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NEW

A LANDSCAPE OF TRAVEL: The Work of Tourism in Rural Ethnic China. *Studies on Ethnic Groups in China.* By Jenny Chio. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. xxxi, 294 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$30.00, paper. ISBN 978-0-295-99366-9.

Over hundreds of years, the mountains of Guangxi have been transformed into terraced rice paddies famous the world over, a textbook example of the human transformation of China's natural environment. Since the 1980s, Ping'an has become a major tourism destination, though its famous fields are increasingly sown by outside hands hired to keep up appearances. The local labour that maintained these terraces is now devoted to tourism work, including guesthouse management, village beautification, and new ethnic displays created specifically for tourism.

The situation in Ping'an village makes up one of the two comparative cases that Jenny Chio presents in *A Landscape of Travel*. The other is the village of Upper Jidao, a nine-hour drive across the border into Guizhou, provided you make the right turns. Upper Jidao has no famous landscapes, but like Ping'an it is caught up in a national push to economically and socially develop the countryside. In the 2000s, Upper Jidao village became a provincial target for tourism development. Despite being marginalized by more popular and accessible Miao villages in eastern Guizhou, Upper Jidao carved a piece of the tourism market by playing up its rural ethnicity with ethnic costumes and performances, and disguising modern brickwork behind wooden plank facades.

Chio's book is an ethnographic account of the mobilities and subjectivities of rural ethnic villagers in China working to become visible, attractive and relevant in a competitive new tourism economy. Chio finds that in both villages, "doing" tourism (*gao lüyou*, in Mandarin) is not something tourists do, but is a process undertaken by villagers learning how to be ethnic and rural (210). This is not an altogether new insight, yet the book makes an important contribution in covering the intensified pressure placed on rural areas over the past decade to more actively contribute to national economic and social goals. In highlighting the role of migrant subjectivities and labor, Chio has at the same time helped clarify the relationship between migration and tourism in China. The rediscovery of rural and remote China by urban Chinese has been a significant social and political change over the past two decades in China. This is a question that I have pursued in my own work. But mobilities of leisure and labour don't map cleanly onto the schematic movement of urban tourists to rural China and rural labourers to urban China, and *A Landscape of Travel* is a valuable study of how closely related these mobilities are.

Stories of Ping'an and Upper Jidao are woven through each chapter, each contributing to Chio's focus on a broad set of theoretical issues. The introduction explains that instead of focusing on the mobility and the visibility of tourists, the book concentrates on the concrete work rural ethnic villagers do in order to be mobile and be seen. Chapter 1 surveys literature on ethnicity and tourism in China, and provides historical overviews of tourism development in Ping'an and Upper Jidao. Chapter 2 frames tourism in these villages as part of the central state's New Socialist Countryside campaign, and as commodified through the trope of the *nongjiale*, the "happy farmer home." The middle chapters go into more detail regarding the mobilities, appearances and subjectivities behind the work of tourism. Tourist subjectivities sneak into the book in chapter 3, which covers the uneven mobilities generated through tourism development—how rural tourism requires that someone remain in the role of the peasant, and how residents come to see their village and themselves through tourism. Chapter 4 probes the politics of the visual work required for tourism, how villagers make themselves and their landscapes appear rural and ethnic. Chapter 5 covers the local politics of tourism—between residents, developers, and local governments—and the requirement to create distance and difference between rural ethnic villages. The conclusion reprises the major themes of the book through an account of a tour to Ping'an organized by Chio for Upper Jidao officials.

Chio demonstrates sensitivity to the complex relationships and politics of tourism development in these villages. In her close focus on specific villages in a specific period of time, Chio does not slip into making generalizations about all tourism in China. However, there is no explicit discussion about how this might relate to other parts of China: to

“non-ethnic” rural villages, for example, to more urbanized (or more remote) ethnic areas, or to China’s “greening,” “ruralizing” cities. And while the book establishes its place in past literature, it makes only tentative steps into new theoretical territory. The central idea of “landscape,” for example, is framed in terms of the visual and phenomenological, rather than the material and political. Geographer Don Mitchell’s book *The Lie of the Land*, with its take on landscape as labour history, came to mind as I read Chio’s account of how these villages came to appear both rural and ethnic.

A Landscape of Travel is a valuable contribution to the study of tourism and ethnic minorities in contemporary China. It is unique in its attention to the role of rural-to-rural and returnee migrant subjectivities in the making of rural tourism destinations. Chio’s work echoes a number of important book-length studies on ethnicity in southwestern China going back to the 1990s. It provides an updated account of dynamics detailed in the work of scholars such as Tim Oakes, Margaret Swain and Louisa Schein, and it stands out among more recent but less rounded ethnographic books on tourism in China.

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