural value is subordinated to economic rationality. Heritage protection and transmission are reframed as tools for industrial integration and GDP growth. Culture becomes a functional instrument within a developmental agenda, rather than an end in itself. Crucially, this instrumentalization is not merely rhetorical, but enacted through institutionalized mechanisms of governance.

8.1.3 Institutionalized Discourses and Technologies of Governance: Regulating Culture and Cultural Subjects

Beyond narratives of nationalism and developmentalism, the governance of minority culture is also enacted through institutionalization. Laws, regulations, and

administrative measures define “what counts as ICH,” “who qualifies as a bearer,” and “how transmission is to be evaluated and managed.” In Foucauldian terms, culture is transformed into an object of governmentality—codified, archived, evaluated, and even subject to disqualification.

The *Intangible Cultural Heritage Law* (2011) defines ICH as: “Various traditional cultural expressions handed down from generation to generation by all ethnic groups and regarded as part of their cultural heritage, along with the associated objects and sites.”

It further stipulates that: “The protection of ICH shall emphasize authenticity, integrity, and transmission, and shall contribute to strengthening cultural identity of the Chinese nation, safeguarding national unity and ethnic solidarity, and promoting social harmony and sustainable development.”

This demonstrates that “ICH” is not a naturally existing category, but one constructed by the state through legal recognition and institutionalization. Culture is redefined as a resource of “historical, literary, artistic, and scientific value,” directly linked to national unity and ethnic solidarity. In other words, what counts as ICH is no longer defined by local communities themselves but elevated into the framework of state governance.

This process involves not only inclusion but also exclusion. Practices deemed “unscientific” or “harmful” are systematically left out of protection. For instance, an interview with a director of a heritage research center highlighted the invisibility of certain Guizhou minority traditions in official discourse, such as *wu yi* (shaman-healers using herbs, chants, and rituals) and *wu gu* (ritual practices associated with sorcery). As he remarked: “Nobody protects or transmits *wu yi* or *wu gu*. These are harmful, unscientific things. You cannot even explain them to outsiders.”

Through the discourse of science and modernization, the state conducts a legitimacy audit on heritage practices. Only those compatible with ideology and “scientific principles” qualify as ICH. In contrast, practices like *wu yi* and *wu gu*, which historically played important roles in local societies, are stigmatized and excluded. Cultural governance thus involves not only “what is done,” but also “what is not done” and “what is discarded.” This filtering mechanism shapes the official image of “ethnic culture” presented to the public.

Further, the *Administrative Measures for the Recognition and Management of National ICH Bearers* (2019) stipulate that:

“National-level ICH bearers shall cultivate loyalty, dedication, and integrity... uphold correct views of history, the state, the nation, and culture, and strengthen the sense of a unified Chinese nation.”

Bearers must submit annual transmission reports to provincial cultural authorities, and if they fail two consecutive evaluations, their status is revoked.

This illustrates how cultural subjects are disciplined: heritage bearers are not only skill transmitters but also expected to embody political loyalty and ideological conformity. Their practices are archived, reported, assessed, and tied to state subsidies, turning “living culture” into a governable and auditable object. Through recognition, assessment, and disqualification, the state defines both “what counts as culture” and “who is authorized to represent it.”

This institutional framework provides legitimacy for local governments to mobilize Miao and Dong culture in tourism and investment projects, while simultaneously paving the way for its commodification and spatialization.

8.2 Official Narratives and the Disjuncture of Local Practice

Despite the seemingly promising visions articulated in cultural tourism planning, the realities of implementation in Kaili reveal multiple tensions and contradictions. At the municipal level, Miao and Dong ethnic culture has not only been framed as “cultural heritage” but also mobilized as a resource for industrial integration and the experience economy. During the peak years of urbanization in the 2000s–2010s, ethnic culture was appropriated as both a rationale and a vehicle for city-making, land conversion, and investment attraction, had produced various theme parks in Kaili.

Archival sources such as the Kaili Yearbook document that the Miao Dong Cultural Park was built on what was once a village graveyard, where residents and ancestral sites were relocated to make way for the newly established Economic Development Zone. The previous farmland was rezoned as non-agricultural urban land so became property of the local government and then repurposed for tourism and service industry projects. The Park thus became not only a fabricated space of “ethnic culture” but also a symbolic flagship of Kaili’s branding as a “tourism city.” Parallel projects—such as the West Exit Ethnic Cultural park and Xianglushang Resort—absorbed billions of yuan in state and municipal investment, but today many remain underutilized or stand as empty “shell projects.”

As one local university professor noted in an interview: “Those are unfinished projects. The government wants to revive them, but it’s hard even to access the original project proposals. Those people who were in charge of them avoid talking about them because the planning intentions and the actual usage now are completely different.”

The collapse of these projects underscores the fragility of the development logic underpinning them. Initially, they were designed to serve elite consumption and attract middle- and upper-class clientele through high-end resorts. Yet the political climate shifted dramatically after Xi Jinping's 2013 anti-corruption campaign, which prohibited government officials from using public funds for luxury resort spending. The political-business nexus that had sustained such projects collapsed. Ironically, Hong Jinzhou—the vice mayor of Kaili and head of the Economic Development Zone, who had championed these cultural-industrial projects—was himself imprisoned for corruption in 2013.

This trajectory illustrates the spatialization and instrumentalization of ethnic culture: culture was mobilized as political capital and as a justificatory veneer for land development and investment projects, rather than as a community-driven cultural practice. The Miao Dong Cultural Park, in this sense, exemplifies how ethnic culture is formed into urban planning schemes, aligning with the central government's discourse of integrating cultural industries into new forms of urbanization. Yet on the ground, culture was reduced to a functional tool for land valorization and political performance.

Moreover, while official discourse highlights “cultural transmission,” “industrial integration,” and “social governance,” the actual institutions established within these cultural parks often functioned symbolically rather than substantively. Based on my fieldwork, for example, local Offices for Women's Associations and Poverty Alleviation existed in name only, with little or no staff presence. Similarly, the organizations like Cultural Innovation base were often empty, activated only when government officials visited for inspections. These institutions operated less as service providers than as visible symbols—practices of doing for seeing—to demonstrate governance capacity to higher-level authorities and external observers.

The disjuncture also extended to the domain of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Although national legislation such as the ICH Law and the Administrative Measures for National ICH bearers endow inheritors with cultural and political significance—casting them as guardians of “outstanding traditional culture”—local practitioners face structural challenges in implementation. A staff member from the Kaili ICH Research Center described the bureaucratic hurdles of organizing training workshops for ICH bearers: “You have to submit the application, it gets reviewed, then the school must hold additional meetings, set up curriculum teams, logistics, approvals, stamps, provincial review, city-level review—only then can it actually be implemented.”

Even when policies encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, funding frequently fails to materialize. As one informant explained, “The policies are good, but the money rarely comes through.” Moreover, artisans struggle with weak intellectual property protections. Designs developed painstakingly over months are often purchased, copied, and mass-produced by factories at lower costs and faster

speeds, eroding the artisans' creative incentives. Patent applications are too slow to provide protection, and by the time approval is granted, the designs are already outdated. As one ICH official put it: "Eventually, no one wants to innovate anymore—they just follow whatever is trending online."

This not only constitutes an infringement of intellectual property but also undermines the very economic basis of ICH transmission. Without fair returns, artisans' motivation to continue their craft diminishes, placing the vitality of ICH at risk.

Altogether, the contradictions between official discourse and local practice expose how cultural governance is far from linear or controllable. National and provincial policies often imagine culture as a governable, productive instrument thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of culture as a tool of 'modernized management—whether for social cohesion, modernization, or economic growth. Yet the reality is the uncontrollable and complicated.

Local practices reveal the diversity of power relations, the potential risks such as messy, uncertain, and sometimes counterproductive consequences of such interventions. and The Kaili case demonstrates that the governance of culture entails not only the projection of desired futures but also the negotiation of failures, unintended outcomes, and structural disjuncture.

8.3 Reconstruction of Miao and Dong Cultural Practices

8.3.1 Spatial Symbolization of Miao and Dong Culture in the Cultural Park

As mentioned earlier, the overarching ambition of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park is summarized as "experiencing the culture of Qiandongnan within a single site." To achieve this goal, the park is carefully designed around the eight key components of cultural tourism—food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, entertainment, medical care, and wellness—in order to form a comprehensive cultural tourism cluster.

Field observations reveal that cultural elements primarily materialized through monumentalized symbols and staged representations rather than organically lived practices. The Miao and Dong-style "Wind and Rain Bridge" is the most commonly employed cultural symbol in the park, as shown in the figures below.

As an emblem of traditional Miao and Dong architecture, the Wind and Rain Bridge here is detached from its original natural and mountainous context and embedded into the urban landscape of Kaili. This spatial transplantation highlights its significance as a cultural symbol, while its original functions as a center of local knowledge and community life are diminished.



Figure 9. The main Miao Dong style Wind and Rain bridge near the entrance of Miao Dong Cultural Park, it also serves as a “cinema” where screening activities is occasionally curated. Photograph by the author.



Figure 10. One of the Wind and Rain Bridge in the Miao Dong Cultural Park which is the symbol of Miao and Dong traditional architecture with the feature of natural mountain and rivers. It looks a bit unnatural as it is embedded with the urban landscape of Kaili city. Photograph by the author.

Similarly, the park’s sculptures and installations function as condensed symbols of ethnic culture. These visual elements are carefully curated and positioned to convey the “essence” of ethnic culture to visitors in the most immediate and legible way. Take the photos here as examples.



Figure 11. Left to right: The first image depicts the Sama Altar, an ancient traditional myth from Dong history. The accompanying description states that the 13-meter-tall sculpture is designed based on the half-open umbrella element used in Dong ritual practices, expressing reverence for Sama and the mysterious, primordial nature of the altar ritual. The human figures vividly recreate scenes of Dong people celebrating with traditional attire, capturing the rustic ethnic charm. The Sama ritual is a historical legacy from Dong ancestors, fully reflecting their history and culture, as well as their cultural values and religious sentiments. The second image shows a statue of a Miao woman standing by a small path, politely greeting visitors. The third image features a photo frame for taking pictures with the inscription: "The national village fashion show, the global village fashion show. All Chinese ethnic groups are one family; together we build our China Dream." Photograph by the author.

Sama Altar sculpture is built to represent the Dong's ancient ritual culture, with accompanying texts detailing its historical and religious significance. It condenses complex historical memory and cultural belief into a single, viewable artwork, transforming "mysterious and primordial" culture into a consumable visual product. At the same time Miao female statues is placed along small pathways, these statues face visitors in gestures of polite greeting. They simplify vibrant, diverse individuals into fixed "ethnic images," reducing complex gender roles and everyday practices into performative postures that serve the tourist gaze.

Furthermore, photo frame for the village fashion show with the slogan, "National village fashion show, global village fashion show. All Chinese ethnic groups are one family; together we build the China Dream". This directly links ethnic culture to the national narrative and the grand political objective of the "Chinese national community." It frames cultural experience as an ideological performance, encouraging visitors to affirm and circulate this narrative through participatory photography.

These observations indicate that the spatial design of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park is not a straightforward replication of local culture, but rather a systematic and symbolic reconstruction. Through strategies such as monumentalization,

decontextualization, and ideological framing, complex and organic cultural practices are distilled into easily legible and communicable cultural symbols. This serves multiple governance objectives, including tourism consumption, urban beautification, and national unity. While this reconstruction creates an immersive experience for visitors, it simultaneously poses challenges to the authenticity and continuity of local culture.

8.3.2 Curating Xiu Li Tao ICH Market

An important site inside Miao Dong Cultural Park is Xiu Li Tao ICH market. In 2023, the local government, together with the operators of the Miao-Dong Cultural Park, decided to relocate the old embroidery market from Cao Ping Xincun in Jinjing Village into the newly developed cultural park. This relocation was framed as part of the city's broader project of "Civilization Building," intended to create a clean and orderly urban appearance, while also addressing practical concerns such as traffic congestion and potential safety hazards at the original site. The relocation is also a strategy of "revitalize underutilized tourism resources" of local governments since Miao Dong Cultural Park is considered as a failure that didn't gain the assumed economic revenue. The entire market was forcibly dismantled and moved, signaling not only an intervention in spatial organization but also an attempt to align local cultural practices with state-led urban modernity and governance priorities.



Figure 12 . The image of previous local embroidery market which is considered as informal and lack of management. Source: <https://m.huxiu.com/article/2000339.html>

The restructuring of the local market illustrates how governance curates cultural value by transforming an informal, self-organized space into a controlled and commodified environment. Officials and managers frequently contrast the past “dirty and chaotic” conditions with the current orderly and modern setting:

“In the past, the old market was small, dirty, and disorderly because it was formed spontaneously. Now everything is planned, organized, and managed. The difference between then and now is like two different worlds.” ——Interview with the manager of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park (原文: “集市其实至今为止已经四十几年了……在老市老集市的地方, 又小又脏又乱……当初他是自发组成的, 我们这是有规划的, 有组织的, 有统一管理的。你现在看到现在的秩序和以前的对比就是一个高低差的问题。”)

This narrative of progress frames governance as the source of cultural legitimacy: what was once devalued as messy and “unworthy” becomes elevated through planning and regulation.

At the same time, the economic benefits of vending in the newly established Xiu Li Tao ICH market soon became a legitimate resource for mobilizing more local participation. Currently, the rent of every stall is only 300 RMB (around 35 euros) per month and everything included. And it only costs 5 RMB (around 0.5 euro) per day for outdoor displays. As one manager explained, the promise of profit was sufficient to overcome resistance to the relocation and ensure compliance:

“When we first relocated the vendors, we only had 235 stalls. Now there are more than 700, with over 300 still waiting in line. Everyone saw that here they can really make money. For local people, the idea is simple: as long as I can earn money, I am willing to do anything. For us, as long as we create such an environment and make it acceptable to the public, we have won.” ——Interview with the manager of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park (原文: “搬过来的时候我们有 235 个, 现在有 700 多个, 还有 300 多个在排队进来……很多人看到在这真的能挣到钱…老百姓的观念, 只要我有钱赚, 我干什么都愿意。对于我们来讲, 我们打造出这么一个环境, 让世人去接受它, 我们就赢了。”)

Here, economic gain is framed as a universal motivator that requires no further persuasion. The speaker even distances themselves from communication as a mode of negotiation, emphasizing instead that visible financial success itself serves as the most effective mobilizing tool. In this sense, profit becomes both a technology of governance and a cultural justification for restructuring local livelihoods.

Yet, this economic framing is entangled with paternalistic governance. Local participants are described as “uneducated” and “stubborn,” requiring strong-handed management:

“These are ordinary people, with little education and rather rigid ways of thinking. So we have to manage them in our own way. Sometimes they say I’m too harsh, but actually they like it. When I enter the market, they even hang their products on me so that I help them sell.” ——Interview with the manager of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park (原文: “这个是老百姓, 他没有文化, 读书越少……观念比较死板……为什么别人会听我的? 有时候别人看到我很凶, 有时候他们就喜欢我这种。当我在市场里的時候, 他们还会把产品挂在我身上让我去帮忙卖”)

This paternalistic stance reveals how heritage markets operate not simply as sites of cultural celebration but as laboratories of social discipline, where economic incentives are intertwined with top-down authority. The construction of a “stable stage” of enterprise—where planning, relocation and expansion is framed as both necessary and inevitable—further demonstrates how cultural heritage is embedded into broader projects of developmental governance.

8.3.3 Branding Miao Dong Culture

In the Xiu Li Tao Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Market, the local government and developers are engaged in a systematic cultural branding project. The brand is constructed around two interrelated value dimensions: on the one hand, the image of “authentic, pure, and unpolluted” minority culture; on the other hand, the historical depth and artisanal sophistication of Miao and Dong craft traditions. The first dimension emphasizes an unspoiled community untouched by capitalist logic, persuading consumers of the authenticity of local products. The second dimension highlights historical narratives, the technical complexity of embroidery, and the cultural weight of antique textiles, thereby inflating the symbolic value of the goods.

Through strategical plan and management, the culture value is reproduced. At present, the Xiu Li Tao ICH Market is divided into twelve zones, as shown in the map below.

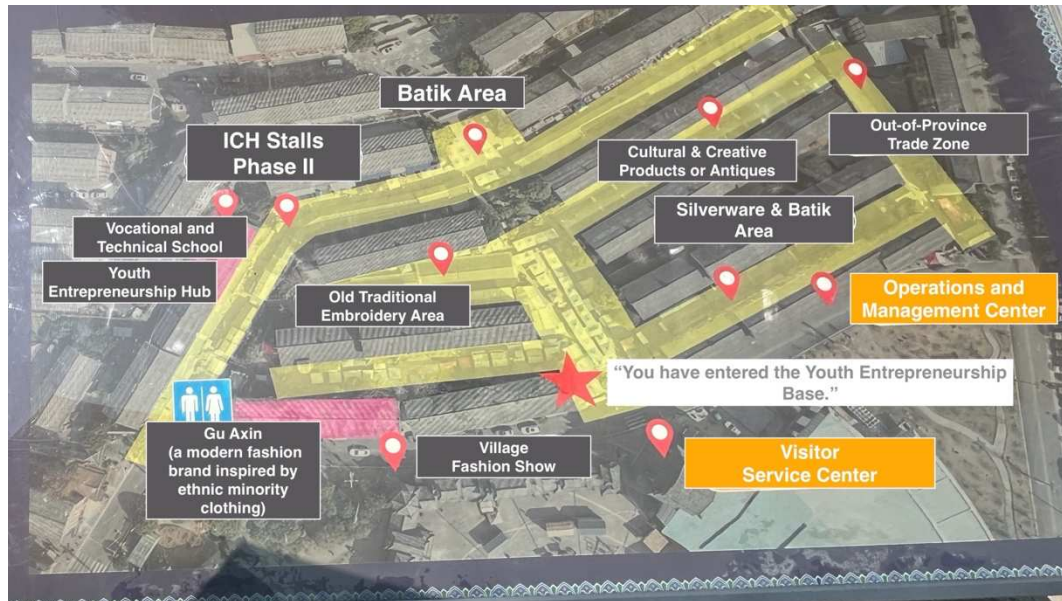


Figure 13. The Guide Map of Xiu Li Tao ICH Market. Translated by the author.

The manager specifically emphasized that more than 60% of the products are authentically handmade. He further explained:

“Local people here rarely cheat visitors. They are very simple and sincere. For example, if you walk into a village—like the one behind our cultural park—when I was hungry and entered a household, they would cook their preserved meat for me as a gesture of hospitality. This is how they treat honored guests. Their hospitality is such that sometimes, even if I wanted to pay, they would refuse. It is just like in the past: when you went to see a doctor in the village, instead of paying in cash, you might simply bring two bottles of liquor or some sugar.” ——Interview with the manager of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park (原文: “这里的人基本都不会骗游客的。他很他很淳朴的, 比如说你走到村寨里面, 就像我们风情园后面这个村里面, 我饿了。随便走到一户人家, 他会把他的腊肉煮起来给你吃, 那是对待上宾礼仪。这就是他们的待客之道。然后淳朴到哪里你就比如说我付你钱他不要, 就像以前在村里看医生你无非你就去买两瓶酒, 白糖就去。”)

Such narratives of sincerity and hospitality create a sense of goodwill for visitors and, more importantly, serve as part of the broader strategy of branding Miao and Dong culture.



Figure 14. The inside of Xiu Li Tao ICH Market, the stalls are well planned and managed by the operating center so to provide a good experience for consumers. Photograph by the author.

At the same time, the branding strategy first entails the production of portable, marketable goods—such as embroidered pouches, bracelets, and fridge magnets—that fit tourist demand. These are framed as “innovations that modernized and revitalized traditions,” designed to make ethnic culture more accessible and consumable in the view of the manager.

“For the new types of products I mentioned earlier, we need new types of talent—recent graduates, university students, or those who have gained experience and knowledge elsewhere and then return. They use their intelligence to develop a series of products. For example, the product designs have gone through version 1.0, 2.0, and now 3.5. Developing these products requires people... It is these educated and knowledgeable young people who take the lead in developing our cultural and creative products.” —Interview with the manager of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park (原文: “一个就像刚才我讲的新型的东西要新型的人才, 比如说应届毕业生, 一些大学生, 或者是一些出去已经长见识的人, 他回来以后通过他的智力去开发的一系列的东西。你像我这里我们这些的商品里面, 它有 1.0 的版本, 2.0 的版本, 现在就到 3.5, 那么他要人去开发, 你靠我一个人去想, 那肯定这些是你们这些有学历有知识的年轻人主导来开发这些文创。”)

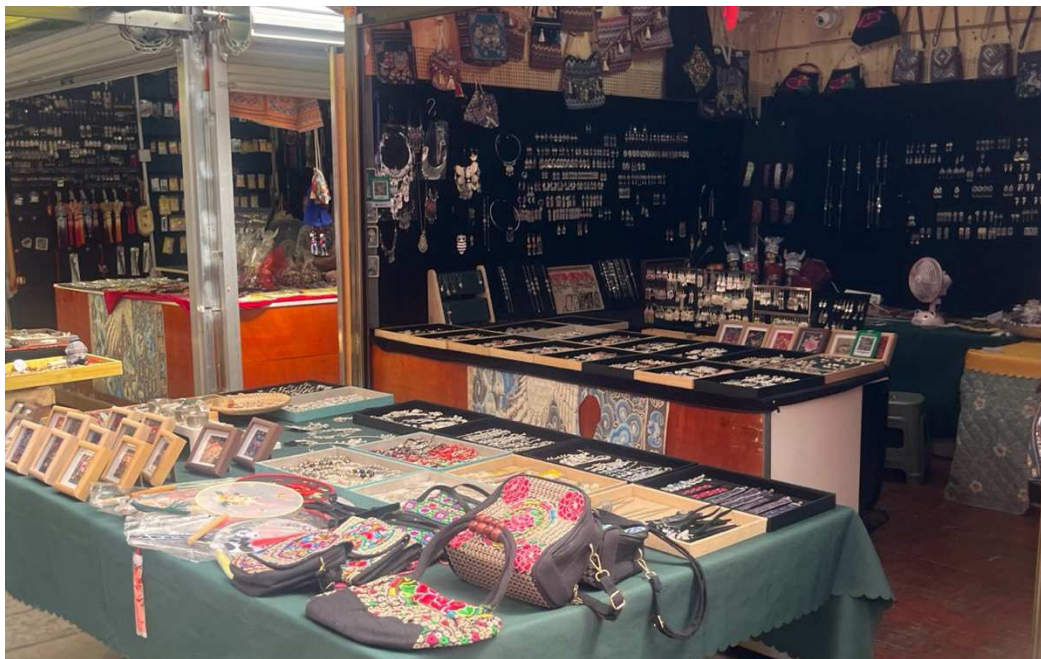


Figure 15. The products on the stalls. These small bags, bracelets, and fridge magnets are very tourist oriented. The management claims this is the modernization, activation, and transmission of minority culture—it allows more people to encounter and purchase it. Photograph by the author.

Another aspect of branding Miao and Dong culture is the deliberate enhancement of cultural products' perceived value. Through careful storytelling, product design, and staged market presentation, both the material and symbolic worth of handicrafts are amplified. This involves emphasizing rarity, historical and cultural significance, and craftsmanship, as well as educating consumers to recognize and appreciate these qualities.

“Just like some of our old fabrics, not all fabrics are the same. Take a ‘Hundred Birds’ cloth, for example—why does it sell for more than 10,000 RMB? Its actual cost is not high, but its rarity and the knowledge embedded in its production make it valuable. Similarly, Miao embroidery carries such rich cultural meaning that studying it closely reveals its depth.” —Interview with the manager of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park (原文: “就像我们的一些老布一样, 老布不一样, 就像一个百鸟衣, 为什么会卖 1 万多? 第一个其实它成本真的不贵, 但是一个问题, 它的技术含量, 知识, 历史文化背景太复杂了。这种珍贵程度就在这里。就像我们的苗绣, 如果细细研究, 它的文化太强了。”)

They further emphasize that it is needed to promote the knowledge and history of Miao embroidery so that the value of it could be accepted widely socially.

“The same logic applies to our cultural products. A small embroidery might be worth 200 RMB in a random village, 500 RMB in our ICH market, and 2,000 RMB when featured on the fashion show. Its value is socially constructed and recognized through exposure, context, and narrative. If people do not understand an old piece of cloth, they might ask, ‘Why would I buy that?’ But through our storytelling and

dissemination, the public learns its value. Just like antiques, something that looks old or worn can actually be very valuable. We cultivate the perception that this is rare and worth money.” ——Interview with the manager of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park (原文: “同样道理, 我们做的文创产品和一些老绣, 在你手里值 200 块, 进入市场 500, 上了 T 台就是 2000。这个价值是在世人接受之后产生的。很简单, 如果你对这些东西不了解, 会问‘我买这个干嘛?’通过我们的传播, 不同形式展示后, 人就知道它值钱, 就会去买。就像古董, 看起来很旧, 但经过灌输, 人们就知道它很值钱。”))

The core insight of these quotations lies in the fact that value construction is a two-way process. As the manager noted, if tourists “do not understand,” they will not buy. Hence, storytelling and dissemination become essential strategies. Through narratives, promotional activities, and even runway shows, the market actively educates consumers about the meaning and worth of these cultural products, shaping their perception that “this is valuable.” Under such a process of cultural edification, consumers shift from passive observers to active co-producers of value. Each purchase they make is not only a financial transaction but also an act of recognition that reinforces the socially constructed worth of Miao and Dong cultural products.

8.4 Shaping the Reflexive Subjects

Not only consumers are shaped but the local craftsmen are also reconfigured. Through policy discourse, training, and economic incentives, the state and local governments not only regulate the ways intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and ethnic minority cultures are presented but also, through education and guidance, shape Miao and Dong minorities into “reflexive subjects.” They learn how to understand, narrate, and perform their own culture in ways that align with national development goals and market expectations. This governance logic transforms them from passive inheritors of culture into active “cultural entrepreneurs” who package, display, and promote their cultural heritage. At the same time, it means that their ethnic identity and cultural practices are not spontaneous self-expression, but products shaped by external governance discourse.

As the manager mentioned: “We are helping them, developing their thinking, broadening their horizons, and letting them use their own energy and creativity.” ——Interview with the manager of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park (原文: “我们只是一个对他们的帮助, 让你开发他们的思想开发, 开拓他们的眼界, 让他们自己去发挥他们的余热。”))

“We organize experts from Tsinghua University, Peking University, and well-known art academies to train artisans. They learn how to explain, for example, the myths or folk stories behind the patterns they embroider, the historical roots of their culture, and the types of embroidery techniques. They must be able to clearly communicate

this to visitors. At the same time, we emphasize the idea that ‘what is ethnic is universal,’ so they develop ethnic pride and a sense of cultural identity.” —— Interview with the head of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Center) (原文: “我们会组织专家比如清华大学, 北京大学, 知名美术学院的专家来培训, 让手艺人知道怎么讲解, 比如你们绣的图案背后的神话或者民间故事, 你们民族的文化历史渊源, 刺绣技艺的种类, 要能跟游客讲清楚。而且在这个过程中去强调“民族的就是世界的”要让她们在思想上有民族认同感和自豪感。”)

Here, training is not only about passing on skills but also about standardizing discourse. Residents are expected to clearly “explain” the stories behind their culture, becoming subjects who can both produce and communicate culture. In this process, they self-discipline and internalize the ethnic identity and values expected by the state.

In addition, the government and related institutions actively promote artisans’ engagement with market logic, with a particular emphasis on “brand building” and “copyright awareness.” For example, the ICH Center provides free brand-building services to artisans, including logo design, promotional material production, and courses on online sales and e-commerce live streaming. Artisans are expected to understand market mechanisms and master brand strategies in the process.

In their eyes, the guidance is very necessary. The reason is that “Many ICH bearers are conservative in their mindset. When asked to package their work or develop a brand, they may feel it is not worth the investment. Some do not understand how a brand could benefit them, and some people require at least one to two years of guidance before they can understand how to do it.” —— Interview with the head of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Center) (原文: “非遗的传承人, 他们很多的意识形态上不进步, 包括你去喊他做个包装, 他觉得花了钱不值, 可能他们做品牌的时候不知道这个品牌对他有什么用沟通, 有些老师你起码通过 1~2 年沟通就怎么做。”)

And of course, some bearers absorbed those strategies and use it to promote their own brand value as shown in the image below.



Figure 16. This photo shows a museum also a sales shop established by an ICH bearer. Inside, medals and certificates are displayed, such as “Qiongzongnan Prefecture Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Transmission Education Base,” “Kaili Women’s Entrepreneurship and Employment Demonstration Base,” and “Representative Inheritor of the Miao Silver Intangible Cultural Heritage Project.” Photography by the author.

By displaying these awards shown in the photo, the ICH bearer asserts her authority and credibility to visitors, building trust and signaling that the products they purchase are officially recognized and possess high cultural value and technical skill. In this way, “culture” is transformed into a trustworthy commercial brand. This represents a deep form of internalized governance, ensuring that ICH practices remain both commercialized and controllable.

Through these discourses and practices, we can see that governance operates not only at the macro policy level but also deeply penetrates the daily performances and self-perceptions of local residents. Whether through training on “explaining mythological stories” or emphasizing “brand awareness,” local artisans are shaped to be both cultural inheritors and cultural entrepreneurs. This dual role allows ICH practices to serve national identity construction while embedding them within market logic.

8.4.1 Performance of the Culture

Under the joint influence of external governance discourses and the reflexive strategies of local actors, cultural practices themselves are reconstructed as “performances” catering to markets and tourists.

In the Kaili Miao and Dong Cultural Park, operators and artisans tasked with creating pleasurable experiences for visitors must deliberately conceal their “work” status and instead enact a role of “non-work.”

The manager frequently emphasizes its spontaneity, stressing that the love for festivals is embedded within Miao and Dong cultural traditions, it is as if “every day is a festival, every day is about drinking, singing, and dancing.”

As one organizer explained:

“People just think it’s fun to come and walk in the show... Many of the villagers who come to perform don’t really understand what we are doing, but they enjoy joining in. Everyone comes together, it feels lively, interesting—just like celebrating a festival.” -
---Interview with Village Fashion show organizer (原文: “大家就是觉得好玩...很多来玩的村民他们不知道我们在搞什么的, 就是好玩嘛, 大家一起来很热闹, 就像过节一样的。”)

However, based on my observation, performers and organizers actually undergo rigorous rehearsals, costume preparation, and time management—activities that are unmistakably “work” in the labor sense. Yet in front of tourists, they must mask this work-like quality and present an atmosphere of spontaneity, festivity, and ease, as if the performance were a community-initiated celebration rather than a scheduled, institutionalized event. This deliberate avoidance of a “work” appearance is precisely aimed at enabling tourists to experience a sense of authenticity.



Figure 17. A group of people are rehearsing for the stage show later, led by a dance teacher.
Photograph by the author.



Figure 18. The Backstage of “Village Fashion Show” where staffs are working to control the lights, sounds so to provide a wonderful experience for the audience. Photograph by the author.

Similarly, artisans in the ICH marketplace must embody the role of simple, kind-hearted artisans with the spirit of craftsmanship, while their real struggles with commercial competition and sales pressure remain hidden. The very existence of such backstage labor is what sustains the pure, idyllic cultural world imagined by tourists, thereby facilitating consumption framed as “non-work.”

Particularly, artisans collectively “perform” embroidery or handicraft-making at their stalls, creating the impression that each item embodies individual labor and time. When asked about the origin of their products, vendors often affirm that the goods are self-made, reinforcing notions of originality and warmth. Yet my fieldwork reveals another reality: many stallholders lack comprehensive embroidery skills, and most only engage in the most basic tasks such as piecing and stitching. A significant number of stalls are in fact supported by small factories or workshops located somewhere else at suburban Kaili, employing a handful to dozens of embroiderers from surrounding villages so to produce a certain number of products. At the same time, they are also selling a lot of mass-produced products that are machine-made by the big factories.



Figure 19. Left: artisan demonstrating handicraft making at the stall. Right: a front of one stall. Photography by the author.

Furthermore, many handmade products sold in the market are created by dismantling second-hand garments or antique clothes purchased from local villages. The artisans cut out embroidered borders or panels and reattach them to factory-made materials such as bags or headbands. This strategy is also guided by the managing and operating center of the cultural park, that's why products in the market present a rather homogenized appearance.



Figure 20. From left to right: In the first image, the blue bag in the center is factory-made, and the vendor intends to sew the green embroidery piece on the right onto it; in the second image, the vendor is matching another factory-made bag with old embroidery patches; in the third image, factory-made bare hairbands are paired with old embroidery pieces, ready to be stitched together. Photos by the author.

This process illustrates the double logic of cultural commodity production: on the one hand, the frontstage performance fabricates an image of authenticity, originality, and ethnic warmth that aligns with tourists' romanticized expectations of Miao and Dong ICH; on the other hand, the backstage reality of industrial production and market operations starkly contradicts this "authenticity." In other words, the performance of "non-work" and "handcrafting" functions primarily to obscure the encroachment of cultural industrialization and market logics.

8.5 Reflexive Appropriations and Negotiations

While the marketplace and cultural park are staged as tourist-oriented spaces of performance, my fieldwork also reveals that local actors reflexively appropriate these spaces for their own purposes. Beyond being sites of consumption, they become arenas of everyday leisure and community-making.

For instance, many elderly residents from surrounding villages use the park as a free public space for rest, socializing, or dancing in the evenings. Miao Dong Cultural Park, for its previous "ghost" status, it's now very inviting and welcoming. Making the space accessible for everyone with little regulation.



Figure 21. People are using the space under the Wind and Rain bridge in the park for leisure.

Photograph by the author.

Ethnic minority groups also gather here spontaneously, where they could speak their own languages and wear their own costume proudly, turning what was designed as a display of ethnic culture into a lived environment of cultural intimacy. Likewise, vendors sometimes trade clothing and handicrafts among themselves—not the staged "ethnic souvenirs" for tourists, but genuine Dong garments and materials exchanged for everyday use.



Figure 22. An artisan lives at Miao Dong Cultural Park asks me to take a photo to see if this traditional Miao clothes suits her. Sometimes, people from nearby villages will come to the ICH market to sell these kinds of clothes to the vendors there. Photograph by the author.

In conversations with artisans are selling ethnic costume at the ICH market, a recurring theme was their perception that tourists “do not really understand Miao embroidery.” While the stalls in the cultural park display small, embroidered patches or ready-made handicrafts tailored to tourist tastes, some vendors emphasized that these items represent only a simplified version of the craft. One lady also passionately offers help in case I want to identify the real value of those pieces, and even guides me to a different marketplace where “real embroidery pieces” were traded—large, intricately worked panels from traditional garments, exchanged among insiders who could recognize their cultural and economic value.



Figure 23. Views of the old streets that the lady mentioned. It is located in the downtown of Kaili city, which not only serves for traditional costume business but also is a bazaar that local people come to chill, buy meat, fruit and veggies. Photograph by the author.

This distinction reveals an important layer of reflexivity: local actors not only participate in the staged performance of ethnic culture for external consumption, but also actively construct boundaries between authentic and touristic forms of embroidery. By doing so, they protect spaces of cultural knowledge from being fully subsumed under tourist logics and carve out a domain of value intelligible primarily to themselves and their peers.

In summary, the governance of the Miao and Dong Cultural Park is not a fully successful top-down process; it is also a site where the locals, through practices of reflexive appropriation and internal differentiation, subtly resist and negotiate with the logics of tourism.

9. Discussion

The above findings illustrate the distinctiveness of China's cultural governance model, situated at the intersection of post socialist legacies and neoliberal instruments, which could be seen as a complementary for Barnett (1999)⁷'s argument that culture should not be understood solely as an instrument of governance, and such governance is never unproblematic; its outcomes are rendered complex by spatial configurations and the agency of local subjects.

This study shows that the state is not a distant regulator but an active planner and entrepreneur, orchestrating both the preservation and commercialization of culture. In Kaili, the redevelopment of the Cultural Park was not a simple market-driven initiative. Rather, it was the state that initiated, coordinated, and legitimized the project, embedding it into broader planning frameworks such as the *Kaili City Territorial Spatial Master Plan*, and other national as well as provincial plans.

The government and local entrepreneurs simultaneously uphold the rhetoric of ethnic culture and heritage safeguarding, while mobilizing entrepreneurial tools like the "ICH+" model to transform culture into a growth engine. The Cultural Park thus exemplifies how post socialist states actively appropriate neoliberal mechanisms to pursue modernization and urban development.

This governance model inevitably generates tension between two competing logics: the aesthetic and the instrumental.

The aesthetic logic emphasizes the intrinsic value of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), framing its protection as an ethical and historical imperative. This is evident in official documents that stress authenticity and continuity of minority traditions. Conversely, the instrumental logic positions ICH as a utilitarian resource, valued for

its capacity to generate tourism revenue and economic growth. This logic is clearly articulated in the *2024 Implementation Plan for the High-Quality Development of Kaili's Tourism Industry*.

The previous failure of the Miao Dong Cultural Park can be read as the manifestation of this contradiction. While ambitious blueprints invoked cultural ideals, the actual implementation faltered under financial constraints and market shortfalls. The stalled development underscores the unsustainability of relying predominantly on economic instrumentalism to operationalize cultural projects, revealing the limits of neoliberal logics when filtered through local political-economy conditions. Nevertheless, from a relational perspective, the failure can be seen not merely as an endpoint but as a rupture — a moment of nonrationality that disrupts existing connections. Such ruptures, however, do not erase relationality; rather, they expose its limits and open the possibility for new configurations (Harrison, 2007).

The current situation of Miao Dong Cultural Park can thus be read as an attempt to reconstitute relations out of a space of rupture and incompleteness. What appears as an “unfinished” project is precisely where non-relationality operates — the gap, the pause, the suspension. The government, new investors, and residents seek to activate this gap, transforming absence into presence, and failure into a site of ethical and spatial practice.

These tensions also materialize in the lived experiences of artisans and residents, who embody hybrid and sometimes contradictory subject positions. Artisans are simultaneously framed as cultural guardians, celebrated in official discourse as embodiments of craftsmanship and authenticity, and as ordinary economic subjects, compelled to commodify their skills to secure livelihoods. This duality complicates cultural governance: artisans are neither passive transmitters of state ideology nor purely rational economic actors, but agents navigating overlapping demands of survival, recognition, and cultural pride.

Local residents similarly display reflexive strategies. By distinguishing between “authentic embroidery” and “tourist-oriented commodities,” they implicitly defend the aesthetic value of heritage against total commodification. Moreover, the Cultural Park’s unintended “afterlife” as a freely accessible public space demonstrates residents’ capacity to re-appropriate state-planned cultural infrastructure. Through everyday practices of leisure, socialization, and informal use, they transform a failed commercial project into a meaningful communal site. This highlights the negotiated and contested nature of cultural governance in practice, which further emphasizes the idea that contemporary geography views subjectivity as a complex, non-linear, and dynamic process, continuously entangled with and shaped by both internal and external worlds, rather than as a simple, stable entity (Pile 2008). Traditional perspectives might assume that artisans occupy an either-or position. However, in the case of Miao Dong Cultural Park, their subjectivity is neither singular nor

coherent. They are neither purely “craftspeople” nor purely “merchants,” but exist as a complex being constantly oscillating between these two identities, “assembled and fragmented” in the process.

In summary, state-led cultural projects are animated by the tension between aesthetic ideals of heritage preservation and instrumental imperatives of economic growth. While this dual logic underpinned the ambitious planning of the Cultural Park, it also produced contradictions that led to its partial failure and “unfinished” state.

Yet failure does not signify absence of effect. Instead, the stalled project created unanticipated opportunities for local agency. Artisans and residents appropriated, redefined, and sometimes resisted the imposed logics of governance and commercialization, thereby re-inscribing cultural space with alternative meanings. This iterative negotiation resonates with recent calls in human geography to attend not only to “relationality” but also to its shadow — the moments of disconnection, rupture, and non-relationality that animate new forms of spatial and social experimentation.

Ultimately, cultural governance in China is not a linear top-down process but an iterative negotiation, where state agendas, market mechanisms, and local practices intersect, conflict, and co-produce outcomes.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, the case of the Kaili Miao and Dong Cultural Park demonstrates that when culture is embedded within the frameworks of tourism and governance, it ceases to be a mere process of heritage transmission; instead, it becomes a dynamic process of ongoing negotiation among symbolic reconstruction, commercialized regulation, and local agency.

The conclusive responses for the research questions are:

- RQ1: How are Miao and Dong minority cultures constructed and mobilized in national, provincial, and local policies and planning?

The findings show that at the national level, intangible cultural heritage is politicized as a tool for nation-building, ideological governance, and cultural confidence. At the provincial level, it is framed as both protection and modernization, aligning heritage safeguarding with economic development. At the municipal level, particularly in Kaili, policies are more closely tied to tourism and investment, reflecting a developmentalist and capital-driven logic. Together, these discourses construct minority culture as both a political resource and an economic asset. However, the official narratives neglected the complexity of the reality. The local practice has shown disjuncture with the desired future of the state.

- RQ2: How are cultural spaces symbolized, commercialized, and re-encoded in the planning and design of the Miao-Dong Cultural Park?

The Miao Dong Cultural Park exemplifies how space is transformed through symbolization and monumentalization (e.g., bridges, sculptures, slogans), the branding and commodification of ICH markets, and the performance-oriented reconstruction of traditions. Cultural practices are detached from everyday life and re-presented as consumable symbols, stage performances, and branded products, which prioritize spectacle and marketability over lived authenticity.

- RQ3: How do these official discourses, spatial strategies, and political-economic forces affect local cultural production and practice?

Official narratives and development strategies reshape local actors into cultural entrepreneurs, who must simultaneously perform tradition, manage brands, and adapt to tourism demands. Yet, local people are not merely passive recipients: they reflexively appropriate the Park as a leisure and community space, distinguish between real and touristic crafts, and negotiate cultural value on their own terms. This reveals both the disciplinary effects of governance and the agency of local communities in redefining cultural meaning.

This study has presented an in-depth case analysis of the Miao-Dong Cultural Park in Kaili, highlighting the entanglement of post socialist culture governance and neoliberal logics, as well as the tensions between aesthetic ideals, instrumental imperatives, and local agency. As a single-case study, its findings cannot be straightforwardly generalized to all ethnic cultural tourism projects in China. Nevertheless, it provides a valuable entry point for understanding similar dynamics of cultural governance, heritage commodification, and local negotiation in other contexts.

Future research could build on these insights in several directions. First, more interviews with ICH practitioners would help to illuminate how they navigate the practical challenges of policy implementation and market demands. Second, longitudinal studies of similar cultural theme parks could reveal their long-term impacts on local communities and cultural ecosystems beyond initial policy ambitions. Third, comparative research between Kaili and other ethnic regions could shed light on the diversity of cultural governance models across China. Finally, with the growing emphasis on digitalization in policies—such as the social media, online shopping—future work should also examine how digital platforms (e.g., TikTok, livestreaming, YouTube etc.) are reshaping processes of cultural commodification, circulation, and value-making.

11. Limitations

11.1 Language

Although I am a native Mandarin speaker and can also understand certain regional dialects, my inability to speak or comprehend Miao and Dong languages posed clear limitations during fieldwork. In informal conversations, especially among older residents or within groups of the same ethnic background, local minority languages were often used. This not only restricted my access to unmediated narratives but also limited my ability to capture nuanced meanings and emotional tones in community interactions. Furthermore, many elderly participants or those with limited formal education expressed themselves in non-standard or accented Mandarin, which occasionally caused miscommunication and hindered deeper ethnographic engagement.

11.2 Time and Finance

The fieldwork duration of one month was relatively short given the complexity of the research focus on discourse, space, and governance. Due to the structure of the 4CITIES program and academic visa constraints, I was only able to return to China for extended fieldwork after completing the Madrid semester. Financial constraints and the challenge of finding long-term accommodation in Kaili also limited the possibility of a more immersive, prolonged stay. As a result, the depth of engagement with certain actors and long-term participant observation was constrained.

11.3 Data collection

The interviewees in this study were not selected through a probabilistic or randomized sampling strategy. Rather, they were accessed through purposive sampling, based on personal networks and field encounters. While this allowed for the inclusion of key informants such as planners, local artisans, and officials, it inevitably introduced selection bias. Individuals who were more open, accessible, or institutionally connected were more likely to be interviewed, while more marginalized voices—such as less visible villagers or dissenting stakeholders—may have been underrepresented. This limitation is especially relevant when interpreting narratives of resistance or dissatisfaction, which may remain hidden in officialized or tourist-oriented spaces.

Additionally, some official documents were missing due to the incomplete archival collection of the Guizhou Provincial Library. Furthermore, certain government reports and documents from earlier periods have not been digitized and are therefore inaccessible online. This limited the comprehensiveness of primary source materials available for analysis.

Bibliography

- Abalos-Gerard Gonzalez, L. (2011). *Ethnographic research*.
https://www.slideshare.net/lanceabalos/ethnographic-research-2?from_action=save
- Barnett, C. (1999). Culture, government and spatiality: Reassessing the 'Foucault effect' in cultural-policy studies. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2(3), 297–316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200306>
- Bennett, T. (1995). *The birth of the museum: History, theory, politics*.
- Bennett, T. (1998). *Culture: A reformer's science*. SAGE Publications.
- Bennett, T. (2002). Culture and governmentality. *Culture and Society*, 19(2).
- Bennett, T. (2006). The governmental rationality of cultural policy. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9(3).
- Bloome, D., & Talwalkar, S. (1997). Book Reviews: Critical discourse analysis and the study of reading and writing. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32(1), 104–112.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/748146>
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*. Routledge.
- Chan, K. W., & Zhang, L. (1999). The Hukou system and rural-urban migration in China. *The China Quarterly*, 160, 818–855.
- Cheng, H., Liu, Y., He, S., & Shaw, D. (2017). From development zones to edge urban areas in China: A case study of Nansha, Guangzhou City. *Cities*, 71, 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2017.07.015>
- Chio, J. (2014). *A landscape of travel: The work of tourism in rural ethnic China*. University of Washington Press.
- Dear, M. (1986). Postmodernism and planning. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 4(3), 367–384. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d040367>
- Dikötter, F. (2010). *Mao's Great Famine: The history of China's most devastating catastrophe, 1958–1962*. Walker & Company.
- Dikötter, F. (2016). *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History, 1962–1976*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Elwood, S., & Martin, D. G. (2000). "Placing" interviews: Location and scales of power in qualitative research. *Professional Geographer*, 52(4), 649–657.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (pp. 87–104). University of Chicago Press.
- Fraser, R. (2020). Cultural heritage, ethnic tourism, and minority-state relations amongst the Orochen in north-east China. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 26(2), 178–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2019.1620830>
- Gong, Q. M., & Yu, R. W. (2024). The basic experience of intangible cultural heritage bazaar to strengthen the sense of community of the Chinese nation: Based on the survey conducted in Guizhou Province. *Journal of Chongqing University of Arts and Sciences (Social Sciences Edition)*, 43(5), 53–61.
<https://doi.org/10.19493/j.cnki.issn1673-8004.2024.05.005>

- Gong, W. B. (2025, February 13). The original contributions of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important discourse on advancing the modernization of China's governance system and capacity. *People's Daily*.
<http://www.qstheory.cn/20250213/5ae26deb443a47cc88cf2517890d59a4/c.html>
- Gregory, D. (1994). *Geographical imaginations*. Blackwell.
- Guizhou Kaili Municipal Local Chronicles Compilation Committee. (2016). *Kaili city gazetteer: 1991–2007* [凯里市志: 1991–2007]. Fangzhi Press.
- Guizhou Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development. (2022, October 28). Guizhou provincial-level historical and cultural city application management measures (trial).
https://www.bijie.gov.cn/bm/bjszfcxjsj/zwgk/csjs/202210/t20221028_76952915.html
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Harrison, P. (2007). 'How shall I say it...?' Relating the nonrelational. *Environment and Planning A*, 39(3), 590–608. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3825>
- Harvey, D. (1987). Flexible accumulation through urbanization: Reflections on 'post-modernism' in the American city. *Antipode*, 19(3), 260–286.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1987.tb00375.x>
- Harvey, D. (2002). Globalization and the "spatial fix".
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2007). *A brief history of neoliberalism*.
- Harvey, D. (2021, July 1). Anti-Capitalist Chronicles: The Urbanization of China (Season 3, Episode 16). *Democracy at Work*.
https://www.democracyatwork.info/acc_the_urbanization_of_china
- He, S., & Lin, G. C. S. (2015). Producing and consuming China's new urban space: State, market and society. *Urban Studies*, 52(15), 2757–2773.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015604810>
- He, S., & Wu, F. (2005). Property-led redevelopment in post-reform China: A case study of Xintiandi redevelopment project in Shanghai. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 27(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0735-2166.2005.00185.x>
- He, S., & Wu, F. (2009). China's emerging neoliberal urbanism: Perspectives from urban redevelopment. *Antipode*, 41(2), 282–304. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00673.x>
- Hind, R. J. (1984). The internal colonial concept. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26(3), 543–568. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/178555>
- Hsing, Y.-T. (2010). *The great urban transformation: Politics of land and property in China*. Oxford University Press.
- Hu, H. (2012). National cultural governance: A new dimension for developing cultural industries [国家文化治理：发展文化产业的新维度]. *Academic Monthly*, 44(5).
<https://doi.org/10.19862/j.cnki.xsyk.2012.05.005>
- Jacobs, J. M. (1993). The city unbound: Qualitative approaches to the city. *Urban Studies*, 30(4–5), 827–848. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420989320081931>

- Kaili Municipal Government. (2025, March 11). Population and ethnic composition of Kaili City. Kaili City Overview – Population & Ethnicity section. kaili.gov.cn
- Keller, R. (2018). The discursive construction of realities: Sociology of knowledge as a theory of discourse. In J. W. Moores, M. T. Wright, & S. D. Blume (Eds.), ***The Routledge handbook of language and identity*** (pp. 239–255). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429467714-20>
- Kendall, P. (2015). Between big city and authentic village: Branding the small Chinese city. ***City***, **19**(5), 665–680. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2015.1071116>
- Kendall, P. (2017). The location of cultural authenticity: Identifying the real and the fake in urban Guizhou. ***The China Journal***, **77**, 27–45.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/688851>
- Kendall, P. (2025). Ordinary life within an extraordinary project: Demystifying the Third Front. ***Modern China***. Advance online publication.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00977004251350051>
- Leicester, T. (2008). Identity conflicts and issues in rural tourism in Yangshuo, China. ***Civilisations***, **57**(1), 223–241. <https://doi.org/10.4000/civilisations.1370>
- Lin, G. C. S. (2009). Developing China: Land, politics and social conditions. ***Geoforum***, **40**(5), 784–794.
- Lin, G. C. S. (2014). China's landed urbanization: Neoliberalizing politics, land commodification, and municipal finance in the growth of metropolises. ***Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space***, **46**(8). <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1068/a130016p>
- Lin, G.
C. S., & Yi, F. (2013). Urbanization of capital or capitalization on urban land? Land development and local public finance in urbanizing China. ***Urban Geography***, **32**(1), 50–79.
- MacFarquhar, R., & Schoenhals, M. (2008). ***Mao's last revolution***. Harvard University Press.
- Molotch, H. (1976). The city as a growth machine: Toward a political economy of place. ***American Journal of Sociology***, **82**(2), 309–332.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2777096>
- Naughton, B. (2007). ***The Chinese economy: Transitions and growth***. MIT Press.
- Naughton, B. (2014). China's economy: Complacency, crisis & the challenge of reform. ***Daedalus***, **143**(2), 14–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43297313>
- Nyíri, P. (2006). ***Scenic spots: Chinese tourism, the state, and cultural authority***. University of Washington Press.
- Oakes, T. (1998). ***Tourism and modernity in China*** (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203978344>
- Oakes, T. (1999). Selling Guizhou: Cultural development in an era of marketisation. In J. Duckett (Ed.), ***The political economy of China's provinces*** (pp. 41–64). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203014219>
- Oakes, T. (2016). Villagizing the city: Turning rural ethnic heritage into urban modernity in southwest China. ***International Journal of Heritage Studies***, **22**(10), 751–765. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2016.1212387>

- Oakes, T. (2017). Happy town: Cultural governance and biopolitical urbanism in China. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, **51**(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X17693621>
- Oakes, T. & Yang, Y. (2020). Dance machine: Performing the city in China's public space. *Civilisations. Revue internationale d'anthropologie et de sciences humaines*, **69**, 61–79. <https://doi.org/10.4000/civilisations.5738>
- Oakes, T. (2019). Leisure as governable space: Transcultural leisure and governmentality in urban China. In R. G. Wagner, C. V. Yeh, E. Menegon, & R. P. Weller (Eds.), *Testing the margins of leisure: Case studies on China, Japan, and Indonesia* (pp. 13–41). Heidelberg University Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.17885/heup.550.c7220>
- Oi, J. C. (1992). Fiscal reform and the economic foundations of local state corporatism in China. *World Politics*, **45**(1), 99–126.
- People's Daily. (2022). Learning the history of reform and opening-up (3): Reform and change in China [学习改革开放史（三）：改革开放与中国的变迁]. http://www.yydj.gov.cn/11202/11228/62419/62422/content_2019087.html
- Pile, S. (2008). Where is the subject? Geographical imaginations and spatializing subjectivity. *Subjectivity*, **23**, 206–218. <https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2008.9>
- Pink, S. (2009). *Doing sensory ethnography*. SAGE.
- Pow, C. P. (2018). Building a harmonious society through greening: Ecological civilization and aesthetic governmentality in China. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, **108**(3), 864–883. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2017.1373626>
- Pow, C. P., & Neo, H. (2013). Seeing red over green: Contesting urban sustainabilities in China. *Urban Studies*, **50**(11), 2245–2264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013478239>
- Qian, J. (2017). Redeeming the Chinese modernity? Zen Buddhism, culture-led development and local governance in Xinxing County, China. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, **51**(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X16687555>
- Qian, J. (2019). Chapter 9: Making urban public space amidst modern Chinese urbanism. In R. Yep, J. Wang, & T. Johnson (Eds.), *Handbook on Urban Development in China* (pp. 1–18). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786431639.00018>
- Qian, J. (2025). Knowledge spillover from tourism research to social and cultural geography. *Tourism Tribune*, **40**(6). <https://doi.org/10.19765/j.cnki.1002-5006.2025.06.001>
- Qian, J., Feng, D., & Zhu, H. (2012). Tourism-driven urbanization in China's small town development: A case study of Zhapo Town, 1986–2003. *Habitat International*, **36**(1), 152–160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2011.06.012>
- Schmitt, T. (2023). Cultural governance: Concepts and approaches. In *Cultural governance* (1st ed., pp. 1–18). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003380535>

- Schwandt, T. A., & Gates, E. F. (2018). Case study methodology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 341–358). SAGE Publications.
- Shin, H. B. (2014). Urban spatial restructuring, event-led development and scalar politics. *Urban Studies*, *51*(14), 2961–2978.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013515031>
- Simons, H. (2014). Case study research: In-depth understanding in context. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 455–470). Oxford University Press.
- Sorace, C., & Hurst, W. (2016). China's phantom urbanisation and the pathology of ghost cities. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *46*(2), 304–322.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2015.1115532>
- Tian, B., Stoffelen, A., & Vanclay, F. (2021). Ethnic tourism in China: Tourism-related (dis)empowerment of Miao villages in Hunan province. *Tourism Geographies*, *25*(2–3), 552–571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2021.1938657>
- Tian, M. (2014, March 31). Chengzhenhua yu chengshihua ji qi queque hanyi [Urbanization and townization and their precise meanings]. *Xuexi Shibao (Study Times)*. <https://news.12371.cn/2014/03/31/ARTI1396215778473153.shtml>
- Tim Oakes. (2019). China's urban ideology: New towns, creation cities, and contested landscapes of memory. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2019.1668815>
- Visser, R. (2019). Posthuman policies for creative, smart, eco-cities? Case studies from China. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *51*(1), 206–225.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X18765481>
- Walters, S. (2007). 'Case study' or 'ethnography'? Defining terms, making choices and defending the worth of a case. In G. Walford (Ed.), *Methodological developments in ethnography* (Studies in Educational Ethnography, Vol. 12, pp. 89–108). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1529-210X\(06\)12006-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1529-210X(06)12006-9)
- Wong, C. P. W. (1991). Central–local relations in an era of fiscal decline: The paradox of fiscal decentralization in post-Mao China. *The China Quarterly*, *163*, 691–715.
- Wu, F. (2003). The (post-) socialist entrepreneurial city as a state project: Shanghai's reglobalisation in question. *Urban Studies*, *40*(9), 1673–1698.
- Wu, F. (2006). *Globalization and the Chinese city* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.4324/9780203698716>
- Wu, F. (2018). Housing privatisation and the return of the state: Changing governance in China. *Urban Geography*, *39*(8), 1177–1194.
- Wu, F. (2018). Planning centrality, market instruments: Governing Chinese urban transformation under state entrepreneurialism. *Urban Studies*, *55*(7), 1383–1399.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017721828>
- Wu, F. (2020). Adding new narratives to the urban imagination: An introduction to 'New directions of urban studies in China'. *Urban Studies*, *57*(3), 459–472.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019898137>

- Wu, F. (2023). State entrepreneurialism: Theorizing urban development politics from China. In P. L. Galès & J. Robinson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of comparative global urban studies* (pp. 364–374). Routledge.
- Wu, F., & Ma, L. J. C. (2005). The Chinese city in transition: Towards theorizing China's urban restructuring. In *Restructuring the Chinese city: Changing society, economy and space* (pp. 1–25). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203414460>
- Wu, F., Zhang, F., & Liu, Y. (2021). Beyond growth machine politics: Understanding state politics and national political mandates in China's urban redevelopment. *Antipode*, *54*(2), 608–628. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12781>
- Wu, Y., & Zhang, H. (2021). From representation to practice: Ethnic tourism and performative heritage in southwestern China. *Tourism Geographies*, *23*(3), 474–493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2019.1687081>
- WU Wenjia, & SUN Jiuxia. (2020). The study of cultural governance in Honghe Hani Rice Terraces World Cultural Heritage Site. *Tourism Tribune*, *35*(8), 71–80.
- Xiao, B., & Ning, L. (2023). Thirty years of research on cultural governance in China: Theory, policy, and practice. *Journal of Hubei Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, *41*(1), 116–124. <https://doi.org/10.13501/j.cnki.42-1328/c.2023.01.016>
- Yan, H., & Bramwell, B. (2008). Cultural tourism, ceremony and the state in China. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *35*(4), 969–989. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2008.09.004>
- Yeh, A., Yang, F. F., & Wang, J. (forthcoming). Economic transition and urban transformation of China: The interplay of the state and the market. *Urban Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004209802311559710>
- Yep, R., Wang, J., & Johnson, T. (Eds.). (2019). *Handbook on urban development in China*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786431639>
- Zhang, L. (2002). Spatiality and urban citizenship in late socialist China. *Public Culture*, *14*(2), 311–334. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-14-2-311>
- Zhang, L. (2006). Contesting spatial modernity in late-socialist China. *Current Anthropology*, *47*(3), 461–484. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/503063>
- Zhang, L. (2010). *In search of paradise: Middle-class living in a Chinese metropolis*. Cornell University Press.
- Zhang, W. (2012). *The China wave: Rise of a civilizational state*. World Century Publishing Corporation.
- Zhang, Z., Liang, Z., & Bao, J. (2021). From theme park to cultural tourism town: Disneyization turning of tourism space in China. *Regional Sustainability*, *2*(2), 156–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsus.2021.05.003>
- Zhu, J. (1999). Local growth coalition: The context and implications of China's gradualist urban land reforms. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *23*(3), 534–548.
- Zhu, Y. (2015). Cultural effects of authenticity: Contested heritage practices in China. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *21*(6), 594–608. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2014.991935>

Appendix

1. Table 2 Multi-level Cultural and Tourism Policy Documents in China (Central–Provincial–Prefectural–Municipal) / 表 2 中国多层次文化与旅游政策文件汇总
(中央—省—州—市)

中央级政策文件		
年份	文件名称	涉及领域
2025	《关于推动文化高质量发展的若干经济政策》 (国务院办公厅)	文化+旅游、乡村振兴、产业融合
2023	《关于释放旅游消费潜力推动旅游业高质量发展的若干措施》	旅游发展
2023	《国内旅游提升计划（2023—2025 年）》	非遗旅游、智慧旅游、文化产业赋能乡村振兴
2022	《“十四五”文化发展规划》（中办、国办）	城乡文化融合、城市文化治理
2021	《“十四五”文化产业发展规划》（文化和旅游部）	城市文化资源开发、文化产业发展
2021	《关于进一步加强非物质文化遗产保护工作的意见》（国家民委）	民族文化、非遗保护、文旅融合
2015	《关于加快构建现代公共文化服务体系的意见》（中办、国办）	城乡文化协同发展、公共文化服务
省级政策文件（贵州省）		
年份	文件名称	涉及领域
2023	《贵州省“十四五”文化和旅游发展规划》	民族文化生态旅游、冬季旅游产品体系
2023	《贵州省文化和旅游厅关于印发〈贵州省非遗旅游体验空间认定与管理办法（试行）〉》	非遗旅游空间管理
2023	《贵州省文化和旅游系统行政裁量权基准（试行）》	文旅执法规范化、市场治理
2022	《关于进一步加强非物质文化遗产保护工作的实施意见》（黔委厅字〔2022〕38 号）	非遗保护与教育融合、文化生态区建设
2021	《贵州省“十四五”新型城镇化发展规划》	城市更新、产城融合
2021	《贵州省城市更新行动实施方案》	历史街区改造、文旅融合
州级政策文件（黔东南州）		
年份	文件名称	涉及领域
2025	《2025 年“引客入黔东南”奖励实施意见（试行）》	跨省旅游合作、市场激励

年份	文件名称	涉及领域
2025	《黔东南州人民政府关于省政协十三届三次会议第3076号提案的会办意见》	智慧旅游平台建设
2023	《黔东南州民族文化生态保护实验区建设方案》	非遗活态传承、生态保护区划定

地级政策文件（凯里市）

年份	文件名称	涉及领域
2024	《凯里市 2024 年推动旅游产业高质量发展实施方案》	苗侗风情园升级、文旅产业提质
2023	《凯里苗侗风情园提档升级工作实施方案》	空间重构、文化活化、资金保障
2021	《关于凯里市城市更新行动工作实施方案政策解析》	老旧小区改造、非遗街区打造
2021	《凯里市国土空间总体规划（2021—2035 年）》	空间治理、产城融合
2018	《关于加大对凯里文化资源挖掘促进旅游发展的建议》	文化资源挖掘