Representing ethnic minority cultures in China:

Museums, heritage, and ethnic minority groups

Thesis Submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the University of Leicester

by

Yahao Wang

School of Museum Studies

University of Leicester

December 2020

Abstract

Representing ethnic minority cultures in China: Museums, heritage, and ethnic minority groups

Yahao Wang

Ethnic minority groups (*shaoshu minzu*) have continued to be silenced in Chinese museums' expert-led representation of their cultures. Museums in China, instrumentalised by the governments, exert their authority over cultural representation through exhibitions to present ideologies such as 'diversity in unity'. The representational politics of some museums lie behind their inequitable power relations with ethnic minority groups in terms of exhibition making and programmes management, inviting intensive criticism. Drawing upon critical museology and critical heritage studies, this thesis calls for the reconsideration of power relations and the marginalised voice within the interdisciplinary field. It explores the impact of ethnic minority cultural heritage discourses and practices on the representational practices of museums and ethnic minority groups and their relations.

This thesis sheds light on how official cultural heritage ideologies and policies shape and change museums' social roles and their museological practices, and how museums interact with ethnic minority groups and form new connections with them beyond exhibitions. Examining two types of museums dedicated to ethnic minority cultures, the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi and the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China, it foregrounds ethnic minority communities' exercise of their active agency in relation to heritage construction and cultural representation. Both museums framed by the authorised heritage discourses act as heritage agencies that are sites of contact and contestation. This study interrogates how ethnic minority groups' heritage constructions resist, negotiate or appropriate museological practices within official heritage discourses. It argues that museums' authoritative cultural representations and practices can be shaped and mobilised by ethnic minority groups to serve their self-representation and self-expression.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Stacy Boldrick, for her persistent guidance, support and patience. Without her encouragement, I would not be able to complete this research. Thanks also to my second supervisor Dr Yunci Cai, for providing thoughtful feedback and recommendations on this thesis. Thank Professor Sandra Dudley and Professor Michael Rowlands for being my thesis examiners and their invaluable advice.

I would like to thank all the museum staff and ICH performers at the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi and local community members from the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum who participated in my research and made significant contributions to this research, including Xuejian Nong, Xiaoyan Liang, Tingfang Pan, Yueli Liao, Wenqiang Hou and so forth. I am extremely grateful to Tang Shaoling for her kindness and sharing valuable research insights during my time at the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi.

Special thanks should be extended to Christine Cheesman, Gurpreet (Bob) Ahluwalia, the PhD community of the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, and all the colleagues who are always supportive. Dr Jingyu Peng and Dr Amornchat Sermcheep, it is great to have you throughout my research journey and thank you for always being there for me. I would like to thank Yuqiao Hu, Dr Sumi Kim, Chiara, Dr Zheng Zhang, Dr Sipei Lu, Dr Aisha, Minju, Cesare, Lanzhou, and many friends in Leicester. Jie Deng, Dr Zhao Li and Xiaonan Xiong, thank you for being my supportive roommates and friends.

My biggest thanks to my beloved grandparents, Cai Mingyi, Chen Shiqin, Wang Deen and Li Dakang; my parents, Xiaodong and Meng; all other family members, Zhu, Yun, Jiang, Kai, Yan, Gangyong, Ding, Yuqing Wang, Xiaorui Huang and Cai Cai; and my best friends, including Rong Luo, Danyang Liu and Zeling Ren, for their unwavering love and belief in me.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Abbreviations and Chinese Terms

AHD	Authorised Heritage Discourse
AMGX	Anthropology Museum of Guangxi
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
LLZE	Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum
PRC	People's Republic of China
SACH	State Administration of Cultural Heritage
Shaoshu minzu	ethnic minority groups
minzu wenwu	ethnic cultural relics

Chapter 1 Introduction

> The goal is not to freeze people in time. One cannot make a rainforest park of the mind. Cultures are not museum pieces; they are communities of real people with real needs. The question, as Hugh Brody has written, is not the traditional versus the modern, but the right of free peoples to choose the components of their lives. (Davis, 2014, p.164)

In light of Wade Davis' words, culture is fluid and in flux, and people should respect the rights of each other to choose their own way of living. Davis' concerns regarding the death of diverse cultures in the world ignites one of the research interests behind this thesis: how do ethnic minority groups maintain their cultures with the effect of modernisation? Museums might be suitable places to find answers to this question. Yet, after a visit to the Provincial Museum of Guizhou in China in 2011, which displays cultural stories of ethnic minority people written through a political lens, I was puzzled. The static depiction of ethnic minorities and encyclopaedic narratives in the museum's exhibition elicited another question: why are ethnic minority groups absent or voiceless in the meaning making process of their cultures? This experience first compelled me to begin the research in this thesis, and to ask the larger question – how can exhibitions of ethnic minority heritage bring the voice of ethnic minorities into museums in China? Crucially, what do museums and heritage mean to ethnic minority groups?

Museums in China are officially sanctioned as sites of representation and bases for patriotic education (爱国主义教育基地) (Svensson, 2003; Denton, 2014), where they are used by the authorities to publicise the inclusion of diverse ethnic groups

and demonstrate their solidarity. Vickers (2007), Denton (2014), Varutti (2010; 2014), Nitzky (2014) and Lu (2014) have offered a comprehensive vision of Chinese museums' history, politics and disputes over cultural representation, and the unsettled issues regarding the static depiction of ethnic minority cultures and staging multiculturalism to entrench nationalism among ethnic groups. As these writers highlight and criticise, many China's museums' authoritative control over knowledge production sparks the hierarchies of cultural representation and Han-centred construction of national identity by drawing on ethnic minority heritage.

Currently, China has been in a time of significant social transformation and social tension due to the forces of globalisation, the free market economy and urbanisation. These forces have brought a fear of cultural homogeneity, as well as cultural loss, triggering a sense of identity anxiety in China (Madsen, 2014; Wang and Rowlands, 2017). Hence, with a series of policies[1] established by the State Council to revitalise Chinese traditional cultures (including ethnic minority cultures) (NPC, 2017), the national, provincial, and local authorities have extensively employed heritage protection as the political and developmental strategy to intensify the idea of multiculturalism in China and instrumentalise heritage as an economic asset for domestic tourism and economic development. Museums dedicated to ethnic minorities, as governmental institutions, construct heritage value as authentic forms of ethnic minority traditions and cultural resources to legitimise and disseminate the official cultural and heritage policies and discourses (Zhu, 2015; Zhu and Maags, 2020). For these museums, ethnic minority groups are objects to be researched, enlightened, and educated (Song, 2010; Shi, 2006).

---

[1] The State Council established 'Proposal on Enhancing the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (关于加强我国非物质文化遗产保护工作的意见)' (2005b), 'The Notice on Enhancing Cultural Heritage Protection Work (关于加强文化遗产保护工作的通知)' (2005a), 'Museum Regulations (博物馆条例)' (2015) and 'Proposal on Further Enhancing Cultural Heritage Protection Work (国务院关于进一步加强文物工作的指导意见)' (2016).

From the standpoint of non-professional ethnic minority groups, museums might be irrelevant or unfamiliar spaces (Isaac, 2005). The questions raised above call for rethinking ethnic minority groups' positions in the hegemonic representation of their cultures produced by official cultural agencies, such as museums. It is imperative to ask 'who controls, or rather, manages heritage, whether in the context of museum work or not? What purpose does such management serve, and whom does it benefit?' (Babić, 2016, p.15). By presenting a fluctuating account of heritage, this thesis can openly discuss the idea that ethnic minority cultural heritage ought not only to be made, instrumentalised and shared by museums, but it should also privilege the perspective of ethnic minority groups.

This thesis is grounded in the field of critical museum studies and theoretically informed by critical approaches to heritage studies. The driving force of this research is the reconsideration of power relations between museums and ethnic minority groups and marginalised voices. It re-examines museums' values and their hegemonic practices within the Chinese context, through attuning the research to the compelling impact of Chinese heritage discourses and heritage practices of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minority groups' heritage making that is occurring on the ground, serving their economic and cultural interests, can echo or resist the official heritage discourses, which contest museums' heritage making and mobilisation for cultural representation. By dissecting their – and museums' – discordant exercises of power over heritage management and cultural representation, it can be argued that museums' authoritative representations in China and the legitimacy of their heritage making can be questioned.

1.1 Research aims and questions

Given the fluidity of heritage, the objective of this section is to critically clarify research aims and questions that guide the interrogation of interrelationships

among *minzu* (ethnic) museums, cultural heritage, and ethnic minority groups. My central argument formulated in this research is that official and non-official heritage discourses and practices of ethnic minority groups can question and shape the *minzu* museums' museological practices, and further perpetuate or challenge their authoritative representations of ethnic minority cultures.

Approaching the concept of heritage as discourse and practice (Smith, 2006; Rowlands, 2002), this thesis locates the study of the representation of ethnic minority cultures within the interdisciplinary domain. In order to articulate power relations from perspectives of museums and ethnic minority groups (Crooke, 2008), this research proposes three key questions:

1. How have representational practices of *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups emerged from, and been influenced by, official cultural and heritage discourses?
2. How have their power relations been affected by their disparate heritage construction and mobilisation?
3. How do ethnic minority groups' heritage discourse and practices shape, question and appropriate *minzu* museums' hegemonic representations of ethnic minority cultures as heritage construction processes?

There are three aims devised to address the questions above. Recognising the political nature of museums within a socialist regime is a starting point of hammering away at the complexities of *minzu* museums' cultural representation. Thus, the first aim is to critically examine how *minzu* museums in China are incorporated into official heritage discourses and how their role has been shaped by these discourses and ethnic policies. Specifically, it focuses on exhibitions as *minzu* museums' primary representational practices, exploring how objects have been identified, selected, interpreted, and presented as ethnic cultural heritage to engage political ideologies of ethnic minority cultures; and furthermore, it explores what impact ethnic minority

4

and heritage politics have on the museum's exhibitionary strategies and approaches. The second is to survey how official heritage discourses affect *minzu* museums' heritage making practices, beyond exhibitions and ethnic minority groups' representational practices within and outside the museum. It purports to uncover differences between *minzu* museums and minority groups' heritage management and how their relationships are forged in a heritage context. The third aim concerns how ethnic minority groups exercise power over self-representation. More precisely, it investigates how ethnic minority groups challenge or capitalise on museums' representational practices to express themselves and how they carry out heritage practices to affirm their identities beyond representation.

To answer my research questions and aims, in this thesis I review official heritage discourses in China (see Chapter Two) and identify *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups as two actors that create their heritage discourses through being involved in the official heritage making processes. Based on case studies and empirical research, this thesis analyses two *minzu* museums, one regional museum and an ethnic ecomuseum, to problematise their representational practices and demonstrate their exclusion of ethnic minority groups in heritage production (Chapter Four). From the perspectives of ethnic minority individuals and communities, I rethink their relations with these two museums and suggest the change of their power structure (Chapter Five and Six). I argue that heritage construction and utilisation of museums and ethnic minority groups remain dissonance, and this dissonance produces questions and frictions. By recognising heritage as a tool for empowerment (Chapter Two), I contend that ethnic minority individuals and communities marginalise museological practices or repurpose them for heritage commercialisation and self-representation.

1.2 Research Context: *Minzu* museums, ecomuseums and ethnic minority groups in China

In this introduction, I introduce numerous concepts which are explored in this thesis (e.g. *minzu* museums, ecomuseums, ethnic minority groups, cultural heritage and heritage discourse). In this section about the research context, two critical terms articulated in this thesis, 'ethnic minority groups' and '*minzu* museums', need to be clearly defined and clarified. This section conceptualises these two terms and elaborates upon why the adoption of them in this research is sensible and essential under the existing political system in China, although the construction of ethnicity (i.e. the classification of ethnic minorities) used to be contentious.

1.2.1 Ethnic minority groups (*shaoshu minzu*)

This subsection uncovers the political and cultural concerns that lie behind the representation of ethnic minorities within the Chinese context. The term ethnic minority group is directly translated from the Chinese term *shaoshu minzu* (少数民族). Minority means *shaoshu*, and *minzu* represents ethnicity and, politically, a unified country with multiple ethnic groups. There are 56 state-designated ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Conforming to the 2010 National Population Census (全国人口普查), 91.5 percent of the Chinese population is the Han majority, and ethnic minorities account for 8.49 percent (Zang, 2016). Distinguishing ethnic minorities from the Han people is not based simply on account of their population, but also their socio-economic, ethical, and cultural differences.

Discussions remain with respect to the translation of *shaoshu minzu* in China among scholars. Translating *minzu* as 'nationality' used to be popular in China, which adheres to Stalin's definition (1953, p.307) that nationality is 'a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture' (Mackerras, 2003; Ludwig and Walton, 2020). Tan (2016, p.66) considers *minzu* to be an ethnic category after the Ethnic Classification Project (民族识别), agreeing to maintain its original phonetic alphabet without the translation or

interpret it as ethnic groups. In this research, many terms related to *shaoshu minzu,* such as 'ethnic minority groups', 'ethnic minorities' and 'nationalities' will be used interchangeably in accordance with the ethnopolitical discourse in China. Furthermore, being aware of the Chinese concept of ethnic minority groups as homogenous, its adoption in this thesis is not intended to signify an overlooking or dismissal of the distinct social agendas and features of diverse ethnic minority groups, communities,[2] and individuals.

Producing ethnicity in China: ethnic relations in China

The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (SCIOPRC, 2009) claims the integration of ethnic groups and their interdependent relations as below. The core of Chinese ethnic policies is 'the consolidation of ethnic groups', which is the elemental principle of addressing ethnic issues (SCIOPRC, 2009).

> The continuity of a unified multi-ethnic country promotes the economic, political and cultural communication between ethnic groups, fosters their attachment to the central government and the national identity, strengthens the cohesion, vitality and creativity, and cultivates the constitution of Chinese civilisation's unity and diversity […]

This quotation also identifies China as a unitary multi-ethnic nation-state, accentuating 'diversity' and 'unity'. Unpacking the political ideology of 'diversity in

---

[2] Ethnic minority communities are defined as ethnic minorities living in specific geographical areas and sharing collective cultural memory, traditions, and a sense of place. Most ethnic minority communities in China are located in remote areas, especially the western part of China and are relatively isolated from cities. An ethnic minority community can be constituted by one or more local villages having differences. In order to avoid perceiving community as a homogenous concept, in this thesis specific names of local villagers are used.

unity' is fundamental to understanding issues of ethnicity and ethnic relations in China.

Fei Xiaotong (1999), one of the leading anthropologists and sociologists in China, published his book *The Pattern of Diversity in Unity of the Chinese Nation* (中华民族多元一体格局) in 1999, which dwells on the ideology of 'diversity in unity' he proposed in 1988, to theorise intricate ethnic relations and the entanglement of ethnic minorities' cultures and histories. One of the key concepts, 'the Chinese Nation' (中华民族), lays the foundation for the twofold and coexisting identity representations in China: the bottom layer is the ethnic identity, as one of 56 ethnic groups, and the upper layer is the Chinese national identity, as Chinese citizens (Zhou, 2016, p.128). With the central government's application of his argument as the core element of ethnic policy formulation, the political authorities broadly adopt terms of 'unity' and 'diversity' as two layers of predetermined cultural identities to promote and consolidate the multi-ethnic nation.

The diffusion of 'diversity in unity' is one of the PRC's ultimate goals, to build a multi-ethnic state and construct national identity. Zhou (2016, p.129) argues that this political ideology of 'diversity in unity' is the new model of nation-state building, which is an alternative to the Soviet model before 1990. This Chinese model of multiculturalism emphasises the significance of diversity and appears to resist the Han chauvinism (Tan, 2016; Zhou, 2016). Zhou (2016) further clarifies that the new model of multiculturalism evolves from the old model, and the meanings of diversity and unity build upon its definition of ethnic relations. Questions arising here are how ethnicity has been constructed and what problems emerged from the construction process. Chapter Two will probe into the representation and use of ethnicity in the state's practice of multiculturalism.

The idea of diversity, literally referring to the diverse cultures of the officially sanctioned 56 ethnic groups, is underpinned by the PRC's Ethnic Classification Project, conducted from 1953 to 1979 (Zang, 2016; Maurer-Fazio and Hasmath, 2015). The Classification project launched by the PRC purported to reduce over 400 self-identified groups to a manageable number of officially recognised ethnic groups (Mullaney, 2011). The classification teams of ethnologists, linguists and cadres did fieldwork nationwide and attempted to formulate an applicable taxonomy. By means of these on-the-ground processes of differentiation and assimilation, ethnic groups have been integrated into a centralised and territorially sovereign state. However, some scholars (Shih, 2002; Mullaney, 2011; Zang, 2016; Maurer-Fazio and Hasmath, 2015) oppose or question the construction of the *minzu* system by considering it as problematic in nature.

According to these scholars, the process of conducting the classification project underestimated the complexity of ethnicity identification, ethnic groups' different interests and their rights to identity determination. In the post-Classification era, the legitimacy of 56 ethnic minority groups generates the exclusion and invisibility of people who have rejected and have not received official designations in the national narrative and the building of the nation. For example, an ethnic minority group in Sichuan province, Ersu (尔苏), has been classified as Tibetan, but they claim their ethnic identity as Ersu people (Tan, 2016). There are also 'non-classified' ethnic minority groups, such as Chuanqing (穿青) people, who have not been recognised, but the government allows them to register as Chuanqing group on their identity cards (2016). Hence, Mullaney (2011, p.17) holds, the concept of *shaoshu mingzu* in China remains ambiguous and the construction of ethnicity is still a 'work in progress'. Notwithstanding, more ethnic minority groups in China use the official *minzu* categories to identify themselves as the efforts of massive political promotion (Zang, 2016; Mullaney, 2011). The 56 ethnic minority groups model appears to be more accurate over time, as younger generations are or will be born within one of the official *minzu* categories (Mullaney, 2011).

The building and concretisation of the *minzu* system through the Ethnic Classification project attempted to eliminate ethnic minorities from "backwardness" and diminish ethnic inequalities, which is, as Zang (2016) noted, possibly based on the assumption that Han people are more socially and culturally advanced. It is controversial that ethnic minority groups are stereotyped as "backward" and distinguished from the Han majority as needing to be civilised (Harrell, 2012). This Han-centred idea can be traced back to Confucianism, which made a distinction between Han Chinese and alleged "barbarians (蛮夷)". It was believed that uncivilised peoples other than the Han were culturally and technically inferior to Han and could learn from Han moral behaviours and lifestyles (Heberer, 1989). Confucian values 'called for a policy of nonviolent assimilation through the imposition of Han-Chinese values, rather than through a policy of extermination' (ibid., p.18). These ideas deeply influenced the Han-Chinese worldviews of "*Dayitong* (大一统)", unity, and "*Tianxia (天下)*", the empire as the centre of the world (Guan, 2015), and ethnic relations throughout history (Heberer, 1989).

Chinese history includes diverse peoples who experienced conflicts, internal migration, decline, and amalgamated with other peoples (Heberer, 1989). The word of "*ronghe* (融合)", i.e. amalgamation or assimilation, is rooted in Confucian's political ideology that encourages the fusion of Han and non-Han groups to build the unified and harmonious Chinese nation, and this has exercised a profound influence on the central authorities' approaches to controlling ethnic minorities before the establishment of the PRC (Zang, 2016, p.7). Herberer (1989) argues that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s ethnic policy, implicated by the ideology of *ronghe,* is assimilation-oriented and seemingly exacerbates cultural homogenisation. In fact, the CCP's practise of multiculturalism is subject to the amalgamation of ethnic groups, which is imperative to the building of a multinational-state and citizenship.

Ethnic identification and classification are used by the internal government management in China, initiating 'the whole system of minority autonomy and the framework of national minority affairs' (Ma, 2016, p.34). As Shin (2002, p.9-11) amplifies, the state employs four ways to approach ethnic minorities: the recruitment of ethnic cadres, setting up ethnic autonomous regions, media, and social policies (economic and population). Recruiting and training ethnic minority cadres was the first critical policy step that the CCP adopted to bridge the gap between ethnic minority groups and socialist culture and conduct patriotism education (Ma, 2016, p.35).

Currently, there are five provincial ethnic autonomous regions (including Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and Tibet Autonomous Region), 150 autonomous prefectures and counties, and 1173 ethnic townships in China (Lai, 2016, p.142). Although autonomous regions enjoy administrative autonomy, it does not signify their independent territorial and political units and self-determination (Guan, 2015; Shin, 2002). Their legislative power over ethnic affairs is confined by the regional CCP committees (Ma, 2016). Implementing these policies ultimately serves the enhancement of control and use of ethnic districts and their differences. The PRC asserts that every ethnic group has equal social status, and minority groups can derive certain privileges (e.g. administration, economy, education, and language promotion) from government affirmative action.

Ethnic minorities or Indigenous peoples?

With the international extension of the ideology of indigeneity, the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand are four countries that have mainly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and practice indigeneity. Many countries in Asia, like Nepal, Myanmar, and Cambodia, endorsed UNDRIP in 2007 (Baird, 2016). Other Asian countries and areas, for

example Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Taiwan, increasingly apply the concept of Indigenous peoples to protect their rights, and a few uphold it without the government's official ratification. The term ethnic minorities, politically identified and mobilised in China, have been treated as Indigenous peoples by many scholars and the international community (e.g. Merlan, 2009; Hall and Patrinos, 2012; Erni, 2008). However, the state's government resists the global indigenist identification. This resistance to the application of indigeneity can be found in India as well.

It is necessary to detail the Chinese government's rationale for being reluctant to apply the concept of 'Indigenous peoples' to people who are characterised as "distinctive" or "special" (Merlan, 2009). The concept of Indigenous peoples, without an extensively accepted definition, has emerged and expanded under the effect of European settler colonialism, shored up by the US, Australia and New Zealand. Yet, the meaning of indigeneity is under negotiation in Asia, as most of the countries feel indigeneity irrelevant to their historical, socio-economic, and political contexts. Andrew Gray (1995) puts forward that Indigenous peoples in Asia could be peoples who used to be colonised and oppressed by others throughout history, beyond the idea of 'First peoples' linked to specific locales (Radcliffe, 2017). The political regime of PRC decides that it is not a liberal democratic state, but indigeneity has been associated with the oppositional relations between the authority and indigenous groups, which can hardly be accepted by the government (Merlan, 2009; Levi and Maybury-Lewis, 2012).

In Baird's (2016, p.504) words, 'it would be inappropriate to simply uncritically accept the concept of indigeneity in all cases, it would be equally wrong to simply reject the concept of indigeneity'. Indeed, practising the global concept of indigeneity can potentially empower ethnic people who are disadvantaged to disentangle from injustices, oppression, or othering (Hall and Patrinos, 2012). I agree with Tan's (2016, p.68) perspective that the idea of indigeneity can be pertinent to

the discourse of ethnic minorities, but it should be reconceptualised and precisely situated in specific ethnic minorities and communities (Baird, 2016). Given the disparate socio-political and economic conditions in different areas of China, not all ethnic minorities are vulnerable, suffering from poverty and feelings of cultural oppression and disregard.

For example, while there are five autonomous regions in China have less political liberty and autonomy over ethnic affairs that might threaten the national state's stability and unity, they benefit a lot from the governments' ethnic policies. Government affirmative actions can contribute to the international discussion concerning preferential policies devised for Indigenous peoples. This thesis conforms to the concept of ethnic minorities but learns from theories (see Chapter Two) regarding museums and Indigenous peoples, and the decolonisation or indigenisation of museums, being open to include the interplay between *minzu* museums and ethnic minorities in the global picture of 'indigenising' museums.

1.2.2 *Minzu* museums

In this thesis, *minzu* museums (民族博物馆) can be identified as museums dedicated to ethnic minority cultures and ethnic issues, sites of publicising of the 56 ethnic groups paradigm in China. Many Chinese *minzu* museums have an indeterminate definition of themselves. Their titles can be translated as "the museum of anthropology", "the museum of ethnology", "the ethnographic museum", "the folklore museum" or "the museum of nationalities". Although Shi Jianzhong (2006, p.61), who authored a textbook 'The *Minzu* Museology (民族博物馆学教程)', proposes 'the *minzu* museology' that focuses on the development and theories of *minzu* museums and explores their operational problems, the definition of *minzu* museums remain unclear. Song (2010, p.135) distinguishes the *minzu* museums from the general public museums by identifying them as institutions that collect, research, and exhibit objects and cultures of all ethnic groups or a specific ethnic minority

within a particular area. He further classifies them into three categories: the Chinese *minzu* museum (中国民族博物馆), the *minzu* museums of universities (高校民族博物馆), and the regional *minzu* museums (地方民族博物馆) (ibid.). However, following the official categorisation of Chinese museums, some of them can be designated as the comprehensive (综合类) museum, which exhibits objects related to other disciplines and social issues. [3]

The first museum in China was the Nantong Museum, established in Zhejiang province in 1904 and sponsored by the entrepreneur Zhang Jian (张謇). In 1914 the museum of *Huaxi Xiehe* University (Sichuan University), an early form of the *minzu* museum, was established (Shi, 2006; Tang, 2007). Since the foundation of the PRC government in 1949, museums have operated under the control of CCP. Su Donghai (2004, p.30), a Chinese museologist, divides the development of museums in the New China era (from 1949 – 2005) into three phases: the first development period (1949-1965), the period of stagnation (1966-1976), and the second development period (1976-2005). In the first phase, there was a national movement to rescue cultural relics and construct museums for promoting socialism and national identity. This brought about the foundation of museums such as the Museum of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in 1957, the Museum of Yunnan Province in 1958, the Museum of Guizhou Province in 1958, the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing in 1959, the Museum of Gansu Province in 1959 and the Museum of Sichuan Province in 1965. These museums, located in the provincial ethnic autonomous regions, also undertook the functions of *minzu* museums: to exhibit the cultural artefacts of ethnic minorities, and, crucially, serve to publicise ethnic policies on the frontier.

---

[3] There are four types of museums according to the official categorisation of Chinese museums: historical, fine art, science and technology, and the comprehensive museum.

The emergence of these museums during this period can be regarded as largely an outcome of the implementation of a model of multiculturalism. The interlocking relationship between multiculturalism and the building of the nation-state began to form even before 1949 (Zhou, 2016). The *minzu* system, established as a significant government institution after the initiation of the Ethnic Classification Project, eagerly worked towards a transformation of the relationship between ethnic minorities and the nation-state in order to build the multinational state (Zang, 2016). The ethnic minorities identification movement triggered the mass collection of *minzu* objects and an increase in ethnological research in China, particularly research into cultural relics (Tang, 2007). Moreover, the government adopted economic and cultural programmes to facilitate the development of autonomous regions. Researching and supervising numerous ethnic minority communities' cultures helped to stabilise society and encourage people's self-identification as ethnic groups of the national state. Provincial museums in areas where ethnic minorities were concentrated were encouraged by the Soviet model of museums to undertake patriotic education by including ethnic minority material cultures in the public patrimony (Shi, 2006, p.45).

The political agenda rooted in the concept of *minzu* has had a profound influence on the formation of China's model of *minzu* museums. Since the 1950s, the development of *minzu* museums has been closely linked with a political intention to engage the idea of multiculturalism within a unified nation and regional or local development needs. The correlation between the histories of *minzu* and *minzu* museums engenders the ambiguity of defining museums dedicated to ethnic minorities and the simplification of their representational contents. Specifically, Wu Zeling (1985), one of the leading pioneers of *minzu* (ethnic minorities) museums in China, states that the *minzu* museum is literally a political tool; a conclusion he made while working in the scientific disciplines of ethnology and anthropology at the museum of ethnology in 1985, when he distinguished the *minzu* museum (民族博物馆) from the museum of ethnology (民族学博物馆). However, the museum of ethnology's government sponsorship and administration, has meant that it has been

widely thought of as a *minzu* museum because of blurred definitions and political functions (Song, 2010). Ethnology in China has prioritised research focusing on *minzu* and *minzu* cultures, which makes it impossible to liberate it from entanglement with ethnic issues (Yang, 2009).

Displaying the cultural resources of ethnic minorities gives prominence to publicising ideologies of multiculturalism in the construction of the national and ethnic identities, and the government's contributions to ethnic minorities' socio-economic development and religious affairs. According to the basic principles of Chinese constitutional and administrative law, the themes and contents of museum exhibitions and activities are required to promote the solidarity of ethnic groups and transmit 'high-quality' Chinese culture (State Council, 2015a). The content of museum representations should be guided by the political needs of governments and are highly censored by them at a national and provincial level (Wang and Rowlands, 2017, p.270).

The Chinese Museum of Ethnology (中国民族博物馆) was founded in 1984 and is a subsidiary department of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China (国家民族事务委员会) (Tang, 2007). Growth in the museums sector accelerated in the 1980s, and China embraced the 'era of museums' boom in the 1990s and beyond. Market reform and changes in government policy provided cultural and financial capital for the diversification and specialisation of museums (Lu, 2014). Following the foundation of many provincial and municipal museums, such as the Historical Museum of Shanxi Province, Shanghai Museum and the Museum of Henan Province, many cities, townships and even villages built an increasing number of museums on diverse themes (Su, 2004; Lu, 2014). A growing number of *minzu* museums, including Tibet Museum, the *minzu* museum of Yunnan Province, and the Museum of Qinghai Province, are being instituted, and most of these are located in areas where ethnic minorities are concentrated, such as south-

west China (Tang, 2007). The political focus on building *minzu* museums for ethnic minorities, and the proportion of ethnic minority populations in different areas, results in the imbalanced geographical distribution of *minzu* museums.

Along with the active building of museums came the heritage protection movement. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive discussion pertaining to AHD in China and heritage works for development. Since the ratification of a series of heritage policies and the call to protect intangible cultural heritage in the 2000s, museums actively act as heritage institutions in protecting cultural and natural heritage (Lu, 2014). In the early 2000s, the government of the PRC announced a 'Great West Development Project' (西部大开发) which purported to iron out the imbalance in social and economic development between the eastern and western areas of China, and to stimulate the economy in the western regions. Museums are considered to be appropriate places to draw on heritage for purposes of poverty alleviation. Responding to the heritage movement and to developmental policies, governments, museum professionals and practitioners have recognised living culture's value and applied new museum models in local ethnic communities. Having been affected by the prevailing new museology, they have also put forward the idea of eco-museums as living heritage museums for strategically developing the economy and protecting the heritage of ethnic minority communities.

As discussed above, the idea of diversity in unity delivered by Fei Xiaotong has been influential in the development and implementation of ethnic policies since the 1990s, but the question is how *minzu* museums contribute to conveying the idea of diversity within the AHD. Taking the eco-museum as an example, the western concept, in the earlier practices of museologists and government officials in the 2000s, has been reshaped and localised to serve the AHD in China (see Chapter Five). Both their role in the maintenance of cultural diversity and poverty alleviation in the western areas, and their locations in ethnic minority villages, link eco-museums to

the theme of ethnic minority cultures. Chapter Four elaborates the heritage discourse created by museum experts that accentuates the ideological concept of 'ethnic minority cultures under threat'. These experts fear cultural loss and modernisation, as they connect change and modernisation in ethnic villages to the disappearance of a sense of place and cultural diversity.

The irony is that ethnic eco-museums are employed as a cultural tool for the development of impoverished areas, and so change in these villages should be foreseeable. In this sense, the transformation of ethnic cultures and their original communities does not pose a threat to cultural distinctiveness, but rather provides an opportunity for ethnic groups' cultural reinvention and revitalisation. Chapter Six unpacks continuity and change in ethnic minority villages in detail. Furthermore, many ethnic cultural practitioners and community members in the current era operate private heritage museums or family museums in order to present their distinctive culture without political meaning. Defining these private and family museums as *minzu* museums is controversial.

The current Chinese Museum of Ethnology is supposed to be mentioned. It has been at the forefront of researching and curating exhibitions related to ethnic minority cultures in China, but surprisingly, it has not had a physical museum building. It was intended, as Song (2010, p.137) noted, to be 'a national symbol of diversity in unity (多元一体) and solidarity among ethnic groups'. It should be subservient to the fundamental ideology of a 'national treasure' (国家典藏) (ibid.), which maintains an authoritative position in the management and the promotion of ethnic minority heritage as shared traditions. In addition to centring on identity work and the dissemination of ethnic and cultural policies, the Chinese Museum of Ethnology strives to tackle the countless difficulties that *minzu* museums face. Without a building, touring exhibitions (e. g. *Tradition @ Modern: Timeless Style of Chinese Ethnic Attire*) and outreach programmes come to be the core of the Chinese

Museum of Ethnology's work. The exhibition *Tradition @ Modern,*[4] which it curated, ostensibly emancipates the museum from this political mission, which is an attempt made to bring an innovative turn of Chinese museums exhibition-making and representational practices (The Chinese National Museum of Ethnology, 2018a; 2018b).

The Chinese National Museum of Ethnology sets out to cement itself as the anthropological research base of Chinese museums and a platform for the cross-disciplinary dialogue and experience sharing among museum practitioners and professionals. In 2017, it held the first Museum Anthropology conference, *Museum Collection, Exhibition, and Interpretation: in Anthropological perspective,* in Beijing. After this conference, it announced the official launch of a research-based curatorial project, the *Museum Anthropology Studies – Young Curators.* This project accepts exhibition proposals from researchers, postgraduates, or PhD students of different *minzu* museums, universities, and other academic institutions who are carrying out their ethnology and anthropology research in ethnic areas (The Chinese National Museum of Ethnology, 2018c). In 2019, at the museum anthropology conference *Practice, Experience and Dialogue*, three exhibition proposals were accepted, and one of them has since been transformed into an exhibition. This indicates the resolve of museum practitioners and professionals from the Chinese Museum of Ethnology to achieve breakthroughs in the exhibition of ethnic minority cultures.

1.3 Research rationale and case studies: Two *Minzu* Museums in Guangxi

Following the research questions and aims, this thesis concentrates on two types of *minzu* museums: a regional anthropology museum and an ecomuseum. The two case study museums are the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) and the

---

[4] The symbol of '@' indicates the tradition is interwoven with the modernity.

Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE), both in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. This section will provide a brief overview of both the rationale for selecting Guangxi as the study location and the two case studies.

The State Council of PRC set up the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (see Figure 1.1) in 1958. The ethnic classification project results in twelve ethnic minority groups officially recognised in this region: Zhuang, Han, Yao, Miao, Dong, Mulao, Maonan, Hui, Jing, Yi, Shui and Gelao. The population size of ethnic minorities in Guangxi is about 21.9 million (2016), including 18 million Zhuang people, which account for 45.17 percent and 34.40 percent of the total number of the regional population (The Compiling Committee of the Provincial Gazetteer of Guangxi, 2020). Most Zhuang people, as the largest ethnic minority group in China, inhabit this region. The political and social movement of ethnic classification, and practising the system of regional autonomy at diverse levels that was elaborated above, propels the promotion of multiculturalism through the political representation and utilisation of ethnicity in Guangxi, such as protecting ethnic minority cultures and developing ethnic tourism. The politics of recognition and representation motivated the construction of the AMGX and the LLZE.
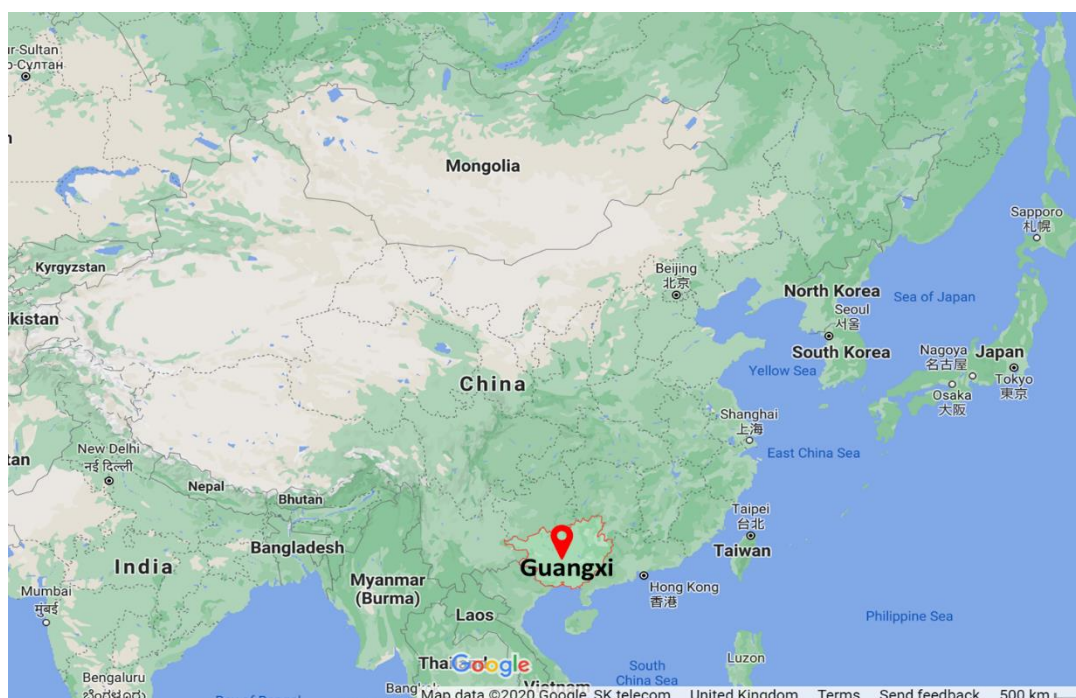
Figure 1.1 Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in China. Map data ©2020 Google.

Identifying Guangxi as the study area for ethnography, and the research potential of *minzu* museums in this region, was based on several considerations. Instead of selecting research cases from different provinces in China, I intend to focus on two *minzu* museums in one geographical area, which are both influenced by the same regionally political context. Selecting a provincial or regional *minzu* museum and an ethnic ecomuseum is a good approach because they represent ethnic minority cultures and interact with ethnic minority groups in divergent ways. The AMGX engages with ethnic minorities from diverse communities (e.g. museum workers and heritage practitioners/performers) in Guangxi and the LLZE is instituted for a specific Zhuang community. In China, governments at different levels can formulate their own cultural and heritage policies. The comparative study of two *minzu* museums impacted by the same or disparate heritage discourses leads to multi-dimensional understandings of power relations between *minzu* museums at different levels and ethnic minority groups.

These two case studies are not merely selected to compare with each other. Ethnic minorities in China mainly inhabit Southwest China (e.g. Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and western Sichuan province). These minority concentrated areas have numerous *minzu* museums, including ecomuseums, as illustrated earlier. When I looked for suitable case studies, visits to various provincial and local *minzu* museums, including Guizhou Museums of Nationalities, Yunnan Museum of Nationalities, Liangshan Yi Slave Society Museum and some ecomuseums in Guizhou province, before the start of my PhD research, provided me with a list of potential case study sites. Yet, I eventually determined Guangxi as the ethnographic site by reason of the association between two types of *minzu* museums, which can be ascribed to the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums' project launched by the Guangxi Regional Department of Culture in 2005.
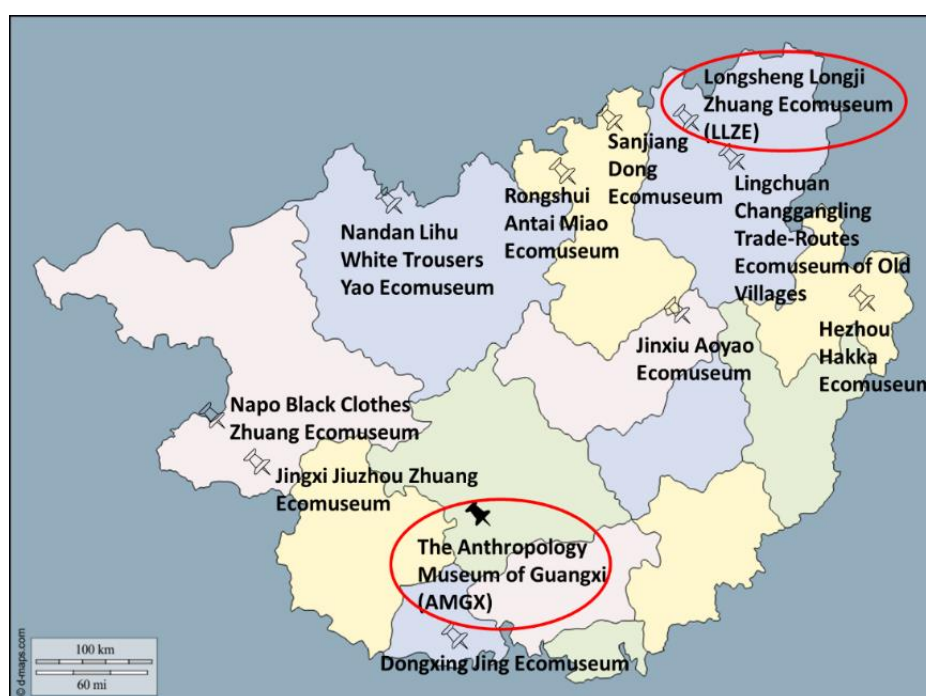
Figure 1.2 The location of the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi and ten ethnic ecomuseums in Guangxi. Adapted from https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=22546&lang=en.

As I discuss in this thesis, conceptually, the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' is a political strategy employed to "salvage" and protect ethnic minority cultures in

selected ethnic minority communities. The AMGX is the '1' in this project, and '10' refers to the ten ethnic ecomuseums constructed in Guangxi (see Figure 1.2). This project forges a subordinate relationship between the AMGX and the LLZE, as one of ten ecomuseums, which motivates me to examine the two museums beyond simple comparison. Connecting with the political importance of cultural diversity, the project underlines its legitimacy for applying the ecomuseum model to satisfy manifold demands: economic development, ethnic cultural promotion, nature and heritage protection (see Chapter Five for in-depth analysis) (Qin, 2009). The AMGX makes the exhibition for ecomuseums and guides local employees' heritage work, but it faces challenges from the local stakeholders. Also, the LLZE has been situated within divergent contexts, being scrutinised in the form of the official heritage discourse or a village museum. Chapters Five and Six delve into this project and its impact on the two museums' relations with ethnic minority groups.

1.3.1 Case studies

Enlightened by the nation-state's policy of cultural diversity and the "Great West Development Project", the Guangxi Regional Government laid out its cultural agenda for evolving to be a 'multicultural province (民族文化大省)' in 2002 (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team, 2005, p.9). Consequently, the construction of the AMGX, begun in 2002, and the formation of the ecomuseum project are both of strategical importance to satisfy this political intention by researching, protecting, transmitting (传承), and presenting twelve ethnic cultures and their cultural heritage in Guangxi (Qin, 2009).

Since the 1990s, the modernisation and urbanisation of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region have been accelerated. The relationship between China and Vietnam got better. Guangxi, which borders Vietnam, have been gradually affected by economic reform, and began to be concerned about cultural loss. The Guangxi Regional Government decided to initiate the construction of the AMGX project in

2001. The leading group and staff of the AMGX project consisted of personnel from different divisions of the Regional Cultural Department of Guangxi. Unpacked in Chapter Five, the emergence of the AMGX and ecomuseums can be perceived as a developmental project launched by the Guangxi Regional Government to brand ethnic cultures in the Guangxi Region as economic and cultural resources for tourism and boost the economy in some ethnic communities.

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX)

As a regional level *minzu* museum, the AMGX was appraised as one of the national first-class museums (国家一级博物馆) by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH 国家文物局) in 2017. It is located in the capital city of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Nanning (南宁). The AMGX, similar to the construction model of *minzu* museums in Yunnan and Hainan provinces, was separated from the Museum of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Prior to the founding of the AMGX, the Museum of Guangxi has also assumed the AMGX's function of preserving and exhibiting ethnic objects, as well as firstly carrying out the outdoor display of traditional architectures and performances of cultural heritage practices in Guangxi (Gong, 2009). The AMGX, therefore, is divided into two sections: the main building and the outdoor exhibition space, which covers an area of more than 130 acres (AMGX, 2020a). Constructed over the period 2003 to 2009, the museum's main building is in the shape of a bronze drum, since it possesses the largest ancient bronze drums collection anywhere in the world (Figure 1.3). It has two exhibition areas on second and third storeys. The AMGX identifies that its primary work is to collect, research and display the traditional cultures of twelve ethnic groups in Guangxi and labels itself as a significant institution for the protection and transmission of Guangxi ethnic cultures (The AMGX, 2020a).

According to the AMGX visitor data from 2014 to 2016, the audience consists primarily of residents of this city and tourists from other provinces (AMGX, 2017b). It

did not, however, look into the audience's ethnicity. To attract more young people, the AMGX hosts workshops about diverse cultures in Guangxi in the *Minzu* High School, as well as ethnic villages or ecomuseums around the province. In addition to the rationale stated above, one of the primary reasons for selecting the AMGX as a case study was that it has been of value to the Guangxi Regional Government's culture development strategy (Qin, 2009) and has been framed as a cultural symbol of staging ethnic minority cultures in Guangxi. Meanwhile, its permanent exhibitions, educational activities and outreach programmes display its active participation in the official heritage making, which enables me to assess the formation of its museological practices and the relationships between a regional *minzu* museum and ethnic minority groups.

Figure 1.3 The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi.
Photograph @ Yahao Wang, 2018.

The Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE)

In 2010, the LLZE was established in the Longji village, as the last of ecomuseums in the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' (see Figure 1.4). The Longji village is located in Heping (Longji) town, Longsheng Autonomous County, in the north of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in China (see Figure 1.2). It officially consists of four natural villages, or three lineage villages, locally: Liao Family village (Liaojia zhai 廖家

寨), Hou Family village (Houjia zhai 侯家寨), and Pan Family village which includes Ping village and Pingduan village (Panjia zhai 潘家寨). Ancestors of the Zhuang people living in this village migrated from the west of Guangxi beginning in the Ming dynasty. They settled down at the summit of the mountain range and created terraced fields from the mountain top down to the foot to engage in agricultural production, despite the severe natural environment and limited land. The name of their village, Longji, was derived from the shape of their terraced fields and the location of their villages, as it means dragon's backbone in Chinese. It is the biggest of Zhuang villages, of which there are thirteen (twelve Zhuang villages and one Red Yao village), in the Longji area (Longji shisanzhai 龙脊十三寨).

Figure 1.4 The Longji village in Guangxi. Map data
©2020 Baidu.

The construction of the LLZE included employing the local staff, building the exhibition centre (displaying the local Zhuang objects collected from residents) (see Figure 1.5), the intangible cultural transmission centre and designating 'the century-

26

old house' for the family display. This ecomuseum was designated one of 'Top Five National Ecomuseum/Community Museum Models' in 2011 by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. The location of the exhibition centre is located in the Pan Family village. The intangible cultural transmission centre is situated at Hou Family village and museum practitioners set up the century-old houses in each lineage village.

Figure 1.5 The Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum
(exhibition centre). Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Constructing the Longji village as an ecomuseum, from the view of museum practitioners and officials, was because of its well-preserved Northern Zhuang culture, traditional architectures, terraced culture and traditional cultural practices (See Chapter Five) (LLZE, 2008). As Wu and Lu (2009) emphasise, the ecomuseums exist for the local communities, encouraging their preservation of cultural heritage by utilising ecomuseums as a tool. The founding of LLZE, for the local Zhuang people, was to enhance tourism and draw more tourists, but the ecomuseum definition of village sparked debate. The rationales behind selecting it as case study include the village's disputable identification as an ecomuseum and the fact that residents in

Longji village actively construct and mobilise their heritage, on an ongoing basis, enabling me to investigate their self-representation.

Travelling to the Longji village without the assistance of a tour agency or personal vehicles is challenging. This village is one of the scenic spots inside the Longji Terraced Scenic Area. Entering the LLZE requires tourists to purchase tickets at the entrance gate of this scenic area. As a result, most visitors to the LLZE are tourists from other provinces or from throughout the world who are drawn to the terraced fields of the Longji area (see Chapter Six). According to statics provided by the LLZE director, the Longji village attracted over 300,000 tourists between 2016 to 2018 (LLZE, 2018). Yet, it is hard to distinguish between visitors to the ecomuseum and those who came to see the terraced field. Moreover, the Longji village hosts the Kaigeng Festival every year, which attracts a large number of people who are impossible to quantify.

1.4 Thesis structure

Seven chapters constitute this thesis. This first chapter introduces the project's research rationales, research aims and questions, key concepts, research context, and case studies. It outlines the structure of the thesis and the contents of each chapter. Chapter Two frames the theoretical and analytical perspectives for the following methodology and analysis chapters by reviewing the extensive literature on critical museology and heritage studies. It reflects on the authorised heritage discourse (AHD) within the socio-political context of China, and discusses that the dominant ideologies of multiculturalism and "culture for development" frame the Chinese AHD. This chapter also enlarges critical approaches to studying cultural representations, seeking to doubt and unravel the authoritarian power structure between museums and ethnic minority groups and delineating *minzu* museums as sites of contact and frictions. It ends with a discussion conveying heritage as a tool

for empowerment, helping claim the agency of ethnic minorities in their heritage construction and cultural representation.

Chapter Three charts the qualitative research methodology, which includes the research design and strategy, research methods (archival research, visual methods, participant observation and interviews), and the data analysis approach. It elucidates why it is important to incorporate ethnography into case studies as the research strategy to gather data and conduct fieldwork. The importance of grounded theory to the data analysis and the reflection on my researcher role have also been unpacked here.

Three main chapters respond to the research questions raised above, which are found in the critical analysis of the research findings. The foci of Chapter Four are to investigate the politics and poetics of exhibition-making, as the heritage production process of *minzu* museums and the inequitable power relations embedded in them. It discloses the transformation of *minzu* museums and their exhibitions by contextualising them imbued with the ideology of "culture under threat". The exploration of the institutional heritage making, aligning with the examination of exhibitions influenced by the political discourse of 'diversity in unity' and museum practitioners' agency, are also crucial to this chapter. This chapter presents the formation of the representational strategies and curatorial systems in the AMGX. I argue that the AMGX's instrumentalisation of heritage within exhibitions showcases its essentialisation of ethnic minority cultures and superficial representation of cultural diversity.

Chapters Five and Six articulate how *minzu* museums develop representational strategies and practices, in alignment with dominant heritage discourses, apart from exhibition-making. Meanwhile, these two chapters scrutinise how ethnic minority

individuals or communities assert their presence through disputing, performing and mobilising cultural heritage in the AMGX and the LLZE, respectively, stressing their distinctive attitudes towards different levels of official heritage discourses and practices. As museums and ethnic minority groups involved in the heritage making process are the two main actors, the complex interplay between them triggers the change of their relations within and beyond the setting of museums and cultural representations.

Chapter Five, building upon the discussion in Chapter Four, considers the AMGX's institutional heritage construction apart from exhibitions. It underscores how intangible cultural heritage (ICH) connects the AMGX's representational practices with ethnic minority heritage practitioners. It suggests the marginalisation of the AMGX in the regional ICH management from ICH practitioners' perceptions and these practitioners' impact on the AMGX's representation of living cultures. The '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project', instated by the Guangxi Regional Department of Culture, draws the attention of this chapter, which is discussed as one of the central heritage discourses in this region. The AMGX is designated by the Regional Department of Culture to take a leading role in this regional heritage protection project and become a stakeholder in the heritagisation of local ethnic communities. Therefore, exploring how the AMGX's museological practices, pertaining to this project, shape its' partnership with ethnic minority communities and cultural representations is indispensable. This chapter reveals issues raised in the ethnic ecomuseum project and the AMGX's struggle for power at local communities.

Chapter Six provides a grounded analysis of the LLZE as a community-based *minzu* museum by exploring its construction process and how the local Zhuang community members participate in its implementation and operation. This helps the demonstration of the LLZE's hegemonic practices of heritage making and representation. The setting up of the LLZE is the political result of the '1+10 ethnic

ecomuseums project', which can also be examined as the authorised heritage discourse. Studying the LLZE from this dimension uncovers the dissonance between it and community members' heritage making, and the power struggle among various stakeholders in the community. The discussion on ethnic minority community's resistance, repurposing, and appropriation of the concept of ecomuseum and ecomuseological approaches declares their power over cultural representation. This chapter also exposes the local community's heritage production and reproduction outside the heritage discourse and the representational purpose to convey that heritage and culture are not always the things to be made, but rather to be sensed and experienced.

In Chapter Seven, this thesis concludes by reviewing the research discoveries and revisiting the discussion of cultural representations as the heritage construction. This chapter also provides the contemplation of the future of Chinese *minzu* museums and demonstrates contributions of this study to the fields of museum and heritage studies in China.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the primary research questions and aims, which stresses three principal concepts, heritage, ethnic minority groups and *minzu* museums. It has provided the research context where this thesis begins through centring on the conceptualisation of ethnic minority groups and *minzu* museums. The concept of heritage lies at the central heart of Chapter Two, has been further analysed to develop an analytical framework of this thesis. This section also has served to offer an overview of the research rationale and two case studies, the AMGX and the LLZE. Finally, it has outlined the thesis structure, noting the contributions of each chapter for a brief understanding of this project. Based on all chapters in this thesis, I argue that ethnic minority groups in China exercise active agency over their heritage construction and utilisation, which can shake and reframe museums' hegemonic representational

practices to express their cultures.

Chapter 2 Towards a critical interrogation of representing ethnic cultures

This chapter draws upon critical theoretical perspectives from the burgeoning literature on museum and heritage studies in China. Numerous scholars (e.g. Rodney Harrison (2013a), Darko Babić (2016) and Elizabeth Crooke, (2008)) have laid the groundwork for the incorporation of heritage concepts and issues into the field of museum studies. As Harrison (2013a, p.110) puts it, 'questions of who 'owns' the past, and hence the right to control its representation, thus became central to the emergence of an interdisciplinary academic field of heritage studies'. With Elizabeth Crooke's (2008) examination of the nexus between museums, community, and heritage in mind, positioning the dissection of power relations between museums and ethnic minority groups within the field of heritage is at the heart of this research.

This research examines heritage as a 'malleable' and slippery concept. It includes three sections which inform my theoretical approach: one on positioning museums and ethnic minority groups within the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) in China; another reviews critical approaches to studying the representation of ethnic minority cultures and power relations in *minzu* museums; and the last section explores heritage as a tool for empowerment. The first section uncovers the construction of Chinese heritage discourse and development and rationalises museums and ethnic minority groups as social actors in the heritage making process. Approaching museums critically and reflexively, the second section explores museums' representational strategies and practices and how they play a role as contact spaces. The third section highlights ethnic minority groups' construction and instrumentalisation of heritage as a tool for empowerment. The three sections discuss cultural representation by presenting it as a process during which the construction and capitalisation of heritage by museums and ethnic minority

communities are consistent, interacted or contested (Harvey, 2001; Harrison, 2013a; Basu and Modest, 2015, p.7).

2.1 AHD in China: Museums and ethnic minority groups as actors

As I stated in Chapter One, one of the key objectives of this thesis is to delve into how museums and ethnic minority groups as social actors represent ethnic minority cultures under the impact of official heritage discourses. To achieve this objective, this section is devised to critically investigate how *minzu* museums and ethnic minorities have been tied to the creation of Chinese authorised heritage discourse, in which ethnic minority heritage has been appropriated to produce representations of cultural stories (Smith, 2015b; Smith and Waterton, 2009) and satisfy national development goals. Heritage is 'a relation that cannot be reduced to one dimension or a unilinear trajectory' (Schramm, 2015, p.442). This perception is grounds for the exploration of heritage discourses in China and social actors' instrumentalisation of heritage for different social and political purposes. People or groups implicated by divergent interests and ideologies attribute different values to heritage, which influences their acts that engage with the past and deal with the present. Three subsections in this section delineate what heritage discourse is, how cultural heritage has been institutionalised, and the discourse of "culture for development" based on heritage institutionalisation. By exploring these themes, this section suggests that representational practices of *minzu* museums and ethnic minorities as diverse heritage discourses are always embedded in state-led heritage making.

2.1.1 Understanding heritage as discourse

This thesis aims to analyse the impact of the Chinese AHD on museums' and ethnic minority groups' representational practices, and the contestations and dialogues between museums' and ethnic minority groups' heritagisations, the processes of heritage construction. Therefore, this subsection addresses the necessity of

understanding heritage as discourse and the formation of the AHD as the conceptual lens for the critical enquiry of heritage (Ludwig and Walton, 2020). In order to apply the critical view of studying heritage, it is pivotal to dissect the AHD by exposing problematic power structures within it, and its overemphasis of professionalisation (Harrison, 2013a; Smith, 2006; Wu and Hou, 2020; Zhu and Maags, 2020).

As defined in numerous academic studies, heritage is always used as a 'verb' instead of an 'objective entity', being 'constituted and constructed' in different conditions (Crooke, 2008, p.423; Wu and Hou, 2015, p.39; Harvey 2001; Svensson and Maags, 2018, p.13; Ludwig and Walton, 2020). Butler (2006) proposes that heritage is 'the present past', a process of making the past for the present needs. In other words, the present decides what the past is, how it is used and what should be the inheritances constructed and mobilised in an imagined future (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996, p.6). Wu and Hou (2015, p.40) consider the process of constructing heritage as discursive practices that 'forge, maintain and perpetuate the relations of power'. Heritage discourse exercises power over how heritage is defined and managed, which shapes, constrains, and controls people's ways of seeing, constructing, and using heritage (Wu and Hou, 2015). The authorised heritage discourse (AHD), identified by Laurajane Smith (2006), is an exclusive heritage construction process that validates conceptions and practices of heritage framed by "experts" and the political authorities.

The authority of heritage expertise has been affirmed through excluding the other discordant or conflicting and democratic ideas and practices related to heritage (Smith, 2006), which is bound up with 'a modern historical consciousness originating from Romanticism and the Enlightenment' (Wu and Hou, 2015, p.43). This hegemonic canon of heritage produced in the AHD has been normalised and privileged as a universal standard and common-sense (ibid.; Harrison, 2013a). The appearance of heritage agencies and organisations reinforces the universality of

heritage values and the authoritative discourse, converting diverse meanings of heritage into a 'self-understood, habitual aspect of culture' (Butler, 2006, p. 254). The AHD largely centres on the tangible forms of heritage, accentuating their aesthetic and scientific value judged by experts, and the significance for constructing national or group identity (Smith, 2006; Waterton and Smith, 2010). Nevertheless, the materialist understanding of heritage remaining dominant in the AHD has been continually criticised and challenged. The incorporation of intangible cultural heritage into the international heritage movement and preservation agenda triggers the change or up-gradation of the AHD (Smith, 2015b; Svensson and Maags, 2018; Ludwig and Walton, 2020).

The inclusion of intangible cultural heritage in the system of the United Nations Education Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) in 2003 is by virtue of UNESCO's privilege of the authenticity and multiplicity of cultural traditions and heritage practices (Bortolotto, 2007). Since that date, heritage has become something that can be reinvented as the living past (Bortolotto, 2007). Nevertheless, UNESCO as the international heritage regime for the cultural heritage preservation has been viewed by some as resembling 'a homogenising machine', dichotomising heritage as tangible and intangible and judging distinct forms of culture as heritage or not conforming to a universal criterion (Schramm, 2015, p.445). Herzfeld (2004) thus applies the conception of 'global hierarchy of value' to clarify its limited subjectivity and effectivity in heritage preservation. Discourses of alternative or minority heritage have been accepted and recognised within the authoritarian heritage regime and might be 'complementary to contemporary national interests and priorities' (Ludwig and Walton, 2020, p.19). Yet, the standardised process of constructing the past as unchangeable, leads to a problem that identities expressed and manifested by heritage have been essentialised and 'subject to the pronouncement and authority of expert judgement' (Waterton and Smith, 2010, p.12).

Moreover, the AHD entails the marginalisation and misrecognition of the legitimacy of minorities and subaltern groups or communities in defining and managing heritage (Waterton and Smith, 2010). In varied local contexts, heritage has been instrumentalised as governing power and an influential form of expert knowledge. Approaching heritage as a tool for governance within the AHD deriving from Foucault's notion of governmentality, concerns more about how to imbue heritage with values for legitimising authorities' and experts' intervention in the regulation and representation of the group or community identity (Smith, 2006; Oakes, 2016). The political rationalities behind dominant discourses are to stabilise their power over the constraint of 'unauthorised' heritage discourses created during communities' engagements with heritage. Viewing the AHD as a changeable and exercisable concept beyond Western settings, recent critical scholarship (Zhu, 2019; Svensson and Maags, 2018; Zhang and Wu, 2016; Ludwig and Walton, 2020) directs more research attention to a theoretical analysis of the Chinese AHD.

The various versions of AHD have been of concern to many scholars and have been critically analysed. Following the critical heritage studies' approach, Wu and Hou (2015) suggest that a multitude of heritage discourses and practices around the world, especially in an indigenous context, should be probed to offer alternative thinking and mobilisation of the past. Marina Svensson and Christina Maags (2018), thus, endorse Winter (2013)'s 'post-western' perspective of heritage studies, which crosses the border of Eurocentric heritage studies into a broader and ongoing dialogue, encompassing divergent stakeholders and actors from the non-Western world. Winter points out that 'understanding the economic, political and social relations that weave in and through and constitute heritage is crucial to think about how we analyse it' (2013, p.541). Therefore, surveying heritage as a constantly changing process, in contrast to the AHD, calls for the reconceptualisation or indigenisation of heritage and the remaking of heritage discourse (Smith and Waterton, 2012; Wu and Hou, 2015). To critically probe into issues of AHD in China, Svensson and Maags (2018) offer comprehensive and insightful theoretical

perspectives of critical heritage studies and contextualise the Chinese heritage framework as follows:

> The explicit political use of heritage makes it compelling to analyse power relations, governmentality and issues of negotiations and resistance. The Chinese case, however, also alerts us to the complexity of any attempts to 'de-westernise' heritage studies as it…increasingly leaving their mark on the global heritage regime…Furthermore, ruptures in the Chinese AHD have occurred due to ideological shifts and socio-economic developments. Heritage production in China is shaped by its communist political system as much as by its pre-communist past. (ibid, p.13)

The Chinese heritage context elaborated above indicates the complexity of the AHD and the strong political ideologies framing it. Furthermore, the Chinese AHD at different scales or official heritage discourses can be controversial, embracing disputations and power struggles among diverse heritage discourses. [5] Diverse discourses generate multi-layered and complex values of heritage and its construction and reconstruction (Wu and Hou, 2015; Ludwig and Walton, 2020). Through perceiving heritage as multi-layered discourse, this subsection primarily examines the underlying power of the AHD and conceptualises it as a critical theoretical tool to justify the dominant heritage recognition and management and its limitations. This research, hence, adopts official heritage discourse and the AHD as a 'heuristic device' (Ludwig and Walton, 2020, p.19) to explore how official heritage discourses orchestrate the heritage preservation and consumption of museums and ethnic minority groups. The subsections below seek to 'further complicate theoretical perspectives' on the creation of the state-led heritage making

---

[5] Zhu (2019, p.21) argues that scale does not represent a set of levels that are categorised by spatial boundaries (the local, regional, national and international), which should be 'constituted and reconstituted around relations of capitalist production, social reproduction and consumption'.

(ibid.) and unravel the dissonance embedded in the heritage making between museums and ethnic minority groups implicated by the AHD.

2.1.2 Institutionalisation of heritage in China

As Zhu (2019, p.30) argues, Chinese heritage discourse is 'the outcome of heritage institutionalisation'. The adoption of AHD in the context of China is complex because of regional political, social and economic diversity. The previous sub-section has suggested the fluidity and mutability of the AHD. In this subsection, charting the institutionalisation of ethnic minority heritage is crucial for the exploration of how heritage making and cultural representations of museums and ethnic minority groups have been impacted by the assemblage of AHD or official heritage discourses (Pendlebury, 2013).[6] Museums and ethnic minority groups play different roles in the top-down heritage construction undertaken at multiple levels, which results in their different responses to the AHD and the disparity of their representational practices.

A state-driven campaign for heritage protection has resulted in the institutionalisation of heritage and a hierarchical structure of heritage governance, which forms Chinese heritage discourse (Zhu, 2019). Drawing on the international hierarchy of heritage value, the Chinese government established the top-down and centralised administration of cultural heritage, which delineates a multicultural national image in the international arena (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013). The powerful administrative system in China, including national, provincial, or regional, municipal, and county levels of government agencies, reinforces this undemocratic heritage management of museums and heritage sites throughout the country and the Chinese AHD (Zhu, 2019, p.30).

---

[6] In this thesis, the AHD and the official heritage discourse are interchangeable with each other.

Domestic heritage protection in the PRC expanded after taking part in UNESCO in 1985. Maags (2020) makes a statement that the PRC formulates heritage policies and takes actions to protect heritage through the appropriation of UNESCO's policy narrative of "heritage under threat". While the idea of "rescuing" diverse cultures remained before the emergence of heritage in China, the institutionalisation and legislation of heritage protection indeed were influenced by the international conventions. Chapter four is going to link the idea of "ethnic minority cultures under threat" to the historical development of minzu museums' heritage construction. In 2003, UNESCO established 'the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage'. This convention led to the change of national heritage policies from emphasising tangible cultural heritage, to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The PRC's State Council, in 2005, enacted 'The Proposal on Enhancing the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (关于加强我国非物质文化遗产保护工作的意见)' and 'The Notice on Enhancing Cultural Heritage Protection Work (关于加强文化遗产保护工作的通知)' to legitimise and guide heritage protection in China. The 'protection (保护为主)', 'rescue (抢救第一)' and 'legitimate mobilisation(合理利用)' of cultural heritage have become the guiding principles of Chinese heritage management (State Council, 2005a). Specifically, the protection of tangible cultural heritage particularly emphasises the 'governance (管理)' and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, which places a priority on 'transmission and development (传承发展)' and largely relies on cultural practitioners (ibid.).

Supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT), the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) has operated to oversee museums and heritage sites, and the evaluation and application of world cultural and natural heritage programs, by managing and protecting cultural heritage, particularly tangible cultural heritage (SACH, 2014). After rectifying UNESCO's ICH convention in 2004, the PRC, therefore, published the "representative list for intangible cultural heritage" and the "intangible cultural heritage transmitter list", thereby participating in heritage

making processes at low levels (Maags, 2018).[7] These ICH programmes assimilate ICH and their practitioners from different ethnic groups. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism thus instated a subsidiary division, the ICH Department (非物质文化遗产司), to administrate the recognition and designation of ICH and ICH transmitters (official designated ICH practitioners) and the adoption of the inscription system at different levels.

Under the authority of the SACH and ICH Departments, the subnational levels of the heritage administrative structure mirror the top-level (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013; Zhu and Maags, 2020). The Cultural Relics Bureaus (文物局) and ICH Departments, supervised by the Provincial or Regional Departments of Culture, collaborate with their subordinate cultural bureaus and heritage agencies, such as museums, to carry out heritage work and promote heritage lists, in order to facilitate the dissemination of heritage concepts and values regionally, municipally, and locally. Taking Guangxi as an example, Figure 2.1 below depicts its heritage administration system.

---

[7] The notion of "intangible cultural heritage transmitter" (非物质文化遗产传承人) represents the official designation of traditional cultural practitioners.
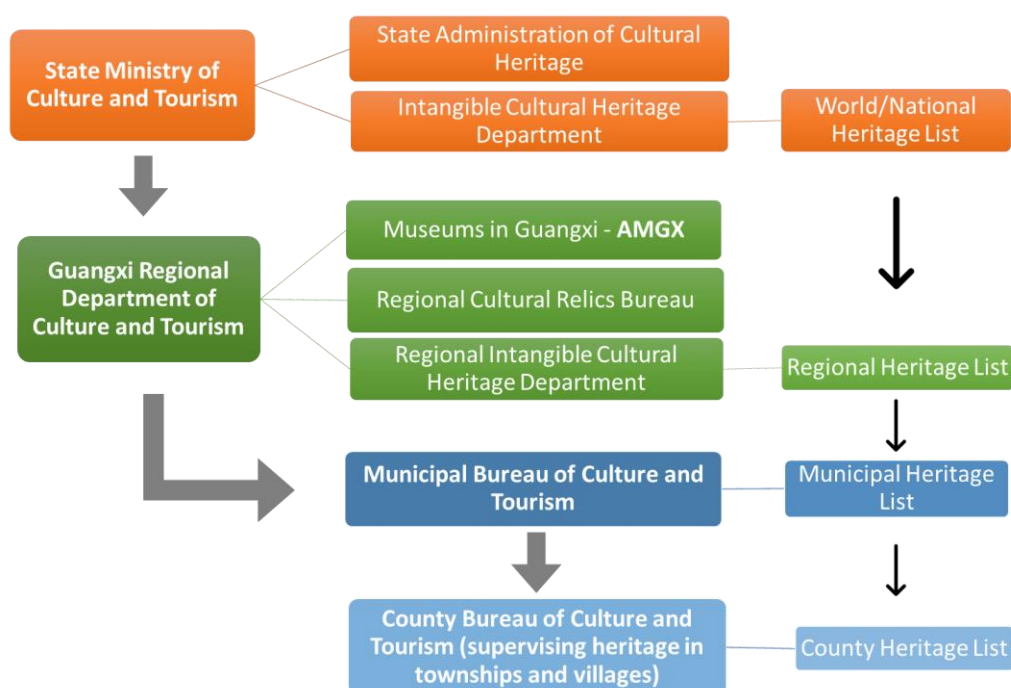
Table 2. 1 The heritage administrative system in Guangxi (Adapted from Zhu, 2019, p.24).

Minzu museums have been reinvented and utilised as a type of heritage agency to disseminate the official cultural and heritage discourses through reinterpreting *minzu wenwu* (cultural relics of ethnic minorities) as cultural heritage (see Chapter Four), the emblem of "Chinese tradition", as illustrated in the previous chapter (Lai, 2016; Ding, 2012; Zhu and Maags, 2020). They can produce their institutional heritage discourse, based on the state-led heritage making and their anthropological or ethnological research and collection of ethnic cultural embodiments and practices. As a subsidiary institution of the Guangxi Regional Department of Culture, the AMGX, starting construction from the end of 2002, was and is involved in the national heritage movement. It has been committed to the creation of heritage discourse to develop the national and regional AHD and the preservation and representation of the living aspect of ethnic minority cultures. The political accentuation of ICH expects museums to modify their museological approaches to protect and present ICH, responding to a progressive revision of the concept of

heritage, which ranges from tangible cultural expression to traditional cultural practice (Bortolotto, 2007).

The institutionalisation of heritage is a state-led system of value recognition, as well as misrecognition. Selecting which aspects of ethnic cultures are to be valued as the official recognised heritage is a process of inclusion and exclusion (Maags, 2019). For example, ethnic minority individuals, who have been recognised as the official representative ICH transmitters of the county, region or nation, can interpret and present cultural practices as symbolic representations of their cultures, but at the same time, ICH listings gloss over the others who also do these practices. The hierarchical governance of heritage suits the needs of the party-state to develop the local economy and draws more ethnic minority people into the creation of Chinese culture. Nonetheless, it intensifies the struggle of recognition (Maags, 2019). Chapter five is going to reveal how the inequality embedded in heritage listings affects the AMGX's and ethnic minority groups' representational practices.

In the perception of Zhu and Maags (2020), after being officially authenticated and recognised, heritage embraces two stages of value recognition, becoming exhibits of museums or commercial products for consumption in the tourism industry. Official (e.g. government agencies, experts, museum professionals and practitioners) and non-official (e.g. entrepreneurs, ethnic minority individuals and communities) stakeholders participate in the heritage making process in different ways. Frictions can be found in their competing objectives and interests. Under the hegemonic regime, various stakeholders have no ability and democratic rights to repudiate the national heritage governance system for heritage protection. Yet, they can employ the dominant narratives, such as development and modernisation, to achieve their aims. The next section explains how "culture for development" as the feature of the Chinses AHD has an impact on different stakeholders' heritage discourses. The plurality of heritage construction and representation can also manipulate the AHD.

2.1.3 Exploring the AHD in China: culture for development

This subsection reviews how ethnic minority cultures have been mobilised to shape heritage politics for developmental purposes, as well as contextualises how museums and ethnic minority groups construct heritage as two social actors within the AHD, framed by development strategies. Importantly, one of the principal motivations of establishing the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' in Guangxi is to promote the sustainable development of ethnic minority communities. The critical analysis of the mobilisation of ethnic cultures and heritage for development is crucial for the exploration of the tensions between two specific museums and ethnic community members.

The Chinese version of AHD has developed alongside national development objectives. The state authorities produce and disseminate the Chinese AHD to foster the dominant discourse of "culture for development", which underpins heritage work and representational practices of museums and ethnic minority groups (Shepherd, 2009; Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013; Oakes, 2009; Zhu and Maags, 2020). The multiple roles that heritage takes serve the state's political and economic ends for development: heritage as a technology of government and commodity for the cultural and tourism industries. The juxtaposition of governmentality and the market necessity embodies two features of Chinese heritage discourse identified by Zhu and Maggs (2020, p.56): nationalism, and development and modernisation, which also accelerate the institutionalisation of heritage (Gnecco, 2015).

Although the developmental studies are not the main focus of this literature review, this section attaches importance to the formation and impact of employing ethnic minority cultures for development. Chapter Four briefly introduces the early heritage work on ethnicity and cultural salvage, which is different from contemporary

practices that stress multiculturalism and development. Two political campaigns, "Great Leap Forward" (1958–1961) and "the Cultural Revolution" (1966–1976), led by ruling authorities obstructed the attempt to institutionalise heritage and build more museums (Shepherd and Yu, 2013). During these periods, many heritage sites, museums, material cultures and cultural practices of ethnic minority groups related to "the Cultural Revolution's 'four olds (破四旧)' – old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas" – were destroyed (Svensson, 2006). Ethnic cultures and heritage had been perceived as a barrier to development in the past.

After the implementation of the Open-Door policy in 1978, the PRC experienced economic reform and dramatic social transformation. It embarked upon the adoption of a cultural development model to make culture instrumental towards fostering economic development, the good ordering of society and sustainability of multiculturalism within nationalism (Oakes, 2009). The announcement of the 'World Decade for Cultural Development' (1988 – 1997) by UNESCO also put culture and development together, bolstering the critical role of culture in the sustainable development model (ibid.). In this vein, culture in the form of heritage has been valued as 'a resource capable of countering the neoliberal structural adjustment' (Oakes, 2009, p.1075) and 'a significant variable explaining the success of development interventions' (Radcliffe and Laurie, 2006, p. 231; Appadurai, 2004).

As Oakes (2016, p.755) noted, 'in China heritage is a powerful state discourse of development and modernisation'. Cultural segments have been assigned value to obtain their cultural heritage status (Bendix, 2008, p.258). While heritage's linkage with development is moulded as 'paired opposites' (Basu and Modest, 2015, p.3), it comes to be the centrepiece of using culture for developmental objectives. Additionally, regarding heritage as 'metaculture' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004), Silverman (2015, p.70) suggests that 'heritage is culture speaking about culture and revealing the continuities in the social, political, economic and other processes and

reconfigured space and time that create and represent it'. Heritage takes dissonant functions, which can be traditional cultures opposed to modernity, meanwhile a dynamic process of remaking and transforming the past to serve present needs is taking place (ibid.).

The public media and local governments, thus, conducted extensive publicity work to disseminate the idea of speeding up economic development domestically, especially in ethnic minority communities in underdeveloped western China (Shepherd and Yu, 2013; Zhou, 2016; O'Brien and Brown, 2020). In 2000, the "Great West Development Project (西部大开发)" launched in poorer regions in western China, as the preferential development aid to provide financial and political support for their infrastructure construction and implement welfare and economic reform (Leibold, 2016). In this project, tourism is one of the main sources of development for China's poverty regions and ethnic minority areas. Hu Jing Tao, the former president, applied a new concept, 'the inclusive Chinese nation with diversity (中华民族多元一体)', to define ethnicity and call for common economic development (Zhou, 2016). State policies regarding ethnic minorities, accordingly, put attention to the "civilisation" of "ethnic minority areas", while promoting the preservation of cultural traditions of ethnic minorities to enhance multiculturalism, together with nationalism.

The symbolic role of cultural heritage in grounding and legitimating national and cultural identities (Light, 2015) encourages the state to legislate and regulate the preservation of ethnic minority cultural heritage as described in subsection 2.1.2. Heritage preservation as a cultural strategy aids the 'global market forces' of homogenisation of ethnic minority cultures and supports national civilisation (Shepherd, 2009, p.56). Framing state-directed ethnic tourism as a powerful technique for an economic and cultural development marks the shift in state policies, from the Soviet model of forced assimilation, to the celebration and exploitation of cultural differences that are 'depoliticised' and mute ideologies

(Shepherd, 2006). This, for example, simplifies the image of Tibetan culture and creates a weak cultural diversity. In Shepherd's (2006; 2009) work on the state-led development in Tibet, through actively working with UNESCO World Heritage program, which endorses the depoliticization of heritage protection and management, the state and local authorities drew on this international discourse to claim their legitimacy of heritage protection and transform historically contested memory into an untroubled and unquestionable state narrative of multiculturalism. Therefore, the Potala Palace and the Jokhang Temple Monastery in Lhasa have been designated as world heritage sites to reflect the international and domestic preservation of "Chinese heritage".

The imposition and dissemination of developmental ideas for ethnic minority groups are one of the measures taken by the state to change ethnic policies, from solely hinging on political citizenship, to social and economic citizenship (Zhou, 2016, p.131). As Shih (2002, p.11) suggests, this mobilisation of ethnic minority groups seeks to 'enlighten ethnic people about becoming state citizens and to transfer their object of loyalty from traditional kinship networks to the abstract state'. Economic development appears to be a solution to diluting the ethnic questions caused by the economic disparities between minority concentrated areas and relatively advanced regions (particularly coastal areas), and the exclusion of ethnic minority cultures in the representation of the mainstream culture. Oakes (2013) argues that heritage preservation and the display of ethnic cultures in rural areas have been employed as tools for improvement and development to enhance the "the quality of life (生活质量)". Transforming ethnic minority heritage in local villages into economic assets enables the state to incorporate diversified ethnic-cultural representations into the narrative of nationalism.

Thanks to rapid modernisation and commercialisation, national identity building accentuates the promotion of the cultural commodity production and economic

improvement through the instrumentalization of heritage as "cultural soft power (文化软实力)" and resources for domestic tourism (Oakes, 1997; Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013; Wang, 2017). The state is eager to be involved in the global heritage discourse and construct itself as a 'gigantic museum' (Evans and Rowlands, 2015, p.278; Wang, 2017). Resourcing ethnic minority cultures and heritage has already become the key strategy of national, provincial, and local development projects. Museums have been transformed from a primary medium for communicating and promoting the overriding ideological messages in a straightforward way (Denton, 2005), to institutions with an overarching task: the conservation or preservation of cultural heritage. In addition to adhering to the preservation function, they have been interwoven with the consumption of ethnicity, heritage, and culture in the context of heritage tourism. Museums, heritage and tourism sites, at different levels, commit to representing ethnic minority cultures through endowing places, objects (ancient artefacts) or cultural practices with aesthetic and essentialised cultural meanings, which always create exotic and romanticised authenticity (Zhu, 2015).

Constructing heritage as development strategies has been critically scrutinised in numerous academic contributions (see Basu and Modest, 2015; Evans and Rowlands, 2015; Shepherd, 2006; Blumenfield and Silverman, 2013; Cai, 2020). Several striking issues stem from heritage for development. As Evans and Rowlands (2015) point out, incorporating heritage into development projects possibly results in the dislocation of local peoples and reconstruction or destruction of their communities. They provide examples (e.g. Jianchuan Museum Cluster and Dongba village) of alternative heritage discourses and museological practices framed by bottom-up initiatives (ibid.). It seems that local peoples can appropriate the forced development needs for their own interests after the negotiation with official stakeholders. However, development projects mainly achieve the governance goal of government agencies or cultural institutions, and the economic benefits are felt by only a few people, such as entrepreneurs and elites.

Ethnic culture has been deemed as 'an expedient resource of governmentality' (Oakes, 2009, p.1076) and an approach to creating a utopia and "pure" space, one that less resembles the local people's actual living spaces, which discounts frictions among social connections. Cai (2020), who researches on four indigenous cultural villages in Malaysia, pinpoints that brokers (agencies and entrepreneurs) who mandate cultural development projects based in communities foster a culture of dependency, which marginalises Indigenous communities who should be the intended beneficiaries. Also, Oakes' (2009) case study in the rural villages in Guizhou province of Tunpu, demonstrates problems of developmental strategies adopted by the local government. Villagers are not allowed to resist the predations of the local authorities or the expansion of the tourism market (ibid.).

Oakes (2013, p.381) conceives of cultural representation as being 'a field of government and regulation'. Tunpu culture, produced by scholars and the local authorities, symbolises the transformation of local villages, from the places where the local people actual live, to a "living fossil" and an exemplary governance model as the effort of cultural development policies and practices (Oakes, 2009). However, when villagers realised that Tunpu culture was expedient to gain economic benefits from the tourism industry and governance from their heritage, they contested private tourism companies and claimed their rights for heritage management (ibid.). These cases display the exclusion of local communities in the top-down development project. They also showcase that local communities are not completely disempowered in the authoritarian political system, and they can negotiate with other stakeholders and repurpose outcomes of projects for their own development needs. For this reason, I am encouraged to look at ethnic community members' development initiatives and their responses to ecomuseums in the study of the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project'. It will help to expose their power struggle with the AMGX and other local stakeholders.

Furthermore, ethnic ecomuseums in China are also development strategies employed by the government to alleviate economic backwardness and boost tourism, developing as the AHD. Chapter Five thoroughly enlarges upon how ecomuseums have been transformed to be the official heritage discourse. Chinese ecomuseums stem from the new museology tendency, which symbolise that museological practices and thinking embrace the heritage turn (Babić, 2016). The evolving nature of this localised museum model should be inconsistent with the idea that museums are a process that 'can be constructed as translation', emphasising the community-led museum making and heritage construction (R. Silverman, 2015, p.4; Clifford, 2013). However, ethnic ecomuseums in China, under the leadership of the governments or related cultural agencies, are not collaborative processes between museum professionals and ethnic community members to apprehend, translate and negotiate their knowledge and preserve their heritage. Power disparities in the ecomuseum making and diverging use of heritage generate less participation of community members. This enables me to reconsider the tensions between ecomuseum practitioners and ethnic minority communities. The next section is going to unpack the critical approach to examining the inequality from the interdisciplinary dimension.

2.2 Reconsidering the disparity in power between museums and ethnic minority groups

Representing ethnic minority cultures is not merely a matter of top-down, political and cultural action conducted by *minzu* museums. Ethnic minority heritage, with dynamism and fluidity, is not only working as the representational tool of the government arenas, such as *minzu* museums, to engage multiculturalism and national unity, but also through a bottom-up process of ethnic minorities' self-representation and self-expression.

Museums produce and reproduce certain cultures through exhibitions, and in doing so either challenge assumptions and stereotypes and make the public aware of 'what was most significant, and what was to be ignored', from the museum's perspectives, or they can reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes (Kreps, 2003, p.10; Hall, 2013). In this research, the understanding of representation extends outwards, from putting it into the critical debates concerning political conduction, institutional power and knowledge production, to questioning museums' representational authority by asking 'who is the subject and who is the object' of the cultural representation (Kramer, 2015, p.490). Realising the fluctuation of communities' and museums' positions as subject/object of representation is critical to investigating the change of power relations in the AMGX and the LLZE, within museums as contact spaces.

2.2.1 Cultural representation within critical museum studies

MacDonald and Alsford (2007, p.276) note that 'the culture that is in a constant process of recreation ultimately defeats attempts to 'museumize' it'. However, cultural representation is a process of constituting "reality" and constructing culture by assigning symbolic meaning to cultural expressions (Light, 2001). As Ames (2006, p.171) says, the mission of museums funded by the government is to represent others for a political purpose, 'while people have the sovereign right to represent themselves'. Museum practices are authorised and flow from the official discourses, working to produce 'professional' or academic knowledge. Examining the politics and poetics of representation and critical museology is necessary for portraying problematic heritage making and narratives in museums.

Heritage, multiculturalism, and identities: Assimilation and othering

Dealing with the three notions of heritage, multiculturalism, and identities is central to the study of the politics of representation in China and the critical analysis of

51

museums' representational strategies and practices. Cultural heritage agencies, like museums and tourist or heritage sites, take on the role of displaying diverse cultural expressions to represent ethnic minority cultures. Their intrinsic political nature enables them to carry power over defining who the ethnic minority people are and shape accepted stories about their cultures. Ideas and discourses of heritage and multiculturalism have rendered diverse ethnic minority identities as the object of regulation and authentication in China, which reinforces the power differentials in the relationship between museums and ethnic minority groups (Waterton and Smith, 2010, p.11).

Graham, Ashworth, and Turnbridge (2000, p.46) hold that 'the power of attachment to ethnic identity underlines the importance of ethnic heritage, as the vehicle of transmission and legitimation of that identity through time'. Schramm (2015, p.225) makes a similar argument that the significance of heritage resides in 'the politics of recognition that are at play in popular memory'. In China, heritage serves as a source of power that heightens the political recognition of ethnic minorities, without allowance for resistance, and affirms museums' status of expertise. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage have functioned as symbolic identity claims in museums (Smith, 2006). Controlling ethnic minority heritage, and the process of organising heritage into collections and representations, become strategies for museums to disseminate static ethnic minority identities constituted in the ethnic classification project.

The PRC's version of multiculturalism, celebrating the ideology of 'diversity in unity', is found in the official categorisation of 56 ethnic groups delineated earlier, in the introductory Chapter, which provides the background discussion of how ethnicity has been constructed in China. Rather than accommodating 'multiculturalism only as particularism on a community basis', the state announces that the Chinese model represents mainstream and minority cultures more equitably (Zhou, 2016, p.136).

Chinese model of multiculturalism practises citizenship in terms of affirmative actions to reinforce ethnic identities of ethnic minority individuals and communities (Zhou, 2016). The stereotype of ethnic minorities as "backwardness" was expected to change. However, the continuous critiques of representing ethnic minorities by sketching them as "other" remain with the hierarchical imaginations and misconceptions of multiculturalism in museums.

Shepherd and Yu (2013) disagree with the existence of a multicultural policy in China, as current multi-ethnic policy discourages the proliferation of ethnic identities, without the official designation that possibly undermines the sovereignty of the nation-state (ibid.). They add, 'to be simultaneously different and Chinese, an official ethnic minority can only be different at a surface level' (p.28). In this respect, in order to emphasise nationalism, Chinese *minzu* cultural heritage (中国民族文化遗产) or Chinese traditional culture (中国传统文化) are precisely identified and shared by all citizens as umbrella terms of heritage which assimilate diverse ethnic minority cultural heritage. The assimilation of cultural difference means that heritage has been merely identified as the tangible symbols of differences among ethnic minority groups and elements to mark national unity (Matsuda and Mengoni, 2016; Shepherd and Yu, 2013). Consequently, official and non-official cultural institution's attempt to situate ethnic minority groups and their cultures as specific ethnic heritage and national heritage shapes the formation of strategies to represent ethnic minority cultures (O'Brien and Brown, 2020).

Karp (1991, p.12) establishes an assumption about 'the exhibition as a medium of and setting for representation'. Exhibitions are constituted by diverse elements such as exhibits, dioramas and texts to 'create an intricate and bounded representational system' (Hall, 2013, p. 135; Karp, 1991). Lidchi adds that 'the process of acquiring objects, researching collections and mounting displays can be understood as requiring both symbolic and institutional power' (2013, p. 157). Their perceptions

expose museums' control of representational authority and validate the power struggle at museums. Museum representations of certain cultures deeply ingrain inequalities. Lidchi thus sketches the role museums play in knowledge production as the "politics" of the display (ibid.; Witcomb, 2015). The "poetics" of exhibitions in Lidchi's definition is rather 'the practice of producing meaning through the internal ordering and conjugation of the separate but related components of an exhibition' (Lidchi, 2013, p.168). "Politics" and "poetics" are the two principal terms used to address representational critiques in ethnographic museums (Lidchi, 2013). They are equally important for the critical analysis of cultural exhibitions in Chapter Four.

Through employing these two concepts to scrutinise exhibitions of the AMGX and the LLZE, I respond to research questions about how official heritage discourses frame museums' representational practices and identify their heritage production as problematic. Varutti (2014) provides a comprehensive overview of the display of ethnic minorities in museums and exposes the problematic narratives in exhibitions, for instance, the exclusion of some ethnic groups and the essentialisation of ethnic minorities. She argues that museums are potent agents of cultural appropriation (ibid.). Mainstream museums in China – funded and mandated by different levels of governments – tell cultural stories that inscribe the official ideologies and politics. They have always been regarded as those in power positions and have performed as the vehicle of patriotic education to disseminate hegemonic ideologies and "Chinese stories" (Vickers, 2007; Denton, 2005; Lu, 2014).

The hegemonic exhibiting strategies of museums, staging otherness and assimilated differences, by presenting heritage as representative of a type, stereotypes ethnic minority groups as 'the other' (discussed further in Chapter Four). This naturalises the silence of ethnic minority groups in museums and the existing inequity in power relations. Luisa Schein, in 1990, initially identified the national portrayal of ethnic minorities as "the internal Orientalism" (Schein and Yu, 2016). Then she recognised

the neglect of the 'hierarchies of representational power' (Schein and Yu, 2016, p.265) and the silence of the minority in this conception. Hence, Schein and Yu (2016, p.265) put forward that 'since certain producers of representations virtually monopolised discourse, it became key to interrogate the relationship between imaging and cultural/political domination'.

Critical museum studies

The critical interrogation of representational practices, within museum studies, is rationalised by exploring changes museums are going through, how they deal with issues of ethnicity in China, and recognising their dwindling patriarchal power. This is aligning with the considerable volume of academic literature on critical museology reviewed below. Through offering acknowledgement of the colonial past and their imperial value system, Western museums seek transformation by drawing on strategies from postcolonial theory. The museological moves and the emergence of critical museologies, informed by Western colonial history, echo the postcolonial criticism and commitment to decolonising museums (Marstine, 2005, p.5). Critical museology purports to democratise heritage and cultural representation and carry out more reflexive, adaptive, and responsive museum practices and interventions (Shelton, 2013; Marstine, 2005; McCarthy, 2015). The epistemological understandings of the term representation shift from unquestioned and objective knowledge constructed by museums, towards partial truth obtained, produced, and disseminated during the subjective process carried out by museums (Corsane, 2005).

The recognition and criticisms of representational issues developed along with the new museology and expanded the scope of museum studies (Macdonald, 2011). The appearance of the new museology advocates for the reflection on the taken-for-granted knowledge produced and disseminated in museums (Vergo, 1997). The new museology urges the core of museum practices to transform from objects to people, and encompasses various forms of museums (Davis, 2008; Alivizatou, 2012; Su,

2008). Being conscious of the predatory nature of ethnographic museums, and revealing that heritage is treated as 'prey', ignited the criticism of Western museums' colonial frameworks and their actions of reshaping museology within the postcolonial context (Pagani, 2017, p.72; Phillips, 2011). Pagani (2017) suggested a new museological paradigm, by detaching museums from "predatory" intentions and ethnographic forms of expertise and knowledge making.

The concept of post-museum has been applied to approach museums critically. Janet Marstine (2005, p.8) borrows the term 'post-museum' from Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000), as one of the museum paradigms. This concept places museums in uncertainty and the critical inquiry, which holds that museums can be more sensitive to diverse voices and museums' spaces, can be re-created and repurposed to stimulate new dialogues with source communities and visitors (Marstine, 2005; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Yet, in Marstine's view, acknowledging representational politics, and museum practitioners' contributions to institutional agendas, is the premise to further claim that the power-sharing with communities can create more inclusive museums. Besides, as Hooper-Greenhill (2000, p.152) accentuates, intangible heritage is supportive of 'the production of events and exhibitions as conjoint dynamic processes' to include more perspectives in museums. She elaborates the possible change of communicational forms, from prioritising exhibitions, to equating them with museum events in relation to heritage and exhibitions produced by the partnership with communities. (ibid.). This thesis makes use of this idea to extend the exploration of museum representation from exhibitions to educational activities and outreach programmes, looking at how heritage has been staged outside exhibitions.

Influenced by Bourdieu's field theory, Anthony Shelton (2013)'s critical museology provides a reflexive approach to the analysis of museum practices embroiled in issues of power, and intends to decentralise museums' institutional power. It

remains different to the new museology, as it has no interest in confining the study of the museum to a specific disciplinary field or issue (ibid.). Diverging from 'operational museology', which makes the museum's institutional power 'on an uncritical acceptance of empirical methodologies anchored in theories of objectivity' (Shelton, 2013, p.11, McCarthy, 2015), critical museology can be understood as following:

> [It] is not only an essential intellectual tool for better understanding museums, related exhibitionary institutions, fields of patrimony and counter patrimonies, and the global and local flows and conditions in which they are embedded, but it is also crucial for developing new exhibitionary genres, telling untold stories, rearticulating knowledge systems for public dissemination, reimagining organisational and management structures, and repurposing museums and galleries in line with multicultural and intercultural states and communities. (Shelton, 2013, p.7)

It is evident that critical museology takes account of the power and agency of marginalised or excluded groups over heritage and representation in museums, eliciting a reconsideration of the impact of their knowledge-making on museums' discourses and practices.

Ruth B. Philips's reflections on the indigenisation of Canadian museums follow the critical museology. Her examination of museum representational practices built upon her empirical work and unearths that the museum comes to act as a site of postcolonial contestation, where the change of Indigenous peoples' status and the revitalisation of their knowledge systems evoke the redefinition and renegotiation of authority over-representation (2013, p.11). She contends that museum practices not only have been carried out as professional museum activities, but also have

foremost acted as 'a kind of whetstone for sharpening tools of representational analysis and postcolonial critique' (2013, p.17). Her analytical framework of museum representation offers illuminating insights into the scrutiny of museums' representational politics and professional practices and their interplay with ethnic minority groups (see Chapter Four and Five).

2.2.2 Exploring the relationship between museums and ethnic minority groups

The section 2.2.1 facilitates the critical analysis of the AMGX's and the LLZE's exhibitions and their authoritative construction and representation of ethnic minority heritage in Chapter Four. Integrating critical museology with critical heritage studies, this subsection underlines that museums are not merely places representing 'relations between ourselves in relations to others' (Witcomb, 2015, p.130). Rather than being an interactive space addressing issues of dissonant heritage and power disparity, museums are spaces where their relations with ethnic minority groups are changeable within a heritage context. In this thesis, the understanding of museums is multidimensional. Chapter four focuses on museums as hegemonic exhibitionary spaces that represent cultural differences and nationalism. In Chapter Five and Six, I argue that the representational practices of museums (e.g. exhibitions and activities) can be repurposed and appropriated by ethnic minority individuals and communities when they interact with museums as stakeholders within museums' spaces. As Schorch and Hakiwai (2014, p.193) elaborate,

> Likewise, museological representations should be approached not as self-evident points of departure or self-enclosed totalities, but rather as ephemeral manifestations of complicated processes performed by multiple actors in particular contexts.

By reviewing the literature on museums and Indigenous peoples, this section moves the discussion to museums as contact zones, preparing for the examination of intricate representational processes in the two case studies.

Museums and Indigenous peoples

Examining the study of museums and Indigenous peoples can help outline how *minzu* museums in China address the aspirations and interests of ethnic minority groups, why they fail to involve ethnic minority groups, and why ethnic minority groups do not - or fail to - request the inclusion of their voices.

Museology transformation in Western countries reached a turning point because of efforts that Indigenous peoples made to proclaim their rights of custodianship over their heritage and self-determination (Minore, 2011, p. 143; Golding and Modest, 2013; Simpson, 2001). Indigenous peoples' demands and struggles for heritage management, land and equity have increasingly gained public recognition through their political and cultural movements. Indigenous critiques and doubts of Western-style heritage perceptions, management, and the museum model have called for restitution and repatriation of their material objects held by museums, particularly sacred objects, and the legitimacy of controlling their heritage and values added to them. They defend their power of self-representation and interpretation of heritage, seeking the inclusion of their voices and narratives inside museums. Smith (2006) clarifies that Indigenous peoples demonstrate their ownership and command of heritage to control both community and political identity and knowledge making.

Museums, reflecting on the marginalisation of Indigenous peoples, appear to be an important place to actively engage with Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems and politics of recognition through cooperating with them. Many cases manifest different countries' changes in museum representational practices, which counteract the

59

tensions between museums and source communities. Taking Te Papa Tongarewa in New Zealand as an example, the museum shapes policies and indigenises their practices to meet the Maori's demands for repatriation of their patrimony and interpretation of their cultures (Message, 2005; Schorch and Hakiwai, 2014). The museum's Mana Taonga (treasures) policy is the central principle that guides the museum to revitalise Maori rights and practices with an awareness of living connections between tanga and their communities of origin (Schorch and Hakiwai, 2014). The Native Americans Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the US also emerged to help bring ownership of cultural heritage back to Indigenous peoples.

In academia, Clifford (2013, p.7) reiterates indigeneity by engaging with 'indigenous histories of survival, struggle, and renewal'. By viewing heritage as something 'ambivalent and hard to circumscribe' instead of 'a recovered source of identity' and 'a commodified objectified product', he explores how Indigenous peoples renew and reconnect heritage to formulate and reformulate their identities (p.276). Publications from Nick Stanley (2007), Ruth B. Phillips (2011), Amy Lonetree (2012), Bryony Onciul (2015), R. Silverman (2015) and Conal McCarthy (2016) have extended the existing body of the literature on the museum and Indigenous peoples and the decolonisation and indigenisation of museums, highlighting the value of indigenous voices and claiming their rights of self-representation. They enlarge the ways of thinking and working with Indigenous peoples and their cultural heritage, and reform Western museological methods and practices.

For example, in McCarthy's (2018) examination of the intersection between museum practices and 'indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing', he finds that the expanded literature on the museum and Indigenous peoples predominantly consists of representational studies and exhibitionary techniques. It 'rarely foregrounds the voices of museum professionals and Native people themselves' (ibid., p.39). Onciul

(2015) delves into the community engagement based on her nuanced and incisive study of four case studies regarding the Blackfoot people in Alberta, Canada. She points out the tensions between museums and Indigenous peoples in engagement practices, and reflects on the efficacy of community engagement as a critical approach to museum studies.

Cristina Kreps (2003, p.9) highlights the Indigenous community members' rights and power to use their 'knowledge, experiences and resources' and ownership of their cultural resources through her comparative analysis of western and indigenous forms of cultural representation and cultural heritage management. A cross-culturally oriented approach, as she noted, challenged Western museology, which is 'sharing curatorial authority and power, and making room for the inclusion of multiple forms of knowledge and expertise' (Kreps, 2011, p.469). As a 'bottom-up and participatory' museum practice, it promotes the participation of the broader public, including community members, visitors, and professionals in every part of museum work (Kreps, 2003, p.10). This conception informs museum curatorial practices and the interpretation of other cultures.

Her theory turns the spotlight on the indigenous museum model, taking a more critical look at the inequality of power relations between Indigenous communities and museums (2008, 2015). 'Appropriate museology' is, accordingly, structured as a ground-up approach that can help the better understanding of diverse forms of knowledge construction and expertise, within different local cultural contexts (Kreps, 2008). It entails 'the integration of indigenous or local museological traditions into museum and heritage work where suitable' (2015, p.6). Moreover, she proposed 'the critical and comparative museology' to liberate culture, which contributed to the new museological discourse which involves diverse forms of knowledge and perspectives (2011, p.459). Her viewpoints uphold the potential of museums and

heritage to be the dialogical spaces across cultural differences, as well as sites of disputation and friction.

Questions proposed by McCarthy in his discussion about the indigenisation of museology are valuable to take into account for this project: 'how institutions deal with Native people in their collecting and exhibiting practices, and what intellectual and cultural framework underpin this work? How have Indigenous communities reconceived the museum for their own purposes' (2018, p.48)? 'Indigenous curation' is the Indigenous communities' efforts on the reinterpretation and representation of their past in the form of the present (Kreps, 2003). Indigenous peoples lead museums to represent their own culture, by showing how they 'perceive, value, care for, and preserve cultural resources' (Kreps, 2003, p.65). They hold the authority to construct and manage the space of museums or cultural centres and their communities to serve their present needs. During the indigenisation of Western museum processes, reconsidering or rebuilding the relationship between Indigenous peoples and museums is pivotal.

These contributions incorporate heritage perspectives of Indigenous peoples into the analysis of museum practices, dwelling on the processes of decolonising and indigenising museologies. Informed by their articulation and re-articulation of the participation, mediation and power of Indigenous peoples in museums or, specifically, indigenous museums, the major concern of this thesis lies in the agency of ethnic minority groups inside and outside museums for the representation of their cultures. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider nuances between Indigenous peoples and ethnic minority groups and the hegemonic regime in China. The main aim of this thesis is not to extend the understandings of political debates about ethnic minority groups, by situating critical perspectives underpinning this research within the discourse of indigeneity.

The study of museums and Indigenous peoples is not always compatible with the research on *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups within the specific social and political context of PRC. Chinese *minzu* museums as active intermediates of the AHD help control and oppose any "indigenous" movements against the unity of the nation-state. They rarely question their "objective neutrality" and problematise their practices. Therefore, the investigation of *minzu* museums, engaged with issues of representation, equity in power relations or (dis)empowerment, finds a new starting point – heritage, to embroil the museum-ethnic minority group relations in the global discourse of critical museology and the study of museums and Indigenous peoples. The subsection below suggests museums as contact spaces by positing them within a heritage context.

The role of museums as contact spaces within heritage dimension

Learning from the critiques and analysis of the relationship between museums and Indigenous peoples in the liberal democratic states above, this section delves into the change of museums' roles in cultural representation. This thesis suggests the mutability of relations of power between museums and ethnic minority groups. Thus, this subsection examines the role of museums as contact spaces to rethink the marginalisation of ethnic minority groups in museum practices. It acknowledges the instability and complexity of museum practices, instead of merely deeming museums as government devices, even though they mediate and reflect on social and political changes (Witcomb, 2015). The conceptualisation and utilisation of heritage, stemming from the institutional and political discourses of ethnicity, become a source of communication and disputation between museums and ethnic minority groups (Babić, 2016).

Bounded closely with the heritage realm, the domain of museum studies is associated with discussions of museums and source communities, community engagement, inclusion or empowerment of communities, power-sharing, and

repatriation (Silverman, 2009; Brown and Peers, 2005; Stanley, 2007; R. Silverman, 2015; Scott, 2012; Golding and Modest, 2013; Onciul, 2015). Engaging or collaborating with communities comes to be museums' representational strategies for the recreation or modification of their museological practices. It works for the reconciliation of the demands of two different value systems and finds the "accurate" ways of heritage safeguarding and knowledge sharing (Phillips, 2011). The collaborative museum work that enriched the critical museological literature tends to prove that museums are sites of dialogues. Museums stage and standardise collaborative or participatory models of practice to address the problematic relations between coloniser and colonised, and welcomes divergent knowledge-making approaches which are regarded as the 'contact zone'.

Appropriating the 'contact zone' concept from Mary Louise Pratt (1992), Clifford (1997) has pushed for further expansion of this concept into the field of museum studies, and the area of museum anthropology in particular. The appropriation of the contact zone, as Boast (2011) highlights, exists in a wide range of academic works. Mason (2011) and Witcomb (2007) endorse Clifford's recasting of museums as encountering spaces, where their meanings can be interpreted in two senses: one is to invite community members (elites) as consultants, and another is much wider, by stressing community participation and polyvocality in museums (Clifford, 1997; Lidchi, 2013). While many contributors help support 'museum as contact zone' and justify museums' position as postcolonial institutions based on this conception (Boast, 2011), the extensive use of it remains controversial.

Notably, museums are public spaces, where their function of governmentality leads to the specific construction of social knowledge and shows their roles as performers of the political power in the presentation of culture (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). A museum is distinguished from a storehouse, for it is a 'space of representation and differences' (Lord, 2006, p.1), created to produce a certain "truth" (Gil, 2016).

Shelton (2011) reinvigorates museums' alliance with the discipline of anthropology, by claiming the formulation of collaborative relations between museums and source communities when explicating institutionalisation and re-institutionalisation of anthropology. These contact zones, however, are 'asymmetric spaces of appropriation', instead of mutually beneficial sites (Boast, 2011, p.63). As Boast (2011, p.63) points out, 'no matter how much we try to make the spaces accommodating, they remain sites where the others come to perform for us, not with us'. Tony Bennett (1998) claims museums as a governmental instrument because, for him, their contact work did not achieve an equal dialogue with communities. Perceiving museums as contact zones and foregrounding collaboration and community participation seems to naturalise museums' authority and expertise in constantly shaping source communities' cultures, which do not imply that museums have anticipated or been ready for the fluctuating power relations (Marstine, 2005).

Lord (2006, p.1) and Borrelli and Davis (2012) suggest a positive understanding of Foucault's idea of 'governmentality' and definition of the museum, which problematises the museum's representational system to 'overcome the relations of power that are based on those Enlightenment values' and considers the potential of knowledge as a means of self-empowerment. Andrea Witcomb (2015) also promotes 'museum as contact zone', by opposing Bennett's (1998) 'museum for civic reform'. She approaches more intricate power plays, including the interactions of institutions, communities, social values, and visitors in the meaning production process. As she summarises, the power relations between the 'coloniser' and 'colonised', while inequality remains, are varied in two ways: not only from museums to communities, but also museums as 'exhibited agency' can be transformed to be contact spaces that are in dialogue with communities who are the 'possessing agency', producers and users of heritage (Witcomb, 2015, p.134-136).

Rather than being 'coloniser' and 'colonised', museums and ethnic minority groups are two social actors in the Chinese AHD. This thesis analyses their interaction within museum spaces, by querying how they respond to each other's heritage construction. Tsing (2005) employs a notion of 'friction' to disclose the negotiations, disputes or conflicts occurring at the interactions among disparate actors with divergent demands. The concept of 'museum frictions' is formulated by Corinne A. Kratz and Ivan Karp (2006) to face the transformation prompted by globalisation, which is much broader than James Clifford's 'contact zone'. Instead of shying away from challenging or difficult topics, it refers to 'debates, tensions, collaborations, contests, and conflicts of many sorts, at many levels' created by 'conjunctions of disparate constituencies, interests, goals and perspectives' (Kratz and Karp, 2006, p.2). In this research, the concept of contact space incorporates a fluid view of museological practices and ethnic cultural heritage. Museums as contact spaces are not only sites of dialogue and friction, but also spaces that ethnic minorities can define and redefine themselves to decentralise museums' power over cultural representations within the heritage domain. Chapter Five and Six indicate the marginalisation of museums in ethnic minorities' heritage making processes.

Practices of *minzu* museums in China are changing to manifest official ideologies (Phillips, 2011). When official ideologies promote the mobilisation of culture and heritage for development as the section one described. A museum tends to embrace a broader mission, repositioning itself as a place to preserve heritage and a stage to sell culture and heritage (R. Silverman, 2015). The redefinition of the museum's role underlines a perception that 'museum work, especially collaborative work with communities, is fundamentally processual in nature' (ibid., p.2). Heritage programmes implemented by the AMGX incorporate the museum into ethnic minority groups' heritage making and cultural representation. This mode of engagement allows the AMGX to establish dialogues with ethnic minority groups and empower them to translate their knowledge (see Chapter Five), which may redress its stifling representations of cultures.

Nevertheless, heritage renders museums as "sites of instability", which can be battlegrounds for the contention of various agendas of ethnic minority groups and museums' heritage work. Moreover, calling for a critical approach to ecomuseum research, William Nitzky (2014, p.3) investigates the complex entanglement between different dynamics 'in the construction, negotiation, and contestation of cultural heritage, ethnic identity, and cultural difference', underpinned by his point that ecomuseums are 'social spaces of contact and friction'. In Chapter Six, the LLZE provides a typical example of tensions among stakeholders and how the ideologies rooted in the concept of ecomuseum have been challenged and modified by the local community's heritage practices and activities.

2.3 Heritage as a tool for empowerment

Given the fluctuation of museum practices, this thesis considers the AMGX and the LLZE as contact zones, but furthers this idea beyond the perspectives of museums and stresses ethnic minority groups' heritage initiatives. By conceptualising heritage as a tool for empowerment, this section unfolds how ethnic minority groups' heritage making and utilisation might counter and shape museums' authorised heritage making and representational practices. Regarding the AHD in China as fluid and variable, the first section of this chapter clearly expounds that *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups can frame different ways of heritagisation within different levels of AHD. Moreover, the state-driven heritage management encourages the bottom-up or grassroots heritage conceptualisation and initiatives for economic development. In this manner, through actively participating in the AHD, ethnic minority groups or individuals create and draw on heritage to express their cultures, which can break conservative ways of making heritage for representations (Smith and Waterton, 2009).

Notably, beyond privileging outsider elite and expert judgements, ethnic minorities' dynamic cultural practices can challenge and rewrite the received knowledge of heritage produced by museums. Cultural heritage exerts its power by striving to 'force changes in popular narrative, changes that can lead directly to improved rights or representation…', as Kiddey (2018, p.695) argues. In a nutshell, this section seeks to rationalise the rethinking of ethnic minority groups' relations with museums from their perspectives, and makes clear how ethnic minorities' power resides in intangible cultural heritage and how they draw power from the tourism industry. Moreover, Kreps (2011) underscores the value of indigenous heritage management as a form of knowledge construction dominated by Indigenous communities, which is aligned with Crooke's idea, based on the heritage context that both museums and heritage are a 'means of communicating their own messages and aiding the definition and construction of community identity' (Crooke, 2008, p.423). Both Chapter Five and Chapter Six demonstrate that ethnic minority individuals and communities capitalise on museums and their practices to represent themselves. It is argued that heritage is a site of contact and contestations between ethnic minority groups and museums as stakeholders in the heritage commercialisation process (Rowlands, 2002; Smith, 2006; Svensson and Maags, 2018).

As I argued in section 2.1, heritage discourse is multifaceted, entailing diverse ways of heritage making and remaking. The AHD exemplifies the dominant heritage recognition and practices around the world as discussed earlier. The official cultural and heritage ideologies and policies form the Chinese version of AHD, which has been naturalised as orthodoxies and has competed with vernacular heritage discourses to devalue them as heterodoxies. Various official heritage discourses can be sanctioned by different levels and areas of governments or authorities, which might be mismatched. Hence, bottom-up heritage making carried out by non-official actors coexists with – and possibly resists – the AHD. Their conflicting visions and practices of how to select and invent the past for present make it clear that the term of cultural heritage instrumentalised for governing and controlling cultural legacy

and practices cannot always be espoused by all stakeholders (Svensson and Maags, 2018, p.14-15; Smith, 2006, p.52).

In agreement with Smith's argument, this thesis recognises the plurality of construction and mobilisation of heritage in China, which can be a tool of governance for governments, heritage institutions, museums and tourism sites, or a tool of resistance/empowerment for ethnic minority groups.

> Heritage thus becomes not only a tool of governance but also a tool of opposition and subversion. Heritage can therefore be understood as an important political and cultural tool in defining and legitimizing the identity, experiences and social/cultural standing of a range of subnational groups as well as those of the authorizing discourse. However, it may also be an important resource in challenging received identity and cultural/social values. This latter use of heritage is often undervalued, but is as important and significant as is its use in constructing and validating identity. (Smith, 2006, p.52)

To contemplate the utilisation of heritage as an empowerment vehicle and a voice of ethnic minority groups, it is imperative to validate the "bottom-up" debates on their power relations with *minzu* museums within the dominant discourse in China. In this thesis, I contend that ethnic minorities' heritage discourses gain the ability to shape museums' representational practices and change received and authorised notions of their cultures.

2.3.1 Authenticity and intangible cultural heritage

Section 2.1.3 clarified museums' positions as agencies of official heritage discourses. Museums engage in these heritage discourses by collecting, classifying, interpreting, or preserving cultural objects or practices to lend legitimacy to their institutional power originating from the nation. Yet, they play a marginalised role in the ICH safeguarding. This subsection deals with the authenticity of ICH in museum settings and how ethnic minorities' voices emerge from ICH.

While heritage as a cultural resource has been mobilised by governments, communities, or individuals to formulate developmental strategy and stimulate the economy globally (Basu and Modest, 2015), for museums, heritage value is subject to the "authenticity" of cultural representations. As Watson, Bunning and Barnes (2018, p.3) put it, the authority and power of museums and their professionals over the production of cultural truths and common sense mainly derive from the tangibility of authentic objects. In museums, heritage is not only related to preservation and presentation (Holtorf and Fairclough, 2013), but also strengthens their control of depicting ethnic minority identities or leads to the devolution of their authority under its powerful impact. In China, *minzu* museums reinvent their practices from representing static cultures of ethnic minorities, to living cultures through the adoption of intangible cultural heritage. Exhibiting ICH as objects and living performances are ways for museums to curate and exacerbate their static representation and fossilisation of ethnic minority cultures (Kreps, 2009). However, museums hinge on ICH practitioners to showcase "authentic" heritage, since ethnic minority groups as transmitters of heritage are 'immediate players in making, interpreting and maintaining their ICH' (Su, 2018, p.924).

ICH performances are a channel for ethnic minority individuals and communities to communicate their knowledge, expertise, and information, which allow them to represent their cultures in museums. In line with the idea of museums as contact spaces examined above, the heritage production, reproduction, and even

transformation produced by cultural practitioners can enable them to foster cross-cultural dialogue with museums, or other stakeholders. However, for presenting living heritage practices, museums have collaborated with ICH practitioners and reinvented themselves as performance stages, which can function beyond meanings of negotiations and contestations (Alivizatou, 2012). ICH performances, for most museums, are useful ways to manage and represent cultural differences and participate in the national and regional ICH safeguarding, but not platforms to communicate with ICH practitioners (Hafstein, 2018).

As Alivizatou (2012, p.191) notes, 'intangible heritage emerges as an impermanent act of dynamically engaging with the past in the present and making traditional culture relevant to the contemporary global context'. The impermanence and erasure of ICH determine that its values and vitality are predominantly sustained and articulated by ICH practitioners, which is 'outside the context of formal preservationism and through more fluid and unfixed processes' (Alivizatou, 2012, p.47; Su, 2018). They can freely define 'subjective authenticity', depending on whether they convey these heritage values successfully (Su, 2018). In this sense, ICH practitioners directly demonstrate their authenticity and claim their identities without the negotiations and disputes with museums. Built upon this section, Chapter Five gives a thorough discussion of the relationship between ICH practitioners and the AMGX.

Alivizatou (2008, p.45) underlines the decisive value of people or community engagement and new possibilities that ICH can bring to museum and heritage areas by situating the contextualisation of ICH in two theoretical bases, 'alternative heritage discourse' (Butler, 2006) and 'new museological discourse' (Kreps, 2003). Both Kreps (2003; 2009) and Butler (2006) perceive ICH as a process to the alternative strategy of heritage production and reproduction and cultural representation. ICH is a living tradition of local control. Hence, Kreps (2009)

examines the term of indigenous curation as a form of ICH practices, and approaches to safeguarding them. Linking to Hooper-Greenhill's idea of the post-museum, ICH can be reconceptualised as 'indigenous curation' and 'cultural reciprocity'. It empowers Indigenous peoples to depict their culture through their 'practices, knowledge systems, skills and instruments' as cultural expressions and safeguarding approaches (Kreps, 2009, p.199; Butler, 2006).

2.3.2 Dissonance in heritage making

This subsection articulates how museums and ethnic minority communities or individuals take on the role of stakeholders in the course of heritagisation. Following from the discussion about authenticity above, it reveals that the conflicting interests and contestations of museums and ethnic minority groups embedded in the disparate heritage discourses can emanate from their divergent definition of authenticity (Salazar, 2009; Zhu, 2015). Situating the dissection of power relations within a heritage studies domain, this subsection provides the theoretical support to make the contention that ethnic communities and individuals are capable of shaping and challenging the official heritage discourse where museums obtain power (Svensson and Maags, 2018; Winter, 2013; Smith, 2015b). I further the argument that ethnic minority groups' heritage making can decentralise museums' authority over heritage management and cultural representation.

As Svensson (2016, p.31) notes, 'Chinese heritage is complex, contested and evolving'. The dualistic functions as cultural and economic assets performed by heritage (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000) serve various social and political purposes. Heritage can be representations of official sanctioned identities of ethnic minorities to build the national identity in museums, while being used as an important economic resource for the development of the tourism industry. The contested nature of heritage flows from the discordant heritage making process, which has been conceptualised as the term of dissonant heritage by Tunbridge and

Ashworth (1996) (Su, 2010; Svensson, 2016; Svensson and Maags, 2018). Regarding heritage as a social construct helps convey that heritage making, occurring at different levels, is a process through which different actors and powers are entangled in struggles to identify and consume cultural heritage and negotiate their social positions (Smith and Waterton, 2009). Museums and ethnic minority groups grant heritage multiple meanings through their "active cultural engagement" for divergent purposes, which might affect how their power relations forge (ibid.; Smith, 2015a).

Going utterly beyond the restraints of the AHD seems to be intractable and even impossible. Heritage is an operative instrument to stabilise the hegemonic regime to fit local or individual stories and identities into the national narratives. Ethnic minority groups have not been empowered to display the political capacity for self-determination through heritage; rather, they ought to negotiate, debate and accommodate the authoritarian discourse. Certainly, their responses to official heritage discourses are not always passive, but instead, they endeavour to capitalise on the cultural heritage discourse and official support for tourism (Oakes and Sutton, 2010; Svensson, 2016; Zhu and Maags, 2020). Zhu and Maags (2020, p.20) illustrate that non-official stakeholders conducting heritagisation from the grassroots level can contribute to the development of AHD assemblage for China. They classify the societal responses as four types: 'active embrace', 'passive acceptance', 'reframing', and 'resistance' (ibid., p.134). These attitudes and actions towards the heritagisation process help contextualise how ethnic minority groups respond to museums' heritage making and representational practices.

Being seen as a key development strategy, heritage tourism is an integral process of the state-led heritage making process (Smith, 2015b; Light, 2015, p.145). It functions as a means of heritage consumption and cultural display, which is intrinsically political and not the polar opposite of cultural traditions and heritage preservation

(Salazar, 2009). Tourist sites, including museums and heritage villages as interactive media, commodify and consume cultural heritage to reinforce or challenge the stereotypical images of ethnic minority groups (O'Brien and Brown, 2020). Rather than being simply represented, 'tourismification process involves performative relations of contestations, reification, and negotiation' (Salazar, 2009, p.50). Tourism as the 'major intersection of authenticity and heritage' (H. Silverman, 2015, p.80) assists ethnic minority groups in staking a claim to the identification of authenticity and their cultural representations, through the production and reproduction of tangible and intangible cultural manifestations.

Ethnic minority groups' heritage making can be a way to express themselves and affirm their local or ethnic identities (Smith, 2015a). As significant stakeholders, they have been embroiled in power struggles with the other stakeholders, such as museums, local governments, tourism companies and experts, in the heritage commercialisation and commodification process (Dicks, 2003). As these stakeholders hold disparate agendas regarding 'what is deemed as authentic', it is difficult for them to reach a consensus on the balance between tourism activity and heritage conservation (Su and Teo, 2009). The disputes between museums and ethnic minority groups over authenticity have predominantly resulted from the heritage transformation triggered by tourism, such as the destruction of traditional buildings (H. Silverman, 2015).

On the other hand, authenticity is invisible and varied, being 'something used to justify and protect intangible cultural manifestations' (Watson, 2018, p.186). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998, p.149), in her penetrating publication *Destination Culture*, poses a contention that heritage has a 'second life' and draws on resources from the past to create something new for the present. Her fluid recognition of the authenticity can also be found in H. Silverman's claim that contemporary authenticity 'may be brand new or revisions but are embedded in active situations'

(2015, p.85), which does not have to 'faithfully' replicate the past. The reinvention and reproduction of authenticity based on the original tradition can prevent staging ethnicity from superficiality (Chhabra, Healy and Sills, 2003). However, it is noteworthy that some ethnic minority communities, pandering to visitors' stereotypical imagination of them, exploit heritage to mark their cultural differences as exotic. Schein (2016, p.284) specifies a notion of 'auto-Orientalism' to recount those ethnic minorities who, for example, participate in heritage tourism, intentionally other, and hide beneath the authenticity they form. It is argued that ethnic minority groups represent their cultures through appropriating museums' representation and self-essentialisation (see Chapters Five and Six). This invokes a deliberation about the long-standing critiques of otherness generated by the dominant Han, while the self-representations of ethnic minorities might be the result of reinventing and echoing the authorities or social imaginaries.

The heritage discourse about ethnic minority groups' experiences and feelings can also compete with museums' heritage making. Waterton and Watson (2013, p.550) suggest the necessity of thinking beyond the representational meaning of heritage and being aware of diverse expressions of heritage engagements. Smith (2006; 2015), and Haldrup and Boerenholdt (2015, p.53), encourage a new theoretical turn through approaching heritage as performance. Smith (2015, p.260) states,

> Heritage is a process that can have conservative or socially progressive outcomes, but, above all, it is an experience or moment of active cultural engagement that has a range of consequences.

Emotions, memories and affects individuals experience during their engagement with heritage and how they feel and experience heritage, as a form of heritage making, are all included in these consequences (ibid.; Svensson and Maags, 2018,

p.23; Haldrup and Boerenholdt, 2015). The performativity of heritage attracts the analytical attention to museum professionals' and heritage practitioners' frontstage and backstage heritage experiences, which 'work to assist the expression of identity and belonging' (Smith, 2015b, p.260). Heritage as a meaning making process beyond representation can become a resource of power in dialogue and contestation with heritage discourses created by museums or other stakeholders (Smith, 2006).

For example, drawing on Su's (2011) discussion on heritage production in Lijiang, an ethnic touristic site in Yunnan province, his research elucidates how the local government-led reconstruction of Mu Palace, opposed by many residents, becomes a site of tension. After its establishment, a range of symbolic meanings has been attached to Mu Palace by authorities, such as an eye-catching tourist commodity and cultural symbol of the Naxi people inhabiting a marginal borderland (ibid.). However, based on societal responses, the incorrect size of the reconstructed version of the Mu Palace, and the appropriation of the Naxi people's capital subsidy, irritated local residents. While residents in Lijiang have no power to cease the official actions and feel marginalised in heritage exploitation, their feelings of displeasure offer an alternative reading of the AHD and their refusal to visit the Mu Palace become a form of resistance to it (ibid.). Likewise, in this thesis, attitudes and feelings of ethnic minority communities towards ecomuseums' construction can be figured out along this line.

In the case study of ethnic ecomuseums, while being an outcome of regional level heritage making, the ethnic ecomuseum has been involved in the local tourism discourse as a stakeholder. This section enables me to expand the investigation of power relations by contemplating the interplay between the ecomuseological heritage construction and ethnic minority communities' heritage interests. Ethnic minority communities assert their presence and authority over heritage by

prioritising their heritage making and management, which might repurpose or be resistant to ecomuseological practices.

2.4 Conclusion

To sum up this chapter, a review of concepts and literature related to critical museum and heritage studies provide a theoretical foundation for the methodology used in this project and inform the data analysis. Instead of building a firmly theoretical framework as a 'form of technical literature', and pre-determining what concepts need to be studied, this chapter took a broader view to fully analyse a variety of forms of data so as to develop complex arguments (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.42). This chapter develops three sections which provides a comprehensive analytical approach to study the AMGX and the LLZE and answer research questions and aims. It contextualises the Chinese heritage discourse and its influence on the representation and use of ethnic minority cultures for the building of a multi-ethnic nation and economic development. Rather than only viewing and naturalising cultural representation as the embodiment of museums' hegemonic power, this project bridges and juxtaposes two disciplines to frame the representational processes of museums and ethnic minority groups as heritage making processes. This chapter enables the rethinking of ethnic minority voices and power over representation, inside and outside museums, by viewing museums as contact spaces where power relations are mutable.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to outline the qualitative methodology that was conducted to answer the research questions specified in Chapter One. It comprises six sections: ethnographic case studies, fieldwork timeline and data collection, qualitative data analysis, my role as a researcher and ethical issues, limitations, and conclusion. These sections explicitly present my research process, the selection of a qualitative approach to inquiry, to the data collection and analysis, to reflexivity. Qualitative research is fundamental to yielding a deep understanding of the complexities behind representations of ethnic minority cultures (Gorard, 2013), as it can explain the complex relationships and experiences in the real world, instead of offering accurate answers or results (ibid.). Ethnographic case studies and associated research methods have allowed me to delve into how museums and ethnic minority groups identify, interpret and represent heritage, in order to echo the official cultural and heritage and how they forge different relations.

The critical and interdisciplinary approaches to museum and heritage studies facilitate research methodology development. Drawing on six-months of fieldwork (17/03/2018-20/08/2018) in the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) and the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE) in Guangxi, this study offers a detailed ethnographic account of museums' and ethnic minority group's representational matters. It gives a new impulse to study the power of museums, and how ethnic minority groups play at representational processes, and the impact of their dissonant heritage construction or reconstruction on those representational practices.

3.1 Ethnographic case studies as the primary research strategy

Case study research is a typical qualitative approach to inquiry. As a research tool, the case study puts more emphasis on the in-depth exploration of a single, or fewer,

instances and investigating processes, which is suitable for questions regarding 'how' and 'why' (Denscombe, 1998; Yin, 2014, p.2). Researchers are restricted to concentrating on only a few instances, for the sake of a deep understanding of them and gaining particular insights. Furthermore, when encountering the complexity of a specific situation of a contemporary phenomenon, within the context of the real-world, the researcher deploys case studies to work on relationships and processes instead of coming up with certain outcomes (Denscombe, 1998; Simons, 2009). As Yin (2014, p.21) puts it, carrying out the case study research is to 'expand and generalise theories (analytical generalisations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalisations)'. The case-study method is considered optimal for museum and heritage studies. It not only helps to study divergent forms of museums and their practices systematically, but also to interrogate and generalise their relationships with ethnic minority groups within the heritage context (Kreps, 2003).

As the introductory chapter indicates, I have clearly identifiable two cases (the AMGX and the LLZE) and elaborated the rationale behind the selection of these two museums. Yin (2014, p.57) argues that the replication logic of selecting cases underpins the critical criterion of choosing cases. The AMGX and the LLZE, as two different models of museums, are multiple cases that satisfy the prediction of either contrasting or similar results. Multiple case studies, while the research project has been altered continuously and refined before the fieldwork, have always been considered as an appropriate research design to generate more compelling data and theories. Unlike a single case study, multiple case studies might generate more robust findings to understand the phenomenon, by widening the discovering scope and the exploration of research questions. As Baxter and Jack (2008) noted, empirical evidence gathered from different cases make theories more convincing, as the examination of multiple cases can identify similarities and differences between cases and produce literature deeply influenced by them. Additionally, the analysis of cases can be within each situation and across situations (Gustafsson, 2017).

In my attempt to implement ethnographic research in the AMGX and LLZE, I encountered an unexpected challenge posed by the change of case study. The initial research phase began with the final confirmation of fieldwork sites. I decided upon field sites before arriving in Guangxi: the AMGX and the Jingxi Jiuzhou Zhuang Ecomuseum. This ecomuseum was selected as my original target by virtue of the sizeable population of Zhuang people in the local area, being built as the first Zhuang ecomuseum in Guangxi, and developed over a long period of time as a popular tourist site. Yet, the visit to several ecomuseums, including the LLZE, the Nandan Lihu White Trousers Yao Ecomuseum, and the Jingxi Jiuzhou Zhuang Ecomuseum enhanced my understandings of these ecomuseums' exhibition-making, operations and development, and their heritage management. The casual conversations with local people and ecomuseums' staff gave me a basic view of their situations. I found that the Jingxi Jiuzhou Zhuang Ecomuseum had received less attention from the AMGX and villagers and the local natural and cultural environment had experienced dramatic change. It would therefore have been difficult to investigate how the local Zhuang community made and used their heritage.

The flexibility of theoretical sampling allows the change of case studies before and during the research process (Silverman, 2013). Accordingly, I re-evaluated the research value and representativeness of ecomuseums that I had visited. Nitzky's contribution regarding ecomuseums in China had already chosen the Nandan Lihu White Trousers Yao Ecomuseum as a case study, providing an exhaustive elaboration and analysis of its political context and ongoing practices. I ultimately focused on the LLZE, as the last ecomuseum in Guangxi to be constructed in the ethnic ecomuseums project, which has been officially designated as a representative ecomuseum in China, and the local Zhuang community actively capitalises on heritage for development.

3.1.1 Ethnography in case studies

The research design is prompted by my initial theoretical perspective –
interpretivism. As Neuman (2013, p.104) notes, interpretivism believes that 'social
reality is largely what people perceive it to be; it exists as people experience it and
assign meaning to it…capturing people's subjective sense of reality to really
understand social life is crucial'. In qualitative research, the construction of research
design and strategy is an ongoing process and grounded in the research practice and
the specific context (Mason, 2002). Compared to case studies, ethnographic research
highlights behaviours taking place within the setting instead of the organisation
(Silverman, 2013). This drove me to incorporate an ethnographic approach to the
case studies, which structures the research design in order to prioritise participant
observation as the main research method. Ethnographic case studies extend
observations of the AMGX and LLZE to unveil issues such as power struggles behind
the scenes (Ellenbogen, 2002; Stokes-Rees, 2013).

Museums can be 'a site of analysis' (McCarthy, 2015, p.xxxix), opening to the
exploration of untold stories of organisational work and entwined power relations,
and going beyond the museum as 'methodological container' (Macdonald et al.,
2018, p.148). This research, therefore, validates cross-cases discussion about the
impact of the state-led heritage making and the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project'
on two museums' and ethnic minority groups' representational practices and
expands the scope of surveying their nexus. However, this study not only
investigates how museums translate ethnic minority cultures and cultural and
heritage politics into their representational practices, but also discusses how ethnic
minority groups' voices and heritage management are influenced by and shape
museum practices, or rather, authorised heritage discourse. In pursuing these
objectives, I use a multi-site ethnographic methodology that scrutinises 'people,
connections, associations and relationships across space' (Falzon, 2009).

According to Brewer's (2000, p.6) definition, ethnography as a flexible research design is 'the study of people in naturally occurring settings or "fields" by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the research participating directly in the setting'. Doing ethnography at multiple sites enables researchers to juxtapose data collected in these places, and, in Marcus's words, 'establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites' (1995, p.105). Various scholars, such as Kreps (2003), Lonetree (2012) and Alivizatou (2012), employ ethnography to study two or more museums and the indigenous people or museum professionals in them.

Ethnographic technique has helped me to explore how dynamics, such as political pressure, relationships, and ways of working, have affected the museums' and ethnic minority groups' representational processes, 'going behind the scenes' to look at how and what they have actually done to construct heritage and represent ethnic minority cultures (Macdonald, 2002; Bouquet, 2012; Tucker, 2014). As a specific methodological strategy of inquiry, it allows me to immerse myself within museum daily operations, planning and processes of outreach programmes, cultural activities or events, and the community museum situated, in order to gain insight into 'forces that shape knowledge production and its dissemination in and through [the] museum' (Tucker, 2014, p.350; Creswell, 2012). Looking for whether community members engage in ecomuseological practices and how they behave within disparate heritage discourses has been the subject of ethnographic study in the LLZE.

Conducting ethnographic research in two museum localities, as the data that I gathered demonstrates, focuses attention on different social and cultural realities. To take a concrete example, the majority of interviewees in the AMGX were museum staff, so the research topics concerned museum operation, collections, exhibitions, projects and activities (see details in the next section). Interviewees in the LLZE, besides the ecomuseum director, were all community members, eliciting discussions

regarding local heritage culture beyond museum settings. Differences in the data drove the revision of research questions and extended critical debates about the influence of museums and ethnic minority groups, as social actors, on heritage construction and utilisation from the regional to the local spheres. Crucially, the aim of studying these two museums is not to address any single issue, but rather present an insightful account of how *minzu* museums differ in their relationship with ethnic minority groups and the roles they play in heritage representation within these contexts.

The disparate functions and features of the AMGX and the LLZE suggested that I was supposed to acquire more sources about how museums engage with the concept of heritage and cultural representation in the AMGX, and tracing how the ethnic minority community produce and use heritage in the LLZE. However, before entering the field, I did not draw a clear distinction between the LLZE and the Longji village when referring to fieldwork sites. This results in ambiguity concerning my research scale and confusion about where the data emerged, the LLZE or the Longji village. Therefore, to give a sense of fieldwork place, I identified the LLZE as the entire Zhuang village in which the ecomuseum is located in the course of the data collection.

Furthermore, the various definitions provided by the AMGX and local villagers lead the empirical research to attain a level of complexity and depth. Data collected in the LLZE, thus, consists of sources concerning villagers' living conditions, heritage festivals organised by the tourism company and local government, agricultural activities, tourism activities, village and family events, and traditional cultural practices. Drawing on these sources, this thesis strengthens arguments about the changing power relations between museums and ethnic minority groups in two sites and the impact of their disparate heritage management. The following sections outline how the data have been collected and analysed.

3.2 Conducting fieldwork: Data collection

Undertaking fieldwork was an important milestone in my research. Coffey (1999, p.1) held that 'fieldwork is personal, emotional and identity work'. Researchers should have a clear idea about what they will observe and write fieldnotes or records of data. A fieldwork timeline (see Figure 3.1 below) offers a brief overview of two phases of data collection from 17th of March to the 20th of August 2018, where outlines when and how I collected and examined the data. Definitive findings are unable to emerge without thorough investigation and further inquiries. Three sources of evidence, archival research (including visual materials), observation and interviews, corroborate research objectives and have the capability of verifying the validity of messages obtained by each other, which are used to conduct constructive and verifiable research (Yin, 2014). By adopting multiple qualitative methods, archives and visual materials offer background information and support the adoption of interviews and observation. Interviews and observation assist in revealing the truth to a large extent and demonstrate diverse perceptions of cases (Stake, 1995).

		Phase One (17/03-09/07/2018)			Phase Two (15/07-20/08/2018)	
The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi(AMGX), Nanning, Guangxi	17/03 - 28/05/2018	17-20/03	Visiting and observing two potential fieldwork sites: The Nandan Lihu White Trousers Yao Ecomuseum and Jingxi Jiuzhou Zhuang Ecomuseum	15/07 - 08/08/2018	16/07-20/07	Fieldtrip with museum staff of the AMGX in Sanjiang Dong Ecomuseum
		21/03-09/05	Archival research: Focusing on the AMGX		25/07-07/08	Interview 11-15 and informal conversations
		10/05-23/05	Interview 1-10		08/08/2018	Observing a temporary exhibition curated by the National Museum of Nationalities in the Nanning Museum
			Archival research: Preparing for the fieldwork in the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum			Participant observation
		21/03-26/05	Observation of permanent exhibitions, museum programmes and events, and its daily operation	14 - 20/08/2018		In-depth investigation and data review
The Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE), Guilin, Guangx	31/05 - 09/07/2018	02/06/2018	Visit to the Pingan village and observing its Shuyang Festival(close to the Longji village)	09 - 12/08/ 2018	09/08/2018	Interview 16
		09/06-11/06	Visit to surrounding villages (Pingan, Dazhai)		10/08-12/08	Visit to family hotels and having informal conversations
		28/06-29/06	Visit to the Longsheng county and its rice terraced cultural festival (the local tourism project)			In-depth investigation and data review
		15/06-07/07	Interview 17-35 (including informal conversations)			
			Participant observation of the Longji village and archival research (Participate in family events, village activities, and observe daily lives, traditional cultural practices, etc.)			

Figure 3. 1 Fieldwork timeline.

Overall, the length of time spent in the AMGX is longer than the LLZE. On 21st of March 2018, I commenced my ethnographic research in the AMGX by doing archival research and accompanying museum staff to activities and outreach programs. On the first day, inducted by the director of Human Resources and Finance into several divisions (Social Propaganda and Education, Research Division (2), specialising in ecomuseums and intangible cultural heritage, the Curatorial Division, Marketing Division and Collection Conservation) where I spent the majority of my time, I was able to access these divisions and interact with them. These divisions always work collaboratively to construct exhibitions or develop activities and outreach programs. There was no freedom of movement across different divisions without permission and invitation from museum staff to discover their formal or informal practices and working process. I underestimated the significance of interpersonal relationships to the ethnography of the institution. It took time to get useful data over the first three weeks. At the end of the initial stage of fieldwork in the AMGX, ten interviews had been done.

The field trip to the LLZE is from June to early July 2018 (31/05 - 09/07/2018). Conducting the fieldwork in the LLZE involved two steps. The first step was to collect information relevant to ecomuseum working practices and the role it played in the local community. During the research, the director of the LLZE, who did not live in the Longji village, rarely appeared and the sole employee of this ecomuseum only needed to open the door for visitors six days per week. The limited ecomuseological practices turned the research foci to the examination of tensions between different stakeholders during the second fieldwork step, and the agency of this Zhuang community functions within various heritage discourses. I not only did ethnographic research and eighteen interviews at the Longji village the LLZE is located in, but also visited its surrounding ethnic minority villages to look for particularities of the Longji village as an ecomuseum and have an overview of the ethnic heritage used in the tourism industry.

The second phase (15/07-20/08/2018) was the detailed investigation of specific issues in order to complement findings gathered at the early stage of ethnography, such as interviewing five informants in the AMGX and the director of the LLZE. It was also designed to examine and reflect on the data collected from the first phase and get more in-depth data through participant observation. I strived to reach more ethnic cultural practitioners collaborating with the AMGX, but I failed to contact them and collect enough to generalise perspectives from these cultural practitioners about the AMGX's role in their heritage production and cultural representation. Overall, the data collection and analysis overcame most challenges and brought about the heritage turn of this research from its initial preoccupation with museums' institutional representation of ethnic minority cultures. Subsections below have elaborately unpacked and critically discussed the scope and limitations of qualitative methods and challenges emerged during the fieldwork.

3.2.1 Archival research

Archival research was conducted throughout the data collection process of this project. The primary objectives of collecting archival documents are to contextualise heritage construction at different administrative levels and sketch the background and process of conceptualising and using heritage in *minzu* museums. Based on Gidley's (2012) categorisation of documents as documents for internal and external consumption, I have classified collected archival data as two types: official documents (including government documents, official records, and published books or papers) and internal archives (unpublished materials, leaflets, evaluation reports, annual work reports and other internal documents) (see Appendix 1).

Gidley (2012) points out that archival and documentary sources allow the researcher to acquire behind-the-scenes information and show 'how particular language or phrases came into use' (p.267). Therefore, I set out to have an overview of the political and heritage context by reviewing official documents regarding national, regional and local heritage and cultural policy,

laws and regulations, and government policies that guide museums' practices and policymaking. I was able to find relevant and reliable official documents on the official websites and social media of governments, museums, departments of culture and tourism and related cultural institutions.

Most internal documents that I examined are not publicly accessible and only available at the AMGX and the LLZE. Owning to the disparate features and situations of these two settings, I approached documentary data in different ways. In the AMGX, most materials are not systematically arranged or collected in the museum library and archived by various museum staff. The issue raised here was that it took a longer time for me to make contact with these people and receive their permission to access data. Tracing practices that are used by museums play an explicit role in foregrounding the discussion of museums' manipulations of cultural heritage and representation of ethnic minority cultures. The description and analysis of museum exhibitions (see Chapter Four), the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' and its relevant community engagement activities (Chapter Five), and programmes regarding intangible cultural heritage partly lie in internal documents gathered in the AMGX.

I reviewed numerous documents regarding the museum's agenda, operational politics and details, operational system, permanent and temporary exhibitions (lists, design, outlines, exhibits, and related meeting notes), and projects and events (lists, outlines and descriptions). The volumes of '2014-2016 National First-class Museum Application Materials' and the 2015-18 annual report of the AMGX, for example, gave me a glimpse of every sector of the museum's work, showing me essential stages and details of museum practices and decision-making process from 2014 to 2016. They also help me prepare for more specific interview questions and determine the observational foci. Articles in the AMGX's monograph 'Safeguarding Homes: the 1+10 project construction of the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi and Guangxi ethnic minority ecomuseums', published in 2009, also recorded the backdrop of constructing ethnic

ecomuseums, allowing me to further inquiries into how ethnic ecomuseums developed as an AHD.

The preliminary work I did for my study was accessing documents regarding the construction of the LLZE, and the annual work reports, before I left the AMGX to move to the LLZE. The precise delineation of the LLZE construction and practices conducted within the ecomuseum, seen in Chapter Five, is credited with documents collected by the LLZE's director and secondary sources contributed by previous scholars, such as anthropologists and folklorists. One of the articles I examined, written by a postgraduate, Lai Xuefang (2013), who did ethnographic research in the LLZE in 2011, elaborately expounds the development of constructing the LLZE which she witnessed. Her research and transcribed interviews undoubtedly offer more detailed messages than the director's documents concerning the tensions among stakeholders since the launch of the ecomuseum in the Longji village. In addition to gathering sources about the ecomuseum project, I tried to work on archives regarding local traditions and family history books compiled by local communities in the LLZE in order to produce in-depth ethnographic description of the Longji village and its histories that shape its culture today.

Archives and documentation are useful in helping 'understand the web of social relations in which social actors are enmeshed' (Gidley, 2012, p.267). However, documents can be inaccurate or only partially complete, or even appear to be contrary to findings generated from interviews or observations (Gidley, 2012; Yin, 2014). Conducting extensive research in the archives besides interviews and observation, and triangulating the data based on archives might enhance the reliability and credibility of the data. It is noted that the internal documents were mainly produced by museum staff for various purposes and contents have been polished and officially sanctioned. Thus, rather than examining these documents as evidence of social realities, I endeavoured to be aware of their subjective meanings and analyse them critically by making clear their functions and biases.

3.2.2 (Participant) observation

Observation involving direct, non-participant and participant observation is a 'natural and obvious technique' for the researcher to encounter people and actions or events being studied first-hand, interrogating 'realities' acquired from interviewees and archives (Robson, 2002, p.315; Yin, 2014; Walsh, 2012; Mason, 2002). In contrast to direct observation, participant observation is valuable in investigating the research problems, without determining where the researcher can obtain relevant sources and is open to unexpected things (Phellas, Bloch and Seale, 2012).

Various components need to be observed to address research problems by critically analysing the embodiment of two museums' ideologies, strategies, interpretative and narrative structures, their representational logic, and the impact of diverse cultural heritage management on their representations (Mason, 2011). In addition to this, participant observation is the fundamental component of ethnography, which encourages the researcher to change positions and be open to the transformation of research problems and more possibilities of data over the course of the fieldwork (Walsh, 2012). At the beginning of carrying out observation, I assumed my role as the 'observer as participant', getting a sense of varied heritage construction inside and outside museums.

Gaining access to the backstage of museums and the ethnic minority community remains difficulties. Since the AMGX operated as a governmental institution, the first challenge I faced was that every division in the AMGX has their own working agenda, so I was incapable of acquiring all divisions' daily schedules and being involved in their new exhibitions or projects under development or work meetings associated with this, as promptly as I anticipated. As all permanent exhibitions had already been constructed in 2008, and less temporary exhibitions

regarding ethnic cultures in the AMGX were made during my fieldwork, ethnography had to centre on museum activities and outreach programmes. Museum staff, from the start, avoided exposing their working contents to me as an outsider. After becoming familiar with some museum staff, they were willing to accept me into taking part in their informal conversations and inform me of their work plans. As for the LLZE, the local Zhuang community is accessible for visitors or ethnographers, but observing community members' cultural practices and understanding their inner thoughts requires the researcher to gain their trust. It was crucial to maintain a stable relationship with museum staff and community members, in order to facilitate observation and acquire their natural responses (Walsh, 2012).

The role I played at the two museums, in the course of observation, was what Walsh suggests is marginal, i.e., 'a marginal native', which can keep the subjectivity of the researcher intact (Walsh, 2012, p.254). For example, when the AMGX's educational division organised activities or events, I participated in and assisted them without being asked to take any functional role in making decisions in these processes. Thus, I considered myself to be a participant because I worked with them and had good relationships, but also an observer in that I witnessed their actions and kept a certain distance from their practices.

I observed five permanent and two temporary exhibitions in the AMGX, and one permanent exhibition in the LLZE, looking at how museums presented ethnic minority cultural heritage at the early stage of fieldwork. My observation of the exhibitions was combined with textual analysis. The exhibition spaces of these two museums were read as texts. For instance, settings and environment in the exhibit space (sound, design, and interactive elements); display of exhibits (types of objects, settings and environment surrounding objects); texts (captions, presentation panels, objects labels); visual display (Tucker, 2014). However, the analysis of texts based on museum exhibitions is valuable to figure out how the museum organises cultural heritage, to translate cultural knowledge and ideologies into exhibitions.

Undertaking participant observation in the AMGX (see Appendix 4), I attempted to uncover museum staff's rationales of making exhibitions and creating activities or events under the political restrictions, to question manipulation of ethnic minority cultural heritage, and significantly, to figure out how the AMGX positions ethnic minority groups in their daily practices. The main observational attention, diverted from exhibition-making to activities and programs construction, renders the formulation of my arguments in latter subsequent chapters. The planning and organisation of activities and events, ethnic cultural practitioners' performances, and the conversations among museum practitioners were involved in my participatory observations. Various activities or events and outreach programs took places in the AMGX, offering me the opportunity to discover the AMGX's community engagement from its outreach programs or projects, and how it and ethnic minority groups position each other in representational practices when collaborating to develop educational programmes or public events.

Participant observation for the ethnography of the LLZE occurred at numerous places throughout the Longji village, including the operation of the LLZE, villagers' cultural practices, festivals, and social activities. I initiated my observation by visiting the whole village. I then moved to investigate the exhibition centre, their family temples, and traditional architecture. This was followed by the study of the intangible cultural heritage transmission centre and the performances for tourists inside it, the events organised by the employed museum staff and community members, and the folklore or working ways related to local Zhuang intangible cultural heritage. I also travelled to surrounding ethnic communities close to the Longji village and took part in their tourism events with community members, such as the *Shuyang* festival held in the Pingan village and the Longji Terraced Fields festival organised by the Longsheng county.

I gradually became familiar with the villagers after staying at the Longji village for two weeks. Through observing their daily routines, and cultural practices, I was aware that the operation of the LLZE was almost paused, and even the LLZE staff conducted fewer practices regarding the ecomuseum. As a result, I changed my focus to community members' tourism activities, studying how they think of the ecomuseum and reconceptualise it; how they define, reconstruct and mobilise their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The observation that was taken in the LLZE also led to discussions about power relations implicated in the ecomuseum development. As Robson (2002, p.320) pointed out, the analysis 'takes place in the middle of data collection and is used to shape its development'. Photographs and fieldnotes were taken throughout the field trip. These records were informed by my analytical ideas and perspectives, which showed the limitation of participant observation: it highly relies on the researcher's sensitivity and possibly produces bias (Yin, 2014, p.117).

3.2.3 Interviews

Qualitative interviews are an effective method of generating information through one-to-one conversations and interactions with relevant interviewees, taking a prominent role in the investigation of social and cultural phenomena (Brinkmann, 2014). With a principal focus on conducting in-depth interviews, the qualitative interviews in this research are predominately in semi-structured forms. The adoption of semi-structured interviews aims to create a comfortable and conversational atmosphere and allow interviewees to express their opinions and use their own voice by posing open-ended and flexible questions (Byrne, 2012).

Taking advantage of the qualitative interviews, the researcher can consider the process of using this method as 'the construction or reconstruction of knowledge more than the excavation of it' (Mason, 2002, p.63). The flexible format of the semi-structured interview is suitable for this research to acquire novel and unanticipated data and reflect complexity (Byrne, 2012, p.211). It enabled me to approach research topics from different angles and respond to interviewees'

answers and feelings promptly and in the following analysis. I attach great importance to the role that interviews can play in contributing a deeper understanding of the history of the AMGX and the LLZE and their operation, the relationship between the AMGX and ecomuseums, and the impact of museum professionals and ethnic minority groups' practices on heritage and cultural representation. Accordingly, I classified interviewees as four types: museum staff in the AMGX, museum staff inthe LLZE, cultural heritage practitioners collaborating with the AMGX, and ethnic minority individuals living in the LLZE.

I conducted 35 interviews (see Appendix 3) for this research with 14 museum staff in the AMGX, 1 cultural heritage practitioner, 2 museum staff in the LLZE and 18 community members in the Longji village (members of the ecomuseum committee, local community leaders, local craftsmen, and people working in the local tourism industry). Eight community members in the Longji village rejected the format of interviews but were willing to share their views. Hence, I chose to have short, friendly and informal conversations with them. Giving a full account of different interview objectives, and in consideration of interviewees' diverse personalities, educational backgrounds, work experience, and attitudes toward the interviews, I formulated different structured interview topics and designed suitable questions for them to collect evidence of their feelings, experiences and positions, and found a deep sense of their personal perspectives by asking follow-up questions (Miller and Glassner, 2020). Qualitative interviews can be used in conjunction with fieldwork observations and archival research (Yin, 2009; Robson, 2002). In doing so, I posed specific questions to gather more detailed descriptions. The Appendix 4 demonstrates the example of questions asked.

12 interviewees in the AMGX were specifically chosen from the Social Propaganda and Education Division, Research divisions (2) and (4), and the Curatorial, Collections and Marketing Divisions, because these people had primarily worked on museum exhibitions, activities and cultural programmes. Aside from these interviewees, I interviewed two vice-directors of the

museum (Zhuang ethnic minorities) and one quiltmaker (personal conversation) who frequently performed in the museum. During the Sanyuesan festival held by the AMGX, I had personal conversations with ICH practitioners performing in the museums and wrote down their experiences, their understandings of heritage, and how they looked at the value of the AMGX in their heritage representation. While interviewing a quiltmaker who often cooperates with the museum, I stayed with her at the exhibition hall during two afternoons in which she was performing.

The questions designed for museum staff in the AMGX concentrated on topics regarding their backgrounds, job responsibilities, activities, understandings of cultural heritage, the museum method of presenting ethnic minority cultures, the exhibitions and cultural projects that staff were involved in, and the voices of ethnic minority groups in the museum. As open-ended questions can be subject to change because of conversations or discussions and be guided by other interviewees' responses (Byrne, 2012), I continued to refine interview questions and review finished interviews based on archival research and participatory observation of what goes on in the museum to prepare for open conversations. Conducting interviews in this way improves the reliability of data and the objectivity of analysis.

For instance, interviews as a research instrument contribute to providing a fuller picture of the ecomuseums project and the network of the AMGX and ten ecomuseums (Brinkmann, 2014). Examining the opinions and attitudes of museum staff who participate in the ecomuseums project, along with how the ecomuseum make sense to the villagers that I interviewed in the LLZE, offered important insights into the marginalisation of ecomuseums in the ethnic communities (see Chapters Five and Six). Informants in two museums and the ethnic minority community had contrasting opinions when I asked them to share their comments on the status quo of the ecomuseums and the interaction between the AMGX and the ecomuseums.

The diversity of their opinions gives value for comparison with each other and other forms of data when considering how museums have achieved or failed to achieve their goals. The criticism, disappointment, and appreciation of the ecomuseums network coexisted simultaneously. After the initial phase of fieldwork, I shared villagers' perspectives on ecomuseums and the role that the AMGX played in the LLZE with the AMGX staff. One of the informants insisted that the passive participation of ethnic minority communities in the ecomuseum's construction and heritage protection is because of their lack of cultural awareness, whereas one staff member reflected on what ecomuseums mean to local communities and the AMGX's working strategies. Chapter Six sheds light on the local community's redefinition of the ecomuseum, by incorporating their ideas into data collected in the LLZE. However, the interviews with museum staff elicited less information regarding the history of the AMGX, as it was difficult to contact former staff members who are familiar with the museum's development.

In the LLZE (the Longji village), the interviewees predominantly discussed their own backgrounds; their understandings of their culture, cultural heritage and the ecomuseum; their perceptions about the exhibition in the exhibition centre; and whether they participated in any tourism businesses or the ecomuseum activities. During the second phase of fieldwork, I visited various family hotels operated by community members and chatted with their local staff. This was a direct approach for me to explore community members' ways of representing their culture, how they use heritage, and how they interpret their cultures and the term 'ecomuseum' for their visitors. As the Longji village is a popular field site for scholars in China, the informants were sophisticated in answering questions. This reduced the need for repeated verification of their ideas when we communicated informally.

Semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with opportunities to participate in the knowledge production processes, but the limitations of this method must be recognised. Byrne

(2012) highlights reflexivity to encourage researchers to scrutinise their influence on interview interaction. During interviews, sometimes informants asked questions back after I posed questions. While my opinions could have evoked different opinions or arguments, it is possible that they changed their minds or offered me answers that I might have anticipated. For example, I asked a museum practitioner about the definition of ecomuseum. She shared her understanding only after I gave my own definition. This issue I was confronted with prevented me from being influenced by the subjectivity of informants when having interviews, meetings or conversations with them and influenced their answers. Nevertheless, the subjectivity of the researcher or participants, particularly interviewees, is inevitable and consequential for research, as 'under any form of interpretivism, the outcomes of researcher bias are acknowledged' (Harrison, 2014).

The audio-recorded (semi-structured) interviews in the two museums and the Longji village lasted an average of 30 minutes. I treated the recordings with strict confidence and stored them securely on a laptop with only personal access. Furthermore, I transcribed the interview recordings into Chinese. Since it would be overwhelming for me to translate them all into English, I conducted coding and translation at the same time, which, though productive, might result in missed nuance due to the different contexts of the languages. To protect the anonymity of the informants, I withheld their personal details and assigned numbers to identify them.

3.2.4 Visual research

Photography as a research method allows the use of photographs as data, which can be analysed as written texts (Holm, 2014). Employing documentary photography is common in social studies. Undertaking visual research is an alternative approach for me to gather evidence that physical documents and observation cannot offer, which can also be included in the archival research. However, this research does not place visual methods in a marginal position

or process visual materials on a superficial level. Ali (2012) suggests that 'the way they were produced, how and where they are produced and how they may affect people involved' (p.286) have a profound impact on researchers in the exploration of social processes.

The visual materials discussed in this research are not simply representations created for multiple purposes but also contain messages that can reveal partial realities (Holm, 2014). This research does not draw a clear distinction between images and photographs, but it largely pays attention to photographs and videos as moving images. By treating photographs and videos as visual artefacts or sources, I reviewed some pictures displayed in exhibitions; photographs of museum activities, the construction of the LLZE, and the exhibition-making in the LLZE; and a few ethnographic films produced by ethnic minority people. I also took photographs to record the embodied details of museum exhibitions and activities, and the living environment and daily lives of villagers for future ethnographic description.

I accessed visual materials in the AMGX through observing its exhibitions and official websites. The museum's online database is not open to researchers from the outside, so I acquired some photos of the ecomuseum's construction from the LLZE director. As for ethnographic videos, those posted on the official website are available, so I viewed several videos about cultural practices in the Longji village that were produced by local people. Fortunately, the online database of the LLZE is open to the public. It contains photographs of how local people participated in the exhibition centre construction, village meetings, and cultural practices and activities, even though there were no illustrations of photographs and videos stored in the exhibition.

The collection of visual data went in conjunction with their analysis in the course of my field trip. How photographs and videos are analysed is determined by how they are collected, as

interpreting photographs without knowing their context provides only limited results. According to Holm (2014), analysing photographs includes content analysis, discourse analysis and ethnographic analysis. While this research embraces a combination of these methods, I primarily examined existing visual images and films and collected them as useful data through combing photography with interviews. The subjectivity and ambiguity of interpreting visual materials is noticeable. Photographers, people who used them, and I as a researcher provide diverse interpretations. Decoding the messages embedded in photographs and videos through interviews and text analysis can facilitate the interpretation and contextual understandings of visual materials (Holm, 2014).

To reduce reliance on the imposition of my personal views and investigate the hidden ideological and cultural information in these visual materials, I interviewed their producers and the museum researchers who collected or exhibited them. For example, inquiring about how and why some pictures were selected for exhibition and where they came from is an effective way of understanding what cultural messages curators expect to transmit. As mentioned in Chapter 4, there is a photo wall of smiling faces of Zhuang people in the Zhuang Culture Exhibition. Although it seems to stereotype Zhuang people, I had a brief conversation with the exhibition curator to understand their rationales. The exhibition centre of the LLZE displayed many pictures regarding local scenery, agricultural activities, traditional cultural practices and important events. While the local museum staff member did not participate in the making of the exhibition, he can clearly point out when and where these photos were produced and the stories behind them.

I interviewed several villagers who participated in the cultural memory project and ethnographic film festivals in the Longji village (see Chapter Five) after watching their ethnographic videos. One villager described how his ethnographic films were produced. Photo elicitation and memory work are also helpful approaches to facilitate interviews (Ali, 2012).

Another reason for using photographs and videos in interviews is to elicit informants' opinions and bring back their memories. I invited museum staff in the AMGX to comment on villagers' works and their values. In doing so, I was able to provide explicit clarification concerning how ethnic minority individuals crystallised their understanding of heritage into photographs and videos that can be used to embody their cultures.

3.3 Qualitative data analysis: Grounded theory

The construction of theories in this research is grounded in the first-hand data. Theories had not been established before my immersion in the data and examining the themes, although some concepts like cultural heritage existed along with the study process (Silverman, 2006). The raw forms of data comprise documents, fieldnotes and interview transcripts, which needed to be teased out and further analysed to find a variety of themes or patterns without predetermining them (Roboson, 2002; Tucker, 2014). A rigorous process of transforming the data into valuable theories was critical to judging this research's credibility and reliability (Mason, 2002). Appling grounded theory coding, the researcher can 'separate, sort, and synthesise' the data and build substantive theories (Charmaz, 2006, p.3). Grounded theory is a research methodology developed to study 'phenomenon or process rather than the setting itself', delineating concepts and generating theories from qualitative data inductively (Charmaz, 2006, p.22; Bryant and Charmaz, 2011; Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.1). In this study, grounded theory is an approach to code and organise codes under overarching categories.

There are a few scholars dedicated to establishing explicit and robust coding procedures, helping discern grounded theory as a systematic methodology. 'Open coding', 'axial coding' and 'selective coding' are three steps of the grounded theory coding proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Charmaz (2006, p.46) also suggested two predominant phases of coding procedures: 'an initial phase' and 'a focused, selective phase'. The initial coding equates with

open coding developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (2017), aiming at categorising segments of data and labelling them, while the next-step coding includes Strauss and Corbin's 'axial coding' (2006). Informed by their well-established methods, thoroughly analytical research began from open coding, moved to the axial coding and ended by identifying and integrating core categories to achieve the theoretical integration and refinement based on a central idea – the interrelationship between museums, ethnic minority groups and cultural heritage in the representation of ethnic minority cultures (Seale, 2012).

Theoretically, grounded theory is supposed to be included throughout the research process (Seale, 2012). The process of identifying expected and unexpected or new theoretical themes needs to be done early, before the data-gathering work comes to an end (ibid.). In order to produce 'saturated' theories, theoretical sampling as a critical approach of constructing grounded theory can be strategically used after the open coding and high-level coding, in order to collect new data or 'sample to develop the theoretical categories' (Glaser and Strauss, 2017; Bryant, 2014, p.131). The data collection should be 'punctuated with episodes of data collection', directed by the preliminary data analysis (Seale, 2012, p.395). Yet, grounded theory is only applied as an eligible analytical tool of this research.

There is certainly ample reason that my coding procedure incorporated the same idea to its coding logic, while I committed to using grounded theory after collecting the data. I separated the ethnographic research into two phases (mentioned above), which had enabled me to distil data from my initial phase of fieldwork and analyse it to further my exploration of specific issues in the second phase of data collection. For instance, after I left the LLZE to move to the AMGX, I returned to my informants working for the ecomuseums and asked them more specific questions based on the data I collected in the LLZE. I gained new insights into materials regarding the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project', ethnic minorities' heritage mobilisation and their attitudes toward museums and their authorities. According to the data that I investigated

during the early phase of fieldwork, several theoretical directions of this research have been discerned, such as the changing power relations between museums and ethnic minority groups within domains of museum and heritage, and the marginalisation of museums in the heritage context. Research questions and methods were changed and developed to respond to these unexpected data (Tucker, 2014). In the formal data analysis, my coding process remained open to more theoretical possibilities and underlying patterns.

Interview data, field notes, and other materials collected at different times were analysed together to further elaborate open codes, helping the formulation of categories and subcategories, the comparison of data and categories, and the identification of relationships between them. For example, in the second visit to the LLZE, I realised that my fieldnotes and photos of how the local Zhuang community members display their cultures to attract visitors in their family-operated inns could be their self-representations. Thus, I identified this as a subcategory 'self-essentialisation for the tourism development', encompassed by the category 'the local community's mobilisation of heritage'. Under the core theme of 'the local community's embodiment of their power', this category was linked to another category 'the reconceptualization of ecomuseum'. Accordingly, Chapter Six illuminates how the local community repurposes ecomuseological practices to represent their culture.

Computer software programs, such as NVivo, let the researcher manage and display data in more systematic and ordered ways. Indeed, NVivo includes many functions such as retrieving data quickly and modelling ideas and facilitates the analysis of different forms of massive data. However, conceptualising the data mainly relies on the researcher's intellectual efforts in interpretative research. Coding the data through its search function fixes them under different labels, which overlooks the breadth and complexity of data and did not suit my strong demand for revisiting the data to acquire more in-depth information. Also, the data included thirty-five interviewees and were transcribed into approximately 200 pages. Interviewees, especially some

of them living in the ethnic minority community, spoke different dialects and digressed from topics. It would be a daunting and meaningless task to translate irrelevant details into English. I reviewed the transcripts many times to avoid the loss of information occurring during the translation. Therefore, NVivo was not an essential and flexible tool for me to work on bilingual data and reflect on interviewees' emotions and varied expressions they used to describe or discuss the same things or concepts. By examining its pros and cons, I coded them manually, assisted by basic Word and Excel files.

3.4 Role as a researcher and ethical issues

Doing qualitative research is a challenge that brings the whole self into the process. (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.13)

The primary purpose of this section is to demonstrate a critical self-reflection of my positionality throughout all phases of the research process and the ethical considerations. Positionality decides how the researcher perceives and works (Chavez, 2008). In retrospect, I immersed myself in the process of formulating questions, designing the research, collection, and analysis of data, and drawing research conclusions. Stating my active role as a researcher presents an account of reflexivity that acknowledges bias that I might bring to the data gathering and interpretative process, and power dynamics influencing the decision making. Interrogating the impact of my research stance is explicitly linked to ethical issues addressed in this research.

I chose to position myself as a "marginal native" when conducting the empirical investigation in the two museum settings. Following this logic, I do not perceive my role as an absolute outsider

or insider, but rather in-between. The identification of the researcher's insider or outsider perspective allows the researcher to bring different understandings to the topic and achieve a critical and in-depth comprehensive analysis of the data. My role in the creation of knowledge affects multiple aspects of this research, such as access to 'fields' and data, relationships with informants, and my sensitivity to the data (Berger, 2015).

During the period of ethnography, I remained close to nature, as snakes, cockroaches and other insects were infesting my living places. My living environment at the two field sites became a unique experience for me (see Figure 3.1 & 3.2). In the AMGX, I lived in a traditional wooden structure of the Miao people, situated in the outdoor display garden with the accompaniment of the museum building. In the LLZE, hiking on steep terraced slopes to visit different villages was my daily task, as the four villages (Liao Family village, Pan Family village, Ping village and Pingduan village) that compose the Longji village are built on mountains. While the AMGX allowed me to live in their exhibition centre, I chose to move to local ecomuseum staff Pan Tingfang's residence, grasping more information from insiders in order to avoid offence or initiating misunderstandings and conflicts with local villagers (Robson, 2002).
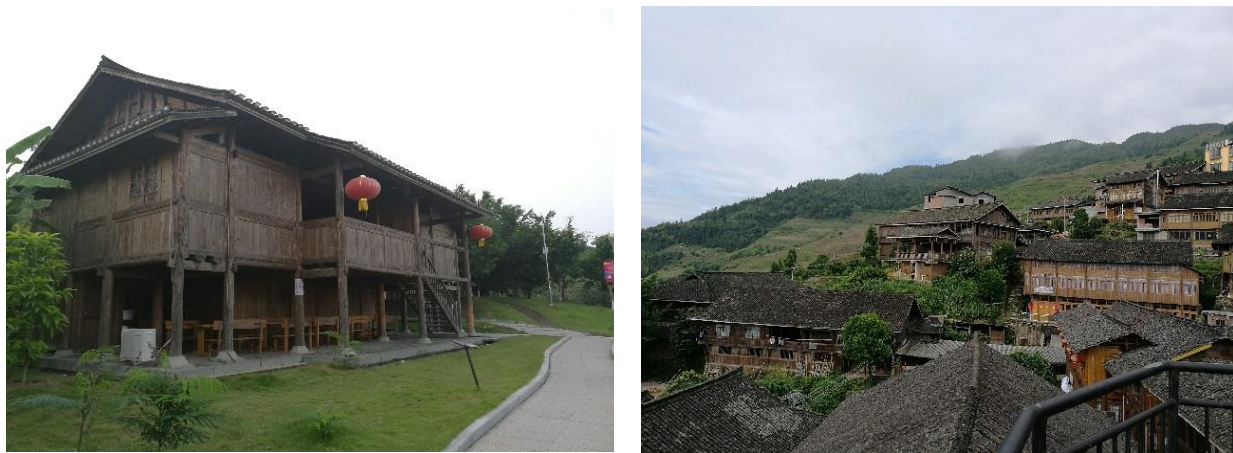
Figure 3. 2 & 3.3 Residence in the AMGX (left) and Residence in the LLZE (right). Photographs © Yahao Wang, 2018.

The role of the researcher as "marginal native" in this process is premised on my research motivations and ethnic background. As a Miao ethnic minority (苗族) in China, my identity[8] urges me to put attention on the representations of ethnic minority cultures in museums and how ethnic minority groups respond to them. I grew up in a small town (i.e. Guizhou Province, China), surrounded by numerous ethnic minority communities, and witnessed the dramatic transformation of ethnic minority cultures in the local area. When I visited a *minzu* museum for the first time, what I saw was not the same as what I have already known, and I expected to know. This experience sparked my interest in museum studies. Although I have never learned the Miao people's languages, traditions, or beliefs, my curiosity about ethnic minority cultures was triggered by a vernacular dialect that some local people use to tease others - 'Miaozi (苗子)'. After noticing that my cultural identity become an offensive word, I realised that ethnic minorities deserve more respect, and that it is necessary to dispel stereotypes about them, which affected the formation of the research objectives and ensured that I conducted the research ethically and in a culturally sensitive manner.

My cultural identity as Chinese and an ethnic minority person makes it easier for me to build trust, develop relationships with museum staff and ethnic minority people at the two museums, and show the transparency about my work plan and research objectives. Working with museum staff and being involved in their different practices in the AMGX, I seemingly become a member of their group. However, museum staff sidestepped sensitive issues, like the criticism of policies and their working places, and the exposure of their internal documents. I had actually been perceived as an onlooker, one who was excluded from their important meetings and unable to access many documents (e.g. exhibition outlines and working plans of several divisions).

---

[8] In China, the official ethnic minority identity can be taken from previous generations. I have taken this status since my mother's Miao ethnic identity determines that I can be an ethnic minority (少数民族) permanently and legally.

Obtaining ethical approval granted by the University of Leicester, I carried out the research 'in an ethically principled way even in the face of the unexpected' (Mason, 2002, p.79). After getting research permission from the AMGX and the LLZE and making clear ethical obligations, participants were fully informed about the research purpose, methods, possible use of the data, their participation procedures and possible risks of taking part (Creswell, 2012). Participants had the right to decide if they would like to take part in research at any stage (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, any sensitive topics in relation to interviewees' personal political opinions, privacy, traumas or tragedies did not appear in the inquiries. All interviewees in the AMGX signed a participant information form and confirmed that they approved the release of their quotes after the interviews were conducted. In the Longji village, where the LLZE is located, I interacted with villagers who are adults and participate in the ecomuseum construction and the tourism industry. Fewer ethical issues arose from this research. Some villagers could not understand the participant consent form I prepared and were very shy to accept formal interviews that involved audio recording. This required me to take steps to provide community members with essential information about myself and the research intentions in different ways, and to avoid raising topics which they would feel uncomfortable sharing with me.

Villagers in the LLZE preferred to use one their three types of dialects instead of Mandarin. Fortunately, one of the dialects is similar to the vernacular of my hometown. There was no constraint to my communication with the local community members. My host Pan is the elder (a nonofficial leader who is an expert on the Longji village and local Zhuang culture) of the Pan Family village, apart from his role as an ecomuseum staff member. As insiders, he and his family members introduced me as a researcher focusing on the ecomuseum to most of the villagers and always invited me to their family or friends' gatherings. They even endeavoured to recommend potential interviewees in the Longji village and contact them for me. With help from Pan's family, I learned about the specific village history and tensions between the

ecomuseum construction and tourism development. Moreover, I quickly blended in with this Zhuang community and had social interactions with villagers to gain their trust, although I was not a native. Once they knew my Miao identity, they spoke openly and asked me why I did not research my hometown. Through casual conversations in a comfortable environment, villagers tended to share their opinions about the ecomuseum and their experiences of developing tourism. Once I asked whether they would like to have formal interviews, most of them rejected it. Therefore, a part of personal conversations with villagers was written down as fieldnotes.

Focus groups are considered a productive way to collect opinions or ideas of a group of people, and gather reliable and more unexpected data while talking and discussing specific topics. When taking breaks at villagers' public social spaces, such as pavilions and *Fengyu* bridges, along with the villagers, I solicited their opinions to do focus groups and explained how to do it. They were still reluctant to formally become informants and talk about what they knew, treating me as an outsider who would ask them difficult questions. Hence, I gave up this plan. This experience raised my awareness of the distinctiveness between the villagers' knowledge system and my values in the academic setting. I transformed strategies of asking questions. For instance, I wanted to know how they understood cultural heritage, but instead of asking them about 'cultural heritage', my question was 'what things in the village can represent your local Zhuang culture from your perspective'? By doing so, I gathered the data, which established that they preferred to point out specific things or cultural practices instead of using the term cultural heritage.

Reliable research rests on the sensitivity of the researcher, which 'enables a researcher to grasp the meaning and respond intellectually (and emotionally) to what is being said in the data in order to arrive at concepts that are grounded in data' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.41). This sensitivity emerges from the appropriate utilisation of personal insights and experiences during

data gathering and analysis (ibid.). It is a subjective process where the researcher decides which codes are the most important and groups some of them to create a multitude of categories. My positionality, built upon research experiences, formed my sensitivity.

My undergraduate thesis, in relation to ecomuseums and tourism, ignited my research interest in ecomuseums and ethnic minority cultural heritage protection. During my postgraduate studies, I become concerned with ethnographic museums' displays of ethnographic collections and cultural rights and the authority of source communities on the interpretation of these collections. Issues of repatriation and authority sharing or collaboration between museums and Indigenous peoples prompted me to rethink the power and rights of ethnic minority groups and their relationships with museums. I also extended one of my research foci from ethnographic collections to ethnic minority cultural heritage in the first year of my PhD. At the beginning of the study in the two museums, I was aware of my overemphasis on museums' representational practices and omitted perspectives and practices of ethnic minority individuals and communities. Even though I could reach fewer ethnic minorities in the AMGX, except for visitors, ICH practitioners performing in the museum allowed me to inquire how they understood their heritage and the relationship with the museum. Valuing ethnic minority people's perspectives and their ways of knowing enables this research to be more inclusive and respectful.

> After staying at the Longji village for almost one month and having casual conversations with many villagers, I can sense that the exhibition centre of this ecomuseum seems to be situated in a parallel space far away from villagers' daily lives. (Field note: 02 July 2018)

Take my fieldnotes as an example, the radical change of my research in the LLZE can be attributed to my position that I sensed the dissonance between ecomuseum practitioners and local villagers in the use of ecomuseums and cultural heritage. Most of the local community's heritage management cannot be recognised as the efforts of ecomuseum practices. Their divergent definitions of the ecomuseum questioned my assumed research standpoint, that this Zhuang community is an ecomuseum and community members can be regarded as active or passive participants. This generated a more open and critical understanding of community members' heritage work on the grounds and beyond the setting of the museum. Afterwards, I sought to be clear in distinguishing ecomuseum practices from community members' representational practices.

3.5 Limitations

Various challenges that I faced throughout the research design and the fieldwork imposed limitations on this research. The first is the selection of case studies. Chapter One and this chapter has already provided the rationale for the usage of ethnographic case studies and the representativeness of my selected case studies. Choosing the AMGX and LLZE as my case studies served dual purposes: they are suitable for the research on the relationship between *minzu* museums at different levels and ethnic minority groups; and, given consideration of varied heritage discourses in different provinces and areas, they, located in the same region, enabled the research to penetrate the deepest discourses where they reside.

The principal reason that I determined to concentrate on *minzu* museums in Guangxi is the association between the AMGX and ten ethnic ecomuseums, owing to the 'ethnic ecomuseums project', which helped structure the research objectives. Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is the only area that links the regional *minzu* museums to ecomuseums. Moreover, ten ethnic ecomuseums are scattered around Guangxi. The research of more cases might contribute to a

new understanding or enrich the current knowledge base. Addressing one ecomuseum case appeared to be less inclusive and unlikely to provide a factual basis for formalising the generalisations of results to the broader research. In addition to the motivations that I illustrated, deeming the LLZE as the representative of ten 'similar' instances takes account of its construction time and growing tourism industry. As the latest ecomuseum to be constructed, it draws more attention from the AMGX, signifying the acquisition of more in-depth information about it in the AMGX. Its tourism development benefits the discovery of the local community's active heritage management. Some ecomuseums, which used to be my potential cases, either maintain little connection with the AMGX or have been studied by other researchers for their doctoral theses.

The uniqueness of the selected cases has both pros and cons. They can limit the scope of this research and result in the difficulties of applying the conclusions to other settings. While the findings drawn from particular cases may not be transferable, the force of fewer examples and strengths cannot be underestimated. Different cases with complicated and particularistic natures have their distinct phenomena and conditions, which need a specific analysis instead of replicating others' research. Additionally, I did not have sufficient time and financial support to devote to all cases.

The choice of interviewees in both museums and the ethnographic research in the AMGX were limited throughout the fieldwork. In the AMGX, I interviewed museum staff from different divisions, but few cultural practitioners performing at and interacting with the AMGX could be interviewed. This limitation gives rise to the weakness of the argument about the collaborative relationship between the AMGX and ethnic minority practitioners, and the marginalised role of the AMGX in the regional heritage tourism development and ICH practitioners' heritage making. Interviewees in the LLZE were mainly from local community members and practitioners who work for the ecomuseum. I endeavoured to contact people from the tourism company, but

received no response. The dearth of interviewees from other stakeholders, such as local government and the tourism company, influenced the depth of analysis of the complex context and power struggles in this Zhuang community.

One of the major limitations that I would like to acknowledge is the relatively short period of ethnographic research time. The richness of data needs researchers to make a long-term engagement in research sites (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). An important part of my research focuses on heritage making and instrumentalisation in the local ethnic community. The anthropological method of ethnography requires me to invest a considerable length of time in fieldwork and sustained immersion in the village for the sake of recording how the idea of heritage is negotiated and used in social life. Nonetheless, as the fieldwork timeline discussed above, it took six months to do the fieldwork and I allocated no more than two months to the study of the LLZE or the Longji village. While the qualitative data collected during fieldwork in the Longji village facilitated the discussion regarding the villagers' appropriation and reconceptualisation of the ecomuseum in Chapter Six, it is evident that revealing the local community's real world and contextualising their heritage practices thoroughly demands an extended period of time in the village.

3.6 Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter reviewed the formation of the research strategy and methods, the adoption of grounded theory for the data analysis, my role as a researcher in the research process and my approach to resolving ethical issues, and this project's research limitations. The process of collection, analysis, and reflection helps support and justify the theoretical base framed in Chapter Two (Kumar, 2005). It also makes evident how difficulties and findings emerging from it tailored the research questions and enlarged the scope of the original research objectives to embrace *minzu* museums as the contested place of power. The critical elucidation of methodology justifies the arguments settled by subsequent chapters, ones that

unearth and reconsider taken-for-granted power disparities between museums and ethnic

minorities in cultural representations.

Chapter 4 How *minzu* museums produce ethnic minority cultures

Minzu museums operate under the sway of the political discourse of 'diversity in unity' in China. To engage this political framework of "multiculturalism" and "nationalism", *minzu* museums have adopted two debatable representational strategies and approaches that provoke widespread criticisms, cultural assimilation and essentialism. This chapter critically explores how these two strategies influence the formation of *minzu* museums' representational politics and poetics and their institutional heritage making as the process of cultural production. Specifically, this chapter is interested in why and how the concept of ethnic minority heritage becomes a subject in *minzu* museums and how museums draw on it to construct ethnic minority cultures.

Influenced by the overemphasis of multiculturalism in China, culture and heritage have always been associated with the idea of endangerment (Butler, 2006; Alivizatou, 2012). This chapter aims to see how *minzu* museums take on their role as heritage agencies from retracing the development of Chinese *minzu* museums and exhibitions. *Minzu* museums frame processes of assembling, classifying, and exhibiting cultural heritage as the salvage of ethnic minority cultures, which has been problematised. The critical analysis of permanent exhibitions at the AMGX and LLZE provide examples of othering ethnic minority cultures as the showcase of cultural diversity. Crucially, this chapter concludes by revealing how and why the disparity in power between museums and ethnic minority groups have been taken for granted and rarely recognised.

4.1 The heritage turn in *minzu* museums: Ethnic minority cultures under threat

To return to discussions about the institutionalisation of heritage and the creation of Chinese AHD in Chapter Two, this chapter seeks to specify how ethnic minority cultural heritage have been institutionalised and how *minzu* museums have evolved into heritage agencies. A sense of

loss has haunted the accumulation of ethnic minority collections, from the early twentieth century to the present, which is the catalyst for the development of *minzu* museums in China. Simply, the impetus for the ethnographic collection of *minzu* museums derives from the ideology of diverse ethnic cultures at risk (Harrison, 2013c). The role of *minzu* museums has gone through a dramatic transformation, from "repositories of ethnological objects" and "patriotism educational sites", to "agents of heritage", along with the creation and recreation of such discourse. The definition of ethnic minority collections has also changed from *minzu wenwu* (cultural relics of ethnic minorities), omitting the intangibility of ethnic minority cultures to cultural heritage that is considered more inclusive.

Consciously collecting, displaying, and managing ethnic minority objects in China began in the early twentieth century. Before the rise of cultural heritage protection and mobilisation for national development, since the 1980s, "rescuing" endangered ethnic minority cultures experienced two major phases: before and after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Within these two phases, assembling and governing ethnic minority objects, as one of the approaches to salvaging cultures, predominately served to difference academic and political intentions (Song, 2004). Confronting political tensions during this period and the negative impact of the cultural assimilation policy, a group of scholars considered amassing *minzu wenwu* as an urgent ethnic task for anthropological and ethnological research and the mutual understanding between the Han majority and ethnic minorities.

In 1916, Cai Yuanpei (2000) proposed that there is the Museum of Anthropology displaying household implements, costumes, decorations, miniatures of architectures and photographs of folklore that enables anthropologists to make the cross-cultural comparison through objects collected during their fieldwork. He was considered as one of the luminaries in China who showed a profound preoccupation with ethnic minority objects and put forward the idea of the *minzu* (ethnic minorities) museum. Although he failed to establish the first Chinese *minzu*

museum, his work on ethnology and the collection of ethnic minority objects inspired the development of anthropology and ethnology research and *minzu* museums in China.

Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the display of ethnic minority collections (民族陈列室) or exhibitions was mostly initiated by universities and existed for the field of ethnology, working as ideal platforms for researching ethnic minority cultures. The *Huaxi Xiehe* University (Sichuan University) has placed attention on the ethnic objects in western China since 1919. The establishment of the Central Academy, in 1928, prompted the empirical research and material cultures gathering of several ethnic minority groups, such as Yao in Guangxi, Gaoshan in Taiwan, and Miao in Xiangxi (Lei and Pan, 2012). This signifies the inception phase of Chinese *minzu* museums' development and the value making and collection of ethnic minority objects (ibid.).

From 1937-1946, the National Museum[9] (中央博物院) in Nanjing and the Central Academy (中央研究院) organised five remarkable ethnographic fieldworks and ethnic object collecting activities in western China (ibid.). These indicated an intentional tendency to preserve and mobilise ethnic minority material cultures for national identity construction, and a strengthening of the social cohesion during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Influenced by pioneers of Chinese ethnology, such as Cai Yuanpei and Wu Zelin, the early stage of the *minzu* museums' formation and *minzu* objects collection in China was anchored to the discipline of ethnology and Western scholarship.

After the PRC was formally established, Western theories of anthropology and sociology discontinued being transmitted. China initiated the formation of its "socialist" museological

---

[9] The predecessor of the Nanjing Museum in China.

framework and theories shaped by the "Soviet museum model" (Lei and Pan, 2012; Varutti, 2014). Hence, in addition to setting up divisions of conservation, exhibition and education in museums, the core function that museums at this stage had to perform was to satisfy the governmental demands of civilising ethnic minority groups and carrying out patriotism education. Varutti (2014) states that museums in a communist society ultimately act as 'propaganda tools' (p.28) to consolidate the multi-ethnic national regime. In her opinion, museums, when restrained by governments, can hardly transform to become the spaces to grapple with unsolved issues of ethnic minorities and power struggles.

Moreover, the authority of constructing *minzu* museums or exhibitions shifted, from universities and academia to the government. Under this circumstance, ethnic minority objects collected by scholars or officials ranged from ethnic minority material cultures with scientific research value, to items reflecting the positive impact of ethnic policies and marking the contribution made by ethnic policies on ethnic minority areas. The dominant function that *minzu* museums undertook transitioned from supporting academic research, into accommodating political demands (Song, 2010). These museums mobilised material cultures of ethnic minorities to distribute ethnic policies and patriotism and their collective identity as "Chinese". The desire to construct diverse ethnic minority cultures as the national value and a source of national construction was beyond their aspiration of developing the professional field of ethnology.

The State Ministry of Culture (Currently State Ministry of Culture and Tourism) put the nationwide ethnographic research of ethnic minorities and the collection and preservation of their historical, social and cultural evidence on the agenda. "Rescuing" (抢救) ethnic minority material cultures was deemed as the emergent political work for the government to address ethnic issues, such as the identity anxiety and inequality of ethnic groups, preparing for the multi-ethnic nation-building (多民族国家). 'The display of Chinese ethnic minority objects (中

国少数民族展览会)', held by the State Ethnic Affairs Committee (国家民族事务委员会) in 1950, inspired the Central *Minzu* Museum initiative (Qin, 2019, p.30). Meanwhile, the State Ministry of Culture officially issued "the scope of collecting *minzu wenwu* (民族文物的搜集范围)" to prepare for the identification of valuable ethnic objects and the recognition of ethnic groups (Tang, 2007; Lei and Pan, 2012). The term of *minzu wenwu* replaced "ethnological specimen or materials" emerging along with the development of ethnology in China (Ding, 2012). It has been conceptualised as tangible evidence that reflects the material and spiritual cultures of 55 ethnic minority groups and is of immense historical, scientific, and artistic value (Gao, 1995; Shi, 2006). "The Cultural Relics Protection Law of PRC" established in 1982 (final revised in 2002) clearly states that 'ethnic objects are representative material cultures that reflect the social systems, productions and ways of living in every period of ethnic minorities' history' (Anqi, 2014, p.15).

In 1956, the central government carried out a campaign of "Salvaging Backwardness (抢救落后)", working for the Ethnic Classification Project, to sponsor scholars to conduct the thoroughly "National Survey of Ethnic Minorities (民族大调查)" (Lei and Pan, 2012). This endeavour aimed to convey the need for civilisation and modernisation of ethnic minority groups, reduce ethnic tensions, and reframe ethnic relations from Han-centred to the coexistence of ethnic groups (Tang, 2007). Strikingly, this large-scale survey lasted eight years, implicated by the Soviet model of multiculturalism, and 'was an important means for making territorial claims, defining borders, and exerting central control over the nation's various peoples—in short, of empire building' (Denton, 2014, p.202).

Ethnic cultural relics collected in the course of that survey were stored in the *Minzu* Museum of the *Minzu* University of China and the Cultural Palace of Nationalities. In the same year, Zhou Enlai, the former premier of the State Council, proposed to construct ten leading national museums in Beijing, encompassing the Central *Minzu* Museum (中央民族博物馆) (Song, 2010,

p.13). Notwithstanding that this museum project had been repealed, the Cultural Palace of Nationalities, replacing the Central *Minzu* Museum, was instituted to display the efforts of researching ethnic groups in the past decade. It became a political site for the authorities to publicise achievements of the CCP on ethnic affairs.

From the 1950s on, increasing political movements engendered a "catastrophe" of cultural diversity and ethical issues in China. The damage of ethnic cultural relics and the disappearance of intangible cultural traditions could be ascribed to this periodic political instability. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1967), numerous temples, old sites and monuments in ethnic minority concentrated areas had come under severe attack, and local people's religious activities had been impeded. Museums and exhibitions had been repudiated and banned (Su, 1996). Desecrating and prohibiting cultural practices of ethnic minorities as "superstitious" and "feudal" were a part of the destructive actions called upon by the "Gang of Four (四人帮)"[10] (Svensson, 2006; Su, 1996). In Yunnan, according to Fiskesjö (2015), the obliteration of Wa people's rituals and paraphernalia connected with their headhunting tradition intensified contestations between the independent Wa society and the new power holder. With the demise of Wa people's self-determination and their "old world" after 1958, their headhunting past and political institutions have been covered by practising Marxist doctrine (ibid.). Since then, their political position has been hampered by the Party-state and Wa people have entered the era of "New China".

As Song (2004) noted, while most people forcedly dissembled their religious beliefs and spiritual emotion, for example, in some Dai villages in Yunnan where people were Buddhists, villagers' religious fervour drove the reconstruction and restoration of temples after the termination of the Cultural Revolution. Ethnic minority groups living in villages began to reclaim

---

[10] "Gang of Four" is a small and powerful clique led by Ling Biao, the deputy chairman, and Jiang Qing, Chairman Mao's wife, which directly resulted in inestimable cultural loss during the Cultural Revolution.

their ownership and demands of heritage, such as temples, ancestral halls, and festivals (Svensson, 2006). As the outcome of the heritage movement in the 1980s, the Party-state embraced this cultural and religious revival, while the term of "revival", to some extent, is actually a recreation or reinvention (Fiskesjö, 2015). The invention of tradition, from Hobsbawm (1983) perception, can be practices which transmit certain values and expressions to the next generations on the one hand and practices which respond to the discontinuity and the historic change on the other.

The promotion of minority distinctiveness throughout China is premised on the suppression of some ethnic minority traditions, which might threaten national solidarity and modernisation (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013). In Fiskesjö 's (2015) research on the exoticisation of Wa culture in China, local cadres and entrepreneurs worked as the state's approach to controlling ethnic minorities, by selectively reviving and appropriating the folkloristic aspect of Wa culture, which carefully disconnect its headhunting tradition from its past related to warfare. This case showcases that celebrating exotic ethnic cultures, without undermining the unity of China, is more crucial than documenting and staging authentic pasts when the state prevents ethnic minority cultures from extinction. Moreover, the appropriated and exoticised past of the Wa group affects how the younger generation understands their identity and represents their culture.

Before the revolutionary period, the Xinjiang Uigur Autonomous Region, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region set up their regional level museums to collect and conserve ethnic minority objects. The explosion of ethnic theme parks had begun from the "Splendid China" in Shenzhen in 1989, followed by "China Folk Cultural Villages" next door, and one in Kunming of Yunnan province (Shepherd, 2006; Fiskesjö, 2015). Theme parks are typical primitivist tourist destinations (Lu, 2014; Fiskesjö, 2015). From the 1990s onward, cultural exhibitions, *minzu* museums at different levels, and theme parks have

begun to burgeon and advocate for the official identification of ethnic groups and the solidarity between them, being dedicated to histories and cultures of ethnic minorities (Denton, 2014).

Minzu museums or theme parks are places staging ethnic minority cultures brought from remote areas, where they might unconsciously preserve them by "abusing" heritage to confirm the exotic otherness and primitive version of ethnic minority groups (Fiskesjö, 2015). Pagani (2017, p.72) draws an analogy between ethnographic museums and 'a predatory activity', stating that their history of hunting for indigenous cultural resources stimulates them to critically interpret objects. Such keen intention of amassing collection can also be detected during the processes of *minzu* museums' salvage of ethnic minority cultural resources (Pagani, 2017). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that *minzu* museums' collection of ethnic minority objects is not built upon asymmetrical colonial power relations. As ethnic minority groups can determine whether and what they sell or donate to museums, which perform pivotal roles in the formation of museum collections to indicate their agency (Harrison, 2013b).

The growing seriousness of the identity crisis and anxiety triggered by the social and economic structure reformation (the market economy), from the late 1970s, needs to be unravelled (Wang and Rowlands, 2017; Varutti, 2014). The state disseminates the fear of cultural loss generated by the Cultural Revolution, modernisation, globalisation and illegal trade in ethnic minority objects with historical value (Song, 2004; Maags, 2020; Men, 2006). Large amounts of historical and sacred objects of ethnic minorities are circulated in markets or other countries. For instance, the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan has collected valuable ethnic objects from China since the middle of the 1980s (Men, 2006). Additionally, the government intends to extend the scope of harnessing ethnic minority cultures and enhance the international image as a multi-ethnic national state by involving the global heritage movement. Amassing *minzu wenwu* in *minzu* museums has been reframed and subject to the international and national heritage making, which 'can be seen as a reflection of a regulatory shift from colonial and

imperial forms of governance to nationalist and transnational forms as the result of processes of globalisation' (Ding, 2012; Harrison, 2013c, p.4). Even though *minzu wenwu* encompasses movable and immovable, and visible and invisible ethnic objects, which are still extensively used in museums, all of them theoretically have fallen under the domain of cultural heritage.

The rise of cultural heritage globally has prompted the state to capitalise on and repackage ethnic minority cultures as heritage to cultivate the nationalism and "Chineseness" among ethnic minorities (Zhu and Maags, 2020; Maags, 2020). The application of cultural heritage enables ethnic minorities' cultural manifestations and practices to subsume into a broader nationalist discourse, depoliticising and transforming plural ethnic minority cultures into 'systematic units for governance and regulation' (Zhu and Maags, 2020, p.109). Shepherd's (2009) analysis of the inscription of Tibet's several temples as World Heritage sites has unearthed the state political objectives. The international (UNESCO heritage program) and national heritage discourses (the top-down heritage management and heritage tourism for development) appear to assimilate and essentialise ethnic minority cultures as "Chinese tradition", which might be deemed as unchanging and fossilised (Smith, 2006). Varutti (2014) elucidates that the underlying logic of sustaining the Chinese idea of tradition is to approach heritage as the symbol of the civilisation's continuity and collective memory. The concept of heritage, championed by the official authorities, evinces the national intent to re-evaluate cultural traditions as a political tool and the constructive strategy that can shore up ethnic harmony in the national forum (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013).

The revaluing and revitalisation of ethnic minorities' authentic pasts expand the protection of ethnic minority cultures, from collecting *minzu wenwu* and recording cultural practices, to assembling places, ethnic items, and practices in situ virtually by inscribing them in heritage lists and countering threats to living heritage (Harrison, 2013c). Appropriating the international policy narrative "heritage under threat", flowing from UNESCO, further legitimises the domestic

protection of ethnic minority cultures and heritage preservation in China (Maags, 2020). Assembling and classifying ethnic cultural practices stemmed from the 1920s' New Cultural Movement (新文化运动) and have been sustained by the national surveys of ethnic minorities in 1950s, 1982 and 2007 (Shepherd and Yu, 2013). In 2003, the state enacted "The Ethnic and Folk Traditional Culture Protection Act (民族民间传统文化保护法)". Since then, safeguarding ICH has been foregrounded as the new paradigm of salvage culture (Ding, 2012).

The perception of "heritage under threat", as the discursive strategy, has developed into a part of heritage discourses in China (Maags, 2020). Many local stakeholders, such as local governments, cultural institutions, entrepreneurs, and ethnic minorities, appropriate this strategy to draw official attention to local concerns and participate in the dominant heritage discourse. The multi-level governance of heritage elicits cultural contestations among stakeholders (Maags, 2018). *Minzu* museums have no longer been privileged sites of preserving ethnic minority cultures. The national institutionalisation of heritage discussed in Chapter Two ratifies museums' status as heritage agencies that can bolster the national identity construction and the management of cultural heritage. With the protection of heritage as cultural and economic capital, museums come to be part of the tourism industry and compete with other tourist or heritage sites (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). *Minzu* museums' identity crisis forces them to safeguard ICH in relation to the agency of ethnic minority people, beyond merely ossifying them and conducting practices without ethnic minorities' participation (Alivizatou, 2012; Harrison, 2013c). Chapter Five seeks to elaborate on how ICH affects museum practices.

4.2 Making ethnic minority cultures: Heritage production within museums

This section problematises official heritage and cultural discourses that are driven by the fear of the disappearance or extinction of ethnic minority cultures. It is argued that cultures and cultural expressions of ethnic minorities are fluid and should be 'made, unmade and remade'

(Clifford, 2001, p.479), which is outside the debate of authenticity and rearticulates heritage and cultural transformation as cultural continuity (Harrison, 2013b). This section explores the AMGX's representational process of collection, classification, ordering and display of heritage and ethnic minority groups, in order to look at how the museum draws on ethnicity to construct heritage (Harrison, 2013b). As described clearly on the official website of the AMGX (2020), its predominant mission is to collect, research and exhibit traditional cultures of twelve ethnic groups living in Guangxi and the ethnic minority cultures of the surrounding provinces and Southeast Asia. It is also built for preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. Questions raised here are: how ideologies affect their practices, and how does the museum determine what ethnic cultural heritage is and utilise it to define ethnic minority cultures?

Heritage and the modes of the exhibition are central to the definition and representation of ethnic minority cultures, attuning to the ideology of 'diversity in unity' (多元一体) (Dick, 2003). The political discourse of multiculturalism in the PRC accentuates the shared ideology of ethnic harmony in unity and leads to the superficial representation of differences (Denton, 2014). This discourse that is disseminated by museums has been criticised and explained as an outcome of the central government's appropriation of ethnic minority cultures to represent the unitary nation (Denton, 2014; Varutti, 2014; Gnecco, 2015). The policy narrative of multiculturalism has reverberated around the society and the promotion of deactivated cultural diversity becomes the principle of cultural representation. Referring to the concept of "Chinese Orientalism", Varutti holds that Chinese museums standardise difference by selectively essentialising ethnic minority cultures in 'the narratives of subordination of ethnic minorities to the Han majority' (2012, p.305; 2014), which generates the marginalisation of some ethnic minority groups and the overrepresentation of the others (e.g. Miao and Zhuang).

Furthermore, Ivan Karp (1991, p.375) sets out the strategies of exhibiting 'others': assimilation and exoticisation, both products of the hegemony. Assimilation and exoticisation are notions opposite to each other, eliciting different responses to cultural differences – dissolving differences or essentialising them. Seeing that exhibiting cultures only rely on one strategy is limiting. Pieterse (2005, p.169) makes a further argument that 'the assimilating strategy subsumes difference and re-inscribes it as a substructure of modernity'. Dialectical tensions and conflicts between these two approaches are engendered when museums simultaneously attempt to define diverse cultures as a unified concept and mark cultural differences. These two strategies of sourcing and arranging cultural heritage are what Chinese *minzu* museums commonly employ to manifest multiculturalism in the Chinese nation.

By referencing Wallerstein's (1990) and Raymond Williams' (1981) work, Bella Dicks (2003, p.25) outlines three definitions of the term culture: anthropological, hierarchical, and cultural products that can be either one. Culture can be anthropological, stressing the cultural differences and the social groups' identities and uniqueness (Wallerstein, 1990); and hierarchical, showcasing the power of defining what culture is and the distinction of superior and inferior (Dicks, 2003, p.25). Adopting an anthropological and hierarchical perspective of culture, the discourse of multiculturalism constructs 55 ethnic minorities as rigid categories (the Ethnic Classification project). It entails the essentialisation and exoticisation of ethnic minorities as the result of fuelling Chinese identity building (Denton, 2014). Its far-reaching repercussions map on to the commodification of ethnicity in the contemporary tourism economy.

Displaying the multiplicity of an authentic ethnic past necessarily contributes to the imagination of a nation-state with "simple", "colourful", and "exotic" ethnic cultures (Oakes, 1997; Varutti, 2012; Zhu and Maags, 2020). Ethnicity, thus, has been defined and represented as heritage closely bonded with Chinese traditional cultures to emphasise the "pure" ethnic minority cultures in the past, instead of being perceived as diverse forms of authorities and knowledge

(Oakes, 1997; Harrison, 2013c; O'Brien and Brown, 2020). The intent to serve the discursive use of ethnicity is the very essence of museological practices. Furthermore, concern about the erasure of cultural differences has been at the core of heritage preservation in China, as the previous section detailed. Concepts such as threat, risk and endangerment have been used to convey that globalisation and modernisation can threaten the persistence of heritage and ethnic minority cultures. Treating heritage and culture as limited resources, *minzu* museums have functioned to collect ethnic objects on a massive and rapid scale and from different channels, in order to manage risk intensified by the conditions of modernity (Harrison, 2013c). In this sense, overlooking ethnic minority culture's ongoing engagement with the present and essentialising them largely inform museums' collection, categorisation, classification and exhibition making as heritage production.

4.2.1 Collection and classification

Assembling ethnic objects as heritage

As indicated by the section above, the reinvention and reconceptualisation of *minzu wenwu* as cultural heritage denote the shift of ethnic minority cultural embodiments and practices, from the instrument for patriotic education and ethnic policies publicity, to cultural and economic assets in need of protection and transmission (Ding, 2012). This phenomenon maps onto the revaluation of *minzu* museums as 'agents of heritage' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p.1). The process of collecting ethnic objects is the inception of museums' heritage making. Collected as fragments of ethnic minority cultures, these objects embrace a new stage in their biographies (Macdonald, 2011), which carry political weight. The presence of ethnic objects as reified heritage is vital to *minzu* museums' self-making as a space of defining ethnic minority cultures and imagining the multi-ethnic nation.

The impetuses of the AMGX and LLZE's collecting activities are to "rescue" cultural heritage and accumulate collections for making exhibitions due to the paucity of exhibits. The AMGX amassed collections during the construction of the museum, starting in 2003, and acquired them from different places in Guangxi. Utilising twelve ethnic groups inhabiting Guangxi as categories, the AMGX organised a group of staff at different levels from the cultural departments to collect ethnic objects. Intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities has also become a category for the collection, but has been ossified as objects, archives, and catalogues. In Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's view (2004, p.6),

> The devaluation of the scientific value of ethnographic collections – as ethnology moves on to other concerns – prepares the way for their revaluation as heritage, in a double sense: the heritage of those from whom those objects were taken and the heritage of ethnology itself.

In the AMGX and LLZE, cultural heritage is a means for the museum to purify ethnic objects collected from fields or other channels through reproducing their relationship with each other and with ethnic minority groups and endowing them with institutional value as museum products. Drawing on cultural heritage as the materialisation of otherness or 'a marker of difference' (Matsuda and Mangoni, 2016, p.3; Kolås, 2004), museums devalue diverse forms of knowledge behind it, which simplify narratives of ethnic minority cultures. Matsuda and Mangoni (2016, p.4) suggest 'the dual mechanism of differentiation and assimilation of heritage', proposing that heritage can also be the unified notion of assimilating difference. For instance, cultural heritage in the AMGX, under the categories of twelve ethnic minorities, is subsumed within "Chinese *Minzu* Cultural Heritage" and "Guangxi *Minzu* Cultural Heritage". Naming and assimilating the display of ethnic minority objects and their living cultures as heritage intends to create common history and collective memories. While cultural heritage emanates from 'a web of interactions and exchanges between various groups and has been

changing and reconstructed over time by all the actors involved' (ibid., p.3), the AMGX's static

and rigid portrayal of cultural heritage makes it difficult to form new interactions between

objects and people, and keep objects "alive".

Classification

The exhibition-making processes of the AMGX and the LLZE start from naming and classification

or objectification. Objects removed from the context of ethnic minority groups have been

recontextualised as collections or displays gifted with new meanings, which are reorganised in

terms of ethnicity when entering into museums. Objectification, as Banquet (2012, p.123)

elaborates, 'involves the appropriation of cultural property and its reconfiguration within a

systematic framework of knowledge'. Objectification, or classification used in this research, is

tacitly acknowledged as an integral part of representational processes to reify the ambiguous

concept of "culture". Utilising classification as the representational technique, the museums

can arrange and rearrange objects to produce new forms of knowledge and tailor narratives to

their own priorities and preferences.

As Gil (2016, p.83) puts it, 'museum narratives can be understood as systems of classification'.

Classification is the embodiment of the museum's power and the crucial element of the

knowledge-making system (Phillips, 2011). In the expression of Yelvinton, Goslin and Arriaga

(2002, p.365), 'objects come from other societies, but everything about the collection itself –

the way the objects were collected, why they were collected, and how and why they get

displayed – points to us'. Linking classification to the idea of 'inclusion and exclusion', Phillips

(2011, p.95) argues that museological practices like collecting and classification can result in

marginalising certain ethnic minority groups.

The AMGX reinforces the official recognised ethnic minorities as an essential categorisation through object assembling. When moving to make the permanent exhibition *Wucaibagui*, the AMGX found that it was an impossible task to achieve equal representation and visibility of the twelve ethnic cultures in Guangxi. As stated in the response from one vice-director,

> If we established themes and classified objects according to the ethnic distinctions, the exhibition would be divided into twelve sections. Therefore, some ethnic groups with a long history, large populations and rich cultural expressions required spacious exhibiting space, but ethnic groups without a mass of collections could only occupy small areas. This might result in the sense of inequality and the adverse impact on ethnic solidarity. (Interview 8, 21/05/2018: Zhuang).

In their original plan, museum curators sought to mobilise cultural difference to create an essentialist perspective of culture. After putting forward a series of exhibition strategies, they abandoned the attempt on presenting twelve ethnic cultures separately and determined a thematic approach (文化事项) was best, for the sake of the emanation of ethnic solidarity and integration.[11] Beyond assigning objects to distinct ethnic cultures, curators invested the macro-classifications with names such as history, home, folklore life, and costumes to engage notions of harmony, integration, and diversity (Ding, 2012). Encompassed by these themes, exhibits were sorted along the lines of function, material, geography, and typology to create the narrative. The thematic approach helps them conceal imbalanced contents of ethnic minority cultures, but this representational and interpretative process is not as unproblematic and objective as what the AMGX curators believed. Through rearranging objects to expert-defined categories, and reconstructing the order of things, the new relationships between exhibits emerged and are conveyed as the "truth". Certain narratives have been associated with the

---

[11] Interview 8, 21/05/2018: Zhuang.

definition of ethnic minority cultures through a thematic approach, which might generate the misunderstanding that cultures defined by museums are permanent and unchanging.

The AMGX's selection and re-classification of exhibits followed the confirmation of themes and the outlining of exhibitions which conformed to these themes. The AMGX houses approximately thirty thousand collections, and a few of these are designated as 'representative ethnic markers' (AMGX, 2017b). The AMGX started to establish policies for the collection and classification of objects from 2003, at the time of the museum's construction (Liang, 2009), as there were no national or regional policies to standardise methods of collecting and classifying objects. Diverse methods of classifying collections in the AMGX have been developed based on the collection policies established by the Regional Museum of Guangxi in 1960s (Liang, 2009). Apart from classifying collections on the basis of their original ethnic groups and functions, the AMGX simplified the categorisation of collections by establishing eight types based on texture: bronze drums, textiles, gold and silverware and ornaments, carpentry, manuscripts, ceramics, stoneware, and obsolete family objects donated by the public (Liang, 2009; AMGX, 2017b).

Eight broad categories of objects possessing 'local and ethnic characteristics' (AMGX, 2017b) have been collected by the AMGX. Interestingly, in order to show colourful cultures, collections of objects relating to ethnic groups that have less pronounced cultural characteristics, such as the Han, have been marginalised in exhibitions. Besides permanent exhibitions, the AMGX held various temporary exhibitions from 2009 to 2018, which were predominantly about the textiles of the eight collection categories. Table 4.1 below has been created after reviewing the AMGX's archive regarding collection management, *Report for the evaluation of Level one National Museum: Part two Collection Management and Scientific Research (1),* and the AMGX's official website. It presents an overview of specific collections displayed in in the Decade Touring exhibitions, and shows that textiles comprising costumes, embroidery, brocade and quilt occupied a comparatively large space in these exhibitions.

Year	Exhibition/Category	Costumes	Embroidery	Brocade	Silver Ornament	Quilt	Batik	Rock Art	Bronze Drums	Archeaological Objects	Photograph
2009	Collaboration Exhibition (CE)									√	
2010	*Sixue Yinhua - Miao Silver Ornament in Guangxi, Guizhou and Hunan (CE)*				√						
	Memory of ethnic groups: Ethnic minority communities in Guangxi										√
	Rock art in ethnic minority areas (CE)							√			
2011	CE			√							
2012	Zhuang Costumes (CE)										√
	Yi Costumes (CE)	√									
	Jingxiu Bagui - Guangxi Embroidery and Brocade Art	√	√		√						
2013	*Pretty Guangxi*	√	√	√		√					
	Diversity China - Miao Costumes in Guizhou, Guangxi, Yunan(CE)	√		√					√	√	
	History of Guangxi Ethnic Culture	√									
	Diversity China - Yao Costume(CE)	√									
2014	*Diversity China - Yao Costume(CE)*	√									
	Zhuang Culture			√					√		
	Traditional Bocade and Embroidery Art in Guangxi	√	√	√			√				
	Diversity China - Miao Costume(CE)	√									
	Diversity China - Dong Costume(CE)	√									
2015	*Jingxiu Bagui - Guangxi Ethnic Minority Culture*	√	√	√							
	Wucai Bagui - Ethnic Costume	√	√	√							
	Jingxiu Bagui - Guangxi Embroidery and Brocade Art	√	√	√							
	Quilts in Southwestern of China					√					
	Baina- Zhuang Quilt					√					
2016	Jingxingtianxia - Chinese Brocade(CE)			√							
	Zhijianjingwei - Ethnic Minority Brocade			√							
2017	*Baby Carreier from Grandma - Costumes of Ethnic Minority Women and Children in Guangxi*	√	√								
2018	*Quilting Arts and Tradition: People, Handcrafts and Community Life*					√					

Table 4. 1 Temporary exhibitions and relevant collections in the AMGX (The AMGX, 2017c).

Most of these temporary exhibitions, as the table indicates, were centred only on the display of a broad category of textiles. Museum practitioners emphasise that the scarcity of collections rendered the repeated display of them in various temporary exhibitions necessary. The widespread use of these objects seems to be the museum's invisible convention when planning an exhibition. A question arises here: why have collections such as clothing, embroideries and quilts been standardised as a crucial type of exhibit to materialise ethnic minority cultures? A popular answer from museum staff is that the aesthetic value of these objects can make ethnic minority cultures visible. Colourful materials, distinct patterns, and complicated production processes are recognised as "evident cultural features (明显的特点)" of clothing and textiles, highlighting these objects as markers of difference. This idea possibly derives from the national

discourse, which is invented based on an assumption that clothing is the symbolic repository of ethnic minority identities.

Some academic works (Varutti, 2011; An, 2011; etc.) uncover a trend of representing ethnic minorities in China in which ethnic identities (as defined by the ethnic classification project) are visualised by promoting diverse ethnic minorities' costumes and textiles. For instance, Zhu Jing (2018) in her PhD thesis traces the histories of China's imperial representation of ethnic minorities by means of photographs in order to explore how clothes were used to visualise ethnic minorities in the past. She found that the two elements of clothing and body serve to materialise identity, creating essentialised and exotic images of ethnic minorities. In the AMGX, museum staff are apt to use mannequins without gender and race characteristics for the purpose of exhibiting the identities of bodies. However, in activities organised by the museum, it appeared that young, attractive women became moving figures, providing a romantic vision of ethnic minority lives.

As discussed by An Qi (2011), ethnic dressing and textiles have been politicised as a symbol of promoting cultural diversity in China. It is noteworthy that producing and wearing traditional costumes has also become ethnic minority groups' typical means of self-affirmation. Accordingly, presenting textiles and ethnic bodies dressed colourfully has been legitimised by museums as a productive way to display multiculturalism. These objects, stereotyped as symbols with more distinct cultural features, get more opportunities to be displayed and commodified in the museum (Kolås, 2004). The bronze drums are valuable both as historical and archaeological objects of ethnic minority groups, such as Zhuang and Yao, in the AMGX. However, the priority given to them is different from other tangible cultural expressions collected in the museum. Their scientific value and materiality for archaeological research are more significant than the cultural-symbolic values that connect them with where they were produced and where they are presently reproduced (An, 2014).

The employment of the ethnic ecomuseums project intends to evoke the paradigm shift in the ways in which ethnic minority communities are involved in museums practices and the negotiation of representations. Exhibitions in these two museum models should have different systems of classification and demonstrate the radical change of the representational strategies (Gil, 2016). However, one interviewee pointed out the dense homogenisation of ecomuseum exhibitions conducted by the AMGX:

> …The Guangxi model of ecomuseums, linking ecomuseums in Guangxi to the AMGX, is excellent, but in fact, the particularity of each ecomuseum has gradually faded. No one will feel how unique this model is, and it will be enough for visitors to just visit one ecomuseum. (Interview 2, 11/05/2018: Han)

They added, for example, that the first section has always been the historical development with certain words and pictures, and the second might be costumes or production instruments. Exhibitions of ecomuseums frame ethnic minority cultures by selecting and organising distinguishable cultural objects around different topics, which was in a 'synchronic perspective' (Varutti, 2014, p.21). The past and the present of ethnic minority cultures are excluded in time and space. The AMGX perpetuates essentialised cultural difference by applying one predetermined narrative structure to fit all ethnic communities with disparate conditions, which inevitably eliminates ethnic communities' unique characteristics. Instead of celebrating vernacular voices and turning exhibitions in the ten ecomuseums into participatory efforts, the AMGX curates ten ethnic ecomuseums' exhibitions as the extension of its representation of ethnic minority cultures, which can be perceived as the reproduction of the idea of the cultural mosaic.

<u>Displaying cultural difference</u>

The understanding of cultural differences in China can be elaborated from Dicks' idea (2003) of the 'cultural mosaic', borrowed from Kahn (1995, p.99). The cultural mosaic, stemming from the anthropological definition of culture, stresses clear and distinguished cultural identities. The identification of ethnic minority cultures is, in this view, not only about what they are, but the differences between them and others, and how they can be distinguished from others. While 'the articulation of difference is a cognitive necessity' (Phillips, 2011, p.101), to constantly distinguish cultural practices the AMGX's use of cultural difference is hierarchical, enlarging its representational authority. An informant from the AMGX doubts the politics of classification and the mobilisation of cultural differences:

If they have no difference with us, we think they cannot meet our criteria for identifying ethnic minorities. We do not acknowledge their contemporary cultural transformation. In the future, these ethnic minority groups may have the same lifestyles as people around the world, so how can you affirm their cultural distinctiveness? We persist in our current criteria, which is our biggest curatorial problem. (Interview 2, 11/05/2018: Han)

This perspective clearly exposes that museum curators still privilege the essentialist meanings of cultural difference and this improper criterion to make distinctions, while it is grounded in the proposition that globalisation and modernisation erase difference and ethnicity (Phillips, 2002; 2007). Instead of crystallising culture as a substance, Appadurai (1996, p.15) identifies culture as 'the process of naturalising a subset of differences that have been mobilised to articulate group identity'. He makes evident that the mobilisation of cultural difference is not to frame the rigid identity politics, but its markers can be exploited to contest different values (ibid.). Failing to regard cultural diversity as fluid, the AMGX always uses heritage to provide the simplified and stereotypical representation of ethnic minority cultures. It standardises cultural difference by 'reducing it to its minimal terms and by transforming it into a temporal category'

(Varutti, 2012, p.307). Moreover, the AMGX exercises the idea of the 'cultural mosaic' to include various ethnic cultures within one exhibition, which represent the self for political ends rather than the others (Yelvington et al., 2002). 'Ideological and material phenomena' of ethnic minorities groups embedded in cultural heritage enable museums to rework and shape it for their contemporary purposes (Pishief, 2017, p.55).

4.2.2 Problematising display techniques

Depicting 'less socially advanced' (Quinn, 2017, p.21) ethnic minorities, while homogenising them and the "modern" majority as united, was originally a strategical technique of *minzu* museums (Zhu and Maags, 2020). In the Post-Mao era, *minzu* museums as interactive media define, represent, and consume ethnic minority cultures to counter the outdated notion of backwardness used to describe ethnic minority groups before. While aiming to embody the political achievement of "civilisation" and "development" among ethnic minority groups (Harrell, 1995), *minzu* museums' display techniques and representational strategies inevitably exoticise ethnic minority groups. The contemporary government-funded museums, as Denton reminds us, endeavour to represent ethnic minorities through properly balancing the glory of a specific ethnic group's intelligence and their cultural uniqueness with 'fitting the group's historical trajectory into the narratives of revolutionary history or modernisation' (2014, p.203). Seeking a positive perspective to represent ethnic minority cultures is the predominant task of *minzu* museums. However, the positive representation can also be problematic with other ethnic minority cultures and appropriates them to assert cultural diversity as central to forging a national identity.

Portraying ethnic minorities positively and artistically has been foregrounded as the AMGX's representational strategy. In the AMGX, submitting an exhibition proposal to the Museum Division of the Regional Ministry of Culture is the first step in creating exhibitions. The government's censorship of exhibitions' contents is a strategy to guarantee that museums

134

adhere to cultural policies to publicise the "excellent traditional cultures (优秀传统文化) of ethnic minorities" (The AMGX, 2017c) and point to the benefits that social cohesion brings to them. The AMGX is oriented to produce "excellent" cultural heritage knowledge of ethnic minorities, which is perceived to be positive or beautiful (Gil, 2016). The identification of ethnic minorities' excellent cultures is blurred and indistinct, but they should be the antonym of primitive.

In the following analysis of this exhibition, I found that the praise of excellent ethnic cultures can be the legitimation of othering ethnic minority groups. Defining what cultural expressions and practices are superior or inferior indicates the hierarchical value embedded in the cultural representation of the AMGX (Dick, 2003). However, most museum practitioners have strong faith that their expertise enables them to exhibit ethnic minority cultures respectfully and objectively, while strictly following cultural policies and the political mission of the museum. As they said, messages they transmitted to the public were built upon their research and scientific knowledge, without the distortion and exaggeration of "truths" and imputing personal feelings. One curator puts it,

> Our museum positions itself as a site of cultural promotion, so we are rarely involved in other (sensitive) issues. That is why our perception is relatively neutral…We just purely… for example the ethnic costume culture we are doing, we just purely introduce costumes features, craftmanship and their current transmission… (Interview 3, 11/05/2018: Han)

However, the fact is that they cannot act as "neutral facilitators" to decide what can be excellent and their dissemination of ethnic cultures is objective. This curator's viewpoint evidently unveils that the museum sidesteps the topics about complex lived realities and difficult histories, and unproblematically asserts their expertise and authority over cultural

135

presentation. "Objective" and "positive", in this sense, reflect and perpetuate the museum's imagination of ethnic minorities by preserving "pure" and authentic culture (Urry and Larsen, 2011).

Museums can also positively write difficult histories for branding the socialist modernity. Drawing upon the example of the Liangshan Museum of Yi Nationality Slave Society in Sichuan province, Anqi (2014) charts how this museum exhibits historical objects to present the historical trajectory of Yi people, from being suppressed by the slavery regime in the Liangshan area, to being liberated and civilised by the CCP. Fitting the traumatic memories of Yi people before and after the liberation (解放) to the national narrative, and drawing on their primitive or savage past, exemplify the hierarchical and political definition of ethnic minority cultures to serve the idea of "unity". This exhibition is not only presented as a history of Yi people's resistance to the oppression, but also the celebration of the CCP as the saviour with superior capabilities and benefits that socialism brought to the backward Yi society.

Several informants from the AMGX suggest the predicament of representing ethnic minority cultures is the idea of ethnic minority cultures as 'living fossils' that still influence the museum's narratives, but the museum can make little effort to avoid freezing these cultures in their past. One of these informants makes the statement:

> …We cannot catch up with the transformation of ethnic minority cultures…Their dramatic transformation cannot be defined by words such as 'primitive' in the museum… (Interview 2, 11/05/2018: Han)

Permanent exhibitions in the AMGX were installed when the building first opened, and they are unlikely to modify and update contents frequently. Museum staff encounter difficulties in continuing their research and renewing the permanent exhibitions, in terms of the transformation or development of ethnic minority groups by virtue of less budget allocated to them and insufficient political support.

In the earlier construction of the exhibition *Wucaibagui*, the AMGX, as a part of the heritage industry, sought to exercise both 'in-situ' and 'in-context' as exhibiting strategies, 'creating the sense of "hereness" necessary to convert a location into a destination' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p.7). Interpretative techniques such as text panels, reconstructions or dioramas, models and others are all in evidence in the AMGX to draw visitors' attention. Museums apply them to 'practice the art of mimesis, recreating native habitats and re-enacting rituals' (Pieterse, 2005, p.166; Dick, 2002).

This 'as-if-you-were-there (身临其境) presentation' (Grognet, 2012, p.164) to be an objective that museum curators expected to attain in exhibition-making. It attempts to construct a sense of reality by creating living environments of ethnic minority groups, life-size figures of ethnic minorities and representative or decorative objects, and position collections in their original contexts (Grognet, 2012, p.164). Visitors can immerse themselves in an "authentic" atmosphere created by them and resonate at ethnic minority cultures represented by these objects. Nonetheless, dioramas, as 'affordances', are not mere 'simple representations of their large prototypes' (Davy, 2018, p.971) but 'embodiments of widespread ideas of 'the other'' (Zittlau, 2011, p.177). The manufacture of these exhibits explicitly occurs in the curatorial processes of the museum, in order to conform to museum exhibits and function as interpretative instruments. They are categorised as artificial objects, but function to engage with "authenticity". Dioramas, figurines and mannequins representing frozen lives and actions of ethnic minorities convey a changeless and static perception of cultures (Varutti, 2011).

What visitors sometimes share with museum guides, after viewing dioramas and mannequins displayed in exhibitions, is that they think ethnic minorities are backwards groups. One of the vice-directors attributes these opinions to the design company. The AMGX provided the design company with a few pictures of ethnic minorities as prototypes. However, the end products of dioramas and life-size figures, described by a curator, are "distorted" so that they cannot successfully satisfy the purpose of re-contextualisation and turn into signifiers of "backwardness" instead of "excellence".[12] The exhibition *Wucaibagui* consequently comes out obsolete and affects visitors' impression on ethnic minority cultures in Guangxi. Even though the design companies have participated in the exhibition by following detailed plans devised by museum practitioners and doing what the museum told them to do, their opinions and implementation somehow direct the representation in unexpected ways. The museum prefers only to employ them to present a moment of ethnic minority cultures grasped in the relevant research fieldwork or the imagination of museum practitioners (Varutti, 2014). Yet Pieterse (2005, p.166) holds that 'the hyperrealism of in situ exhibitions highlights difference and tends to be exoticising'. As exhibitions are constructed based on the established knowledge or ideas of curators and professionals, the application of dioramas and miniatures possibly enlarges the exotic depiction of ethnic minorities or shapes their images to the opposite of authenticity.

The AMGX aspires to iron out the disputation of otherness generated by outdated installations and design of exhibitions through presenting "beautiful (美)" aspects of ethnic minorities, in order to subvert the construction of ethnic minorities' primitive images. A curator adds,

---

[12] Personal conversation with one of the vice-directors, 06/08/2018.

They (ethnic minority groups) experienced a lot…Their cultures are excellent, which cannot be represented by a simple result. Otherwise, visitors may deem ethnic minority groups as 'backwardness'. (Interview 1, 10/05/2018：Yao)

Transitioning ethnic objects into the category of art is how the AMGX modernises its representation of ethnic minorities. The recognition of the aesthetic value of heritage in the AMGX, on the contrary, appears to facilitate romanticising ethnic minority culture and devalues objects embracing powerful cultural messages (Denton, 2014). Creating *minzu* museums as a 'de-politicised space of culture' can also be seen in Shepherd's (2009, p.225) analysis of the Tibet Museum. The political aim of pacification legitimises the definition and representation of ethnic minority cultures from an aesthetic perspective (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013). Focusing on tangible and intangible heritage, particularly costume, craftmanship, and the like, renders the museum circumventing the potential political sensitivities and turning the artistic representation of ethnic minority cultures to be 'less obviously ideological' (Denton, 2014, p.203). The irony of the museum's aesthetic consideration is that it addresses the othering of ethnic minorities through essentialising their cultural expressions as exotic artefacts and art (Pieterse, 2005).

Grognet (2012, p.164-165) noted that displaying collections in an 'ethnological' way and presenting them as 'a visual artistic experience' have been two entangled museological approaches and cannot replace each other for the sake of assuring the better representation of ethnic cultures. Bouquet's (2012) research on the history of the ethnographic museum in Europe elaborated them differently. Classification and organising them for the display are the fundamental work of the museum of ethnology, and the aesthetic presentation is a display technique for providing the public more experiences rather than just the transmission of scientific knowledge. The artistic representation, in essence, is the museum's imposition of new display paradigms, art and artefacts, overwriting ethnic minorities' knowledge forms and

accommodating the modernist aesthetic orientation (Phillips, 2002; 2007; Banquet, 2012). In the sense of the museum, costumes are always the obvious icons of ethnic minority groups, as their patterns, materials and production skills can be easily presented and reach consensus with the public from an aesthetic aspect. On the other hand, tying to modernity, the museum can reinvent itself and re-articulate 'identity, power and tradition' (Banquet, 2012, p.140). The AMGX, thus, invites intangible cultural heritage practitioners to perform in the exhibition halls, proclaiming the vitality of ethnic minority cultures (see Chapter Five).

Compared to presenting ethnic objects as "message-bearing entities", interpreting collections based on their physical traits is more comfortable and convenient for the AMGX curators to adopt the aestheticisation of cultural heritage and make exhibitions artistic and modern. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes, 'the artfulness of the ethnographic object is an art of excision, of detachment, an art of the excerpt' (1998, p.18). When the museum positions ethnic objects within their spaces, the function of these things shift, from personal or collective signifiers, to indexes of much larger cultural phenomena (Davy, 2018). Curators have less interest in objects biographies such as "who made them", "who used them" and even "who collected them". The short-term accretion of objects resulted in a lack of information in the object records. These ethnic objects cannot act as 'go-betweens between those who gazed upon them and the invisible from whence they came' (Pomian, 1994, p.171). The AMGX's singular understanding of objects as cultural symbols and appreciation of them as art eradicate them from their original contexts, which generate the superficial and static knowledge formation and the missing voices of people, such as source communities and collectors, in the museum, which is discussed in detail in the analysis of exhibitions (Alivizatou, 2012).

4.3 Exploring exhibitions in the AMGX and the LLZE

Following the section above, this section moves to the exploration of permanent exhibitions as the output of the AMGX' and the LLZE's heritage production. Creating exhibitions, as the

prominent representational strategy of *minzu* museums, is a process of constructing and drawing on ethnic cultural heritage to produce readable and comprehensible cultural knowledge, which has intense political directivity. One of the AMGX's vice-directors explicitly clarified the impulse of exhibition making and the subordinate position of the AMGX in the regional political and cultural work.

> We constructed this museum and permanent exhibitions to satisfy the needs of the government, which was authorised by the superior division, for instance, the Regional Department of Culture. After this, we organised teams to arrange different aspects of work such as writing exhibition contents, design and collecting objects. (Interview 8, 21/05/2018: Zhuang)

The regional government highly manipulated the founding of this museum as the regional development plan and cultural project. Unsurprisingly, when political discourse directs the attention from patriotism to the preservation and transmission of ethnic minority cultural traditions, the AMGX works at the frontline of promoting and preserving ethnic minority cultures. As analysed earlier, the ideology of cultural salvage implicitly denies the fluidity of culture and the modernity of ethnic minorities. Through critically dissecting three types of exhibitions in the AMGX and the LLZE, curated by museum staff in the AMGX, I discovered what this discursive strategy entails and that it encourages the continual stereotype of ethnic minority cultures as exoticised others. The representations of ethnic minority's culture in three exhibitions have been disconnected from the flux idea of culture. To declare its linkage to modernity, the AMGX strived to glorify ethnic minorities' intelligence of making cultural heritage and encouraged visitors to appreciate them, rather than viewing them as the manifestation of ethnic minorities' "backward" lives.

Permanent exhibitions in the AMGX present comparisons and similarities across ethnic groups in this region, while exhibitions in ethnic ecomuseums represent cultures of local ethnic communities. The didactic form of interpretation shows that exhibition contents have been developed and structured along "enlightened academic principle". This encyclopaedic approach ties separated and fragmented ethnic cultural knowledge together, through classifying cultural heritage in different manners to enlighten visitors regarding diverse ethnic cultures in Guangxi, instead of pronouncing that ethnic minority groups need to be civilised (Davy, 2018, p.969). These three exhibitions (below) demonstrate two main representational strategies the AMGX adopted: essentialisation and assimilation. After scrutinising them, it is essential to understand how these two questionable strategies are accessible and practical for the AMGX to produce exhibitions inside of it and in ethnic ecomuseums.

4.3.1 Exhibiting multiculturalism in the AMGX – *Wucaibagui* (五彩八桂)

Located at the third floor of the AMGX, *Wucaibagui* (Diversity Ethnic Cultures in Guangxi) is a major permanent exhibition installed for the AMGX's opening in 2008, aiming to celebrate the Fifth Anniversary of the establishment of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and the National Day.[13] However, this exhibition was not completed in time for the opening, but officially opened to the public in May 2009. Preparing this exhibition was done alongside the construction of the AMGX, starting in 2003. Its exhibition team included many museum professionals, scholars, and outside officials. With the strict censorship of exhibition contents by the Guangxi Regional Department of Culture, it became the iconic example of exhibiting cultures within the official discourse of ethnic minorities. Five sections (see Table 4.2) constitute this exhibition to reflect the harmony among the twelve ethnic groups in Guangxi, emphasising that diverse ethnic groups are inseparable components in the construction of the nation.

---

[13] Every 1st October is the National Day in China to celebrate the establishment of the PRC.

Subtheme	Description
Preface	Introducing 12 ethnic groups living in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (geographical distribution, origins, population), cultural characteristics and ethnic policies
Jiayuan (Home)	Four parts included in this section: 'Life in the mountainous area(山地生活)', 'Life in the field (田园炊烟)', 'Life on the water (水上人家)', and 'Xuzhen Trading (圩镇贸易)' - Habitation, production ways, and life-style of 12 ethnic groups
Nishangyuyi (Gorgeous Garments)	Six parts included in this section: 'Ancient technologies (古代技艺)', 'Colorful costumes(五彩服饰)', 'Silver ornamentations (似雪银花)', 'Gorgeous Embroideries (绣丽华章)', 'Beautiful brocade (锦行天下)' and 'Inheritance and conservation' - Craftmanship, costumes of 12 ethnic groups, patterns brocades, textiles and looms
Jiangxinshenyun (Charm of Craftsmanship)	Eight parts included in this section: 'Ceramic', 'Rock painting', 'Sculpture', 'Painting and paper cutting', 'Carpentry', 'Basketry' and 'Paper making' - Ethnic intangible cultural heritage: traditional craftmanship
Hexieyuezhang (Harmonious Movement)	Four parts included in this section: 'Traditional festivals: Meaningful implication', 'Ritual and Happiness', 'Worship: From belief to recreation' and 'Folk songs' - Ethnic intangible cultural heritage: the spiritual lives of ethnic minority groups (customs, religious belief, songs and dance)

Table 4. 2 *Wucaibagui* in the AMGX (The AMGX, 2017c).

Preface to the exhibition

A large map model of Guangxi is placed at the centre of the introductory space and easily draws people's attention. It shows the distribution of ethnic minority groups in the Guangxi region. Text panels introducing the twelve ethnic groups have been incorporated with the map model to instil essentialised notions of ethnic minority groups. The panels stress the twelve ethnic groups' contributions on 'the creation of a unitary multi-ethnic country' and their 'intelligence (聪明智慧)' as a significant part of Chinese culture.[14] With no reference to the history of ethnic minority groups in Guangxi before the establishment of PRC, this section is devised to proclaim the museum's equal representation of ethnic cultures in Guangxi. As a curator stresses, 'the

---

[14] The exhibition *Wucaibagui* panels, the AMGX, last visited August 2018.

display of twelve panels is our strategy to avoid some ethnic minority visitors directly feeling

neglected and unrepresented in the museum after viewing the exhibition'.[15]

Figure 4. 1 The introductory space of the exhibition *Wucaibagui.*
Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Jiayuan (Home)

Passing through the first gallery, visitors enter the hall of "*Jiayuan* (home)". The four

subsections of *Jiayuan* attempt to reflect how ethnic minority groups formed their ways of

living and production according to their geographical environment. The "closeness to nature"

theme is at the heart of this section, to convey the interrelationship between ethnic minority

cultures and the natural world. A number of visual constructions and dioramas of traditional

architectures (see Figure 4.2), wall paintings about village life and dwellings, artificial trees, and

objects have been organised to create different types of natural environments that ethnic

minority groups inhabit. These displays have not been provided with sufficient interpretation

---

[15] Interview 8, 21/05/2018: Zhuang.

and linked to the modernity of ethnic minorities' lifestyles, however, stereotyping them as primitive and underdeveloped, which is antithetical to curators' original intention of design.

Figure 4. 2 The reconstruction of Longsheng Zhuang *diaojiao* style architecture in Home. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

With no linear narrative in this section, museum curators, in order to impose harmonious ideology, brought together exhibits and objects belonging to different ethnic groups and places to show their relationships that could not previously be seen. Several cases exhibiting Yao people's agricultural instruments have been contextualised by the decorations about Maonan people's architecture and pictures about cattle feeding, which is confusing and messy (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4. 3 Cases displaying Yao people's agricultural instruments and Maonan people's architecture. Photograph © Yahao Wang,

Jiangxinshenyun (Craftmanship)

The panel of *Jiangxinshenyun* starts with a statement that the continuity of craftmanship within Guangxi is the 'embodiments of ethnic groups' wisdom' and the 'crystallisation of their worship of nature'. Cultural practitioners, as the core of craftsmanship, have been excluded and marginalised, although curators asserted that some of the craftsmen participated in the installation of dioramas to guarantee the accuracy of representing their cultural practices. The construction of mannequins was drawn on images of several ICH practitioners, which rendered them as outdated and uncivilised. Crystallising their cultural practices as dioramas decorated by the pictures of their natural environments, and using their images as the contextual information, generates the representation of intangible cultural heritage as a set of "dead" and distanced cultures.

Figure 4. 4 Diorama and mannequin of Maonan people's
baboo basket making. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Hexieyuezhang (Harmonious Movement)

The header of the *Hexieyuezhang* (Harmonious Movement) section ties five subthemes to the topic of ethnic solidarity and the abstract illustration of ethnic minorities' relationship with God, society and nature during their historical development. This section also centres on the intangible cultural heritage, such as religious rituals, festivals, songs and dance. It features dioramas and material displays of ICH, following typological classification. ICH associated with religious beliefs and so-called "superstitions" have been downplayed in the museum to confirm the Marxist materialist worldview (Denton, 2014). As a consequence, this section approaches religious objects by divesting them from sacred and spiritual meanings, leading to the silence of certain traditions and the decontextualised representation of ethnic minority cultures. For example, the Shui manuscripts (水书), as Shui people's calendar book where their worldview was derived, have a strong spiritual connection with them, but the museum only placed small labels to explain this (see Figure 4.5). In addition to alienating objects from cultural history and context, some dioramas and mannequins (see Figure 4.6) employed in this section make the exhibition unsettling, heightening the negative depiction of ethnic minorities.

Figure 4. 5 The Shui manuscripts (水书). Photograph ©
Yahao Wang, 2018.

Figure 4. 6 Diorama and mannequins regarding Yao people's
marriage folklore. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

The focus put on this section is folksong. Multimedia installations have been mobilised to suggest that singing folksong was an inseparable part of most ethnic minority groups' lifestyles, and they were always welcoming visitors to their communities. Video clips about how ethnic minority people living in the village spent a day with singing folk songs is projected on two white walls of the exhibition space. Along with showcasing the natural environment, this video does not allow visitors to experience folksongs aesthetically but rather deepens their stereotypical imagination of ethnic minorities.

Nishangyuyi (霓裳羽衣)

...they have showcased the uniqueness of the national culture and art in the long course of tradition and history.[16]

This sentence on the exhibition explanatory board discloses the aim of *Nishangyuyi* (Gorgeous Garments), which is to represent exhibits like costumes and textiles as the historical and traditional art of ethnic minorities. This sub-exhibition was reinstalled and refurbished in 2017. Compared with the original installation, the new gallery of *Nishangyuyi* employs a more fashionable style of design. Removing all larger dioramas and keeping a few miniatures looms, *Nishangyuyi* became the best exhibition among the five sub-exhibitions of *Wucaibagui,* which were regarded as obsolete and "products being of poor quality" in museum staff's views. The AMGX rarely rotated the permanent collections, objects exhibited in this section did not change, and fewer new acquisitions were included in it. Strings of beads in the centre of the entrance hall constitute a figure of dressing up Zhuang woman (see Figure 4.7). The design company prompted this idea. It is noteworthy that curators disliked this design but eventually

---

[16] The exhibition *Nishangyuyi* (Gorgeous Garments) panel, the AMGX, last visited August 2018.

decided to leave it as a simple representation and decoration because they could not propose any better solutions. This collaborative relationship with external companies increases the concern of misinterpreting and exoticising ethnic minorities.

Figure 4. 7 The introductory section of *Nishangyuyi* (*Gorgeous Garments).* Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Costumes, patterns, brocades, textiles, looms and production skills are on display under the five subthemes. The subsection of 'colourful costumes' classifies costumes based on their ethnic groups and displays them in the sequence "Zhuang, Han, Yao, Miao…", which exoticises these costumes and essentialises these ethnic groups. Museum curators gave priority to iconographic features of costumes, without providing detailed explanations of historical and cultural context. For example, costumes of the White Trousers Yao people contain many motifs linking to their historical and folklore stories (see Figure 4.8). Visitors can only see which ethnic minority groups they represent and acquire more information from the interpretation of museum tour guides. Although curators asserted that they sidestepped ideological issues, representations

have still been appropriated within the hegemonic cultural narrative to define ethnicity. The aesthetic discourse created by curators was intended to alienate cultural knowledge from objects as artefacts.

Figure 4. 8 Costumes of White Trousers Yao people. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

4.3.2 Exhibiting Zhuang culture in the AMGX – *BEIXNUENGX* (Zhuang Culture Exhibition)

Subtheme	Description
Preface	Introducing Zhuang ethnic minority group in Guangxi, population distribution, dialect, characters
Raeuz (us)	Historical development of Zhuang people (from Paleolithic age to Qing dynasty)
Ranz (Home)	Including three parts: 'mbanj (village)' - traditional architectures, 'naz (Field)' - agriculture, 'haeux (rice)' - food culture
Fwen (Folk Song/Poetry)	Costumes, embroidery, folk songs and belief

Table 4. 3 Zhuang Culture Exhibition in the AMGX (The AMGX, 2017c).

Zhuang is the mainstream ethnic culture in Guangxi Province…holistically display the history and culture of Zhuang ethnic minority can meet the requirement of ethnic cultural promotion and constructing harmonious society (The AMGX, 2017a, p.127).

Inaugurated in 2014, Zhuang Culture Exhibition sought to foster the historical and cultural narrative of Zhuang people in Guangxi, and substantiate the claim that Zhuang identity is subsumed by Chinese identity, evolved from the past, and amalgamated with other ethnic cultures under the governance of a national state (The AMGX, 2017c; Oakes, 1997). This exhibition combines the chronological approach (*Raeuz* (us)) with typological categorisation (*Ranz* (Home) and *Fwen* (Folk Song/Poetry)) to arrange the objects. In the section of *Raeuz* (us), archaeological and historical objects, such as cultural relics from Palaeolithic sites, bronze drums and rock art, have been arrayed to unearth the provenance of Zhuang culture as indigenous culture in Guangxi, as Guangxi has a sizable population of Zhuang people. These objects showing evolutionary change were transformed to collections that legitimise the recent historical and political process of identifying Zhuang culture. The incentive for creating this exhibition was for Guangxi Zhuang people's reaffirmation of identity.

The curatorial team of this exhibition was led by the vice-director of the AMGX, who is from the Zhuang ethnic group. Interviews with him showed that he realised the necessity and importance of his role as a Zhuang curator. Titles of each section in the exhibition, as he suggested when preparing the exhibition outline, are the conceptual categories selected from the Zhuang language. As Table 4.3 indicates, the sections of *Ranz* (Home) and *Fwen* (Folk Song/Poetry) display objects and miniatures to present folklore culture of Zhuang people. They categorise varied cultural heritage of diverse branches of Zhuang people in Guangxi, in order to assimilate their different geographical culture features and celebrate the creation of their collective identity.

The introduction and the ending panels mention that Zhuang people are a member of the "Zhonghuaminzu (Chinese) family". They interpret the meaning of the exhibition name *BEIXNUENGX,* in Zhuang dialect, to be "siblings". The word "siblings" is employed to represent intimate "family ties" between Zhuang and other ethnic groups. This implies the hierarchical and patriarchal situation remained in the representation of an ethnic minority group, which set up a linkage between an ethnic minority identity and Chinese national identity as the parent-child relationship. Additionally, on the left side of the exhibition entrance, a picture wall features many images of smiling faces to initiate the exhibition (see Figure 4.9). It attempted to disseminate the AMGX's positive portrayal of Zhuang people, through colouring them as groups of people who have always been in a state of happiness and harmony. Nonetheless, female faces occupy most of the picture wall. Simple and pure smiles and females dressed in traditional costumes romanticise and depoliticise the Zhuang people as members of 'the happy family of nationalities within the Chinese nation' (Fiskesjö, 2015, p.506; Oakes, 1997). This type of romanticising Zhuang people possibly breeds 'a derogated subordinate positioning of minorities' (Schein, 1997, p.92). From the perspective of the curator who devised this wall, it only showed solidarity and diverse traditional costumes of Zhuang people, and museum staff with Zhuang identity agreed.

Figure 4. 9 Photo walls of smiling faces of Zhuang people.
Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

4.3.3 Longji Zhuang Culture Exhibition (龙脊壮族文化展) in the LLZE

The Longji Zhuang Culture Exhibition at the LLZE opened in November 2010 (see Figure 4.10), as one of ten ethnic ecomuseum exhibitions curated by the AMGX because of the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseum project'. One vice-director of the AMGX, Wu Weibing, stated that the exhibition's intention was to supplement the permanent exhibitions in the AMGX with the other nine ecomuseums.[17] Classification categories in this exhibition privileged the terraced fields in Longji and their relationship with local knowledge, cosmology, and the lifestyles of Zhuang people. A rich array of collections, dioramas, images, and book copies with text panels bearing theme titles are articulated to convey themes developed by museum practitioners. Exhibits are classified into four thematic sections: *Longji*, *The Soul of Longji*, *Zhuang Culture in Longji* and *The Development of Longji*.

Figure 4. 10 The exhibition hall of the Longji Zhuang Culture exhibition. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

---

[17] Interview 12, 07/08/2018: Zhuang.

Most objects collected from the Longji village are without cultural information for sharing with the public and are simply placed in the hall. The heritage recognition and acquisition largely relied on the local community members, such as Pan Tingfang, who is regarded as "a living dictionary" as one the described ecomuseum practitioners, and the only local staff member in the village. He clearly remembered previous owners and the information of most of the exhibits when I invited him to introduce the exhibition. While being eager to contextualise exhibits, he mentioned that he needed the help and approval of the AMGX. However, Pan knew more than ecomuseum practitioners from the AMGX. The exhibition in the Nandan White Trousers Ecomuseum has presented exhaustive information of objects through labels displayed next to them, as its local staff insisted on it (Nitzky, 2014). In the LLZE, ethnic objects are the tool for ecomuseum practitioners to legitimise the narrative created by them, rather than telling the local community's cultural stories.

The section of *Longji* displays the historical development of the local Zhuang community and agricultural instruments, contextualised by contemporary photographs. Some of their material cultures are still utilised by local villagers and found in the village (see Figure 4.11 & 4.12). Visitors can easily feel the fluidity of heritage even though the exhibition merely provide simple labels of objects. *The Soul of Longji* and Zhuang Culture mainly elicits the intangible aspect of the local Zhuang culture that is considered the product of agriculture. The theme of *The Development of Longji* was set up to promote the positive role the ecomuseum model played in the local community and tourism development. The interconnection between the terraced fields and culture is strongly demonstrated throughout the exhibition, along with the interaction between Zhuang people and nature. The partial narrative narrows the comprehension of the local Zhuang culture and formalised the essentialisation of community members. The essentialist definition of Longji Zhuang culture, by bonding it with the terraced fields, unveiled the problematic politics of the authoritative curatorial voice and the imposed thematic structure.

Figure 4. 11 & 12 Baboo basket used by villagers outside of the exhibition centre (left) and Baboo basket collected in the exhibition centre (right).

Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Compared with the Zhuang culture exhibition in the AMGX, this exhibition, concentrating on the local history and objects displayed in their original contexts, seems to speak for the local community in a way. As Kaeppler (1992, p.473) notes that 'although all museums can preserve objects and display them, it is up to the local museums to preserve knowledge about them'. Local or community museums can persist in systemic and intensive study on ethnic cultures in communities and keep track of their continuity and discontinuity. However, this exhibition detached objects from their owners and reassembled them to form new connections with each other, which echoes the hegemonic narrative. Surprisingly, the interrelations between objects and people have not been effaced. During my fieldtrip, some villagers remembered where their objects that were collected by ecomuseum practitioners displayed and family stories behind them, but meanwhile claimed that they had only been to the exhibition once or twice and had no interest in it. These objects have been recontextualised within their original cultural environment while existing as personal emotions and feelings outside the exhibition (Dudley, 2012).

4.4 Unequal power relations

Based on the critical analysis of heritage production and meaning making established above, this section encourages museums to be reflexive by questioning their authority of defining cultures and deciding upon what information the public can access (Pieterse, 2005; Dicks, 2003). While the rise of new museology in Chinese academic circle brings in some museum theories that challenge the dominant voice of museums, principally ecomuseums, the problems of representation or the relations between *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups remain consistent. Marstine (2005, p.9) sets forth, 'the expertise of the "museum man" (the expert is always a patriarchal figure) gives an assurance that museum objects are "authentic" masterpieces that express universal truths in an established canon or standard of excellence'. What Chinese scholarship and museum practices emphasise is the abiding status and privilege of *minzu* museums to produce reliable heritage knowledge. Premising on such an idea, the AMGX and LLZE do not reconsider who should represent and who should be represented, but rather conduct the exhibition practices to shore up their authority over the representation of ethnic minority cultures and mask unequal representations by a phantasmatic diversity (Gnecco, 2015).

In the AMGX, ethnic minorities from communities were only invited for the constructions of dioramas, but rarely became a part of the curatorial processes. Many *minzu* museums recruited people from different ethnic minority groups and assigned important work to them in the exhibition-making. On the surface, museums seem to include them in the representations of ethnic minority cultures and build a new relationship with ethnic minority communities, but in fact museum workers rarely rethink museum functions and their activities at the ground level. They adopt conventional museological practices and impose their unilateral proposition. Voices of ethnic minority groups continue to be marginalised in the exhibition-making.

Relations of self and other derive from the ethnographic convention of *minzu* museums that reiterates the dualistic opposition of the majority Han and ethnic minorities, undergoing the transformation or reconfigurations in the era of globalisation. Yet, 'in the process of representation as a manifestation of power, all others represented are "others"' (Pieterse, 2005, p.172). As Chapter Two noted, the current problems of representation in *minzu* museums lie in the absolute power of museums, and their rigid mechanisms in the representational process are still discussed within the discourse related to othering (Pieterse, 2005).

Phillips (2011, p.213) referred to Althusser's perception, that the change of ideologies can modify museum practices. The historical development of museums representing ethnic minority cultures in China differs from the Western ethnographic museum, which determines their unique museum politics and traditions, and museological structures. Chinese museum practitioners construct exhibitions with the principle that they attempt to inscribe the state ideologies of ethnic minority cultures, and their practices are supposed to be mandated to carry out those practices.

The construction of national identity and ethnic identities is stuck with their internalised stereotypes of the hierarchical relations between the national and ethnic identities and the insistence of problematic representational politics – the museum as the centre of power creates authoritative stories regarding ethnic cultures. It seems to be a common idea received by them that ethnic minority identities assigned by the government are static. For *minzu* museums, ethnic cultural identities are not what they need to construct, but rather what they should promote through referencing to "the Chineseness" shared by ethnic groups and their assumed distinctive cultural representations.

Pieterse (2005, p.168) foregrounds and articulates that 'cultural identities are not given but produced'. His argument regarding multiculturalism shifts attention towards a view that multiple cultures are consistently constructed and reconstructed, which coexist but are mixed. Identities are unstable, in flux and variable. Corsane (2005) also indicates the multiplicity of identities. Museums are supposed to be 'significant sites in which to examine some of the claims of identity transformation' (Watson, 2007, p.269), while enlightening ethnic minorities on their cultural identities' construction and representation of themselves (Woodward, 2002). Ethnic minority groups cannot only witness how museums represent their cultures, but also shape museum practices.

A certain number of museum practitioners at the AMGX belong to ethnic minority groups. From my interviews, although they become insiders of the museum, their identities have not created the opportunity for their demands to be met for remaking the established representational framework and challenging the decision-making and meaning making processes, or imparting their cultural knowledge to people. They work in the AMGX because they are interested in their cultures and they agree with the approaches of the museum to developing exhibitions. As for the LLZE, the exhibition centre acts as a storehouse, failing to demonstrate the relationship between the local people and objects. The local people have no authority to produce or even revise the narrative of them within it. The AMGX and its ecomuseum have a less self-conscious sense of reconfiguring their policies and their relations with ethnic communities.

Fundamental to representation's power in Pieterse's (2005, p.178) view is the political and economic power, which embodies the state's political interests and the demand of commodifying ethnic minority cultures. Museum professionals and practitioners centralise the power of representation during their exhibition-making process. The omission of ethnic minority groups' voices in the exhibition-making and the difficulties of challenging museums'

operational policies and exhibition system reflect a harsh reality - the untouched inequality of power relations between the museum and ethnic minority groups.

Informed by the study of museums and Indigenous Peoples, this chapter is grounded in the critique that museological forms of knowledge production exoticise ethnic minority people. Nonetheless, different perspectives remain in the AMGX. 'Colourful(多彩的)' has been extensively used in China to brand cultural diversity in order to develop ethnic tourism and romantically delineate images of ethnic minorities. This is based on the stereotype or exoticisation of ethnic minority cultures with colourful costumes, which are their visible traditionalism, and which remain popular to the public (Tapp, 2008). The title of the exhibition *Wucaibagui* also contains the term *wucai,* which can be translated as colourful. *Wucai* in Chinese has two layers of implication: five colours and diversity. As a few museum practitioners explain, "colourful" not only references diversity, but also corresponds with the characteristics of ethnic minority exhibits with rich colours, chiefly costumes, and textiles. It implicates the tight linkage between their knowledge of ethnic minorities and evident cultural features. However, some museum staff express that they realise the exhibition title might also mean the romanticism of ethnic minorities. Only the quiltmaker I interviewed interpreted *wucai* as "five colours", representing Zhuang culture, and which have spiritual power to bless people and exorcise evil. Opening up a new dimension brought by ethnic minority groups can deal with the extension of inequality and othering outside exhibitions through viewing museums as contact spaces where their meanings and roles are changeable.

4.5 Conclusion

Through analysing the formation and development of the *minzu* museums, along with the social and political changes in China, it is evident that the political function of *minzu* museums for the ruling government is unshakable in China. The dissection of the specific case, the AMGX,

unearths how the museum's monolithic narratives have been constructed from the recognition of heritage, object collections, classification in exhibition making, its stubborn problems and its resistance to change. While the political ideologies cannot be challenged and undermined, the museum's practices for representation and the authority of its expertise in heritage identification and exhibition making can be shaped and modified by external challenges.

In the following chapters, the study of representation moves from exhibition-centred displays towards broader museum programmes and related heritage projects. These chapters further the research on how power relations between museums and ethnic minority groups are changed within the realm of heritage. Museums' representational process and logic embedded in exhibitions can open the door for the contestation of ethnic minority groups (Pieterse, 2005, p.173).

Chapter 5 Rearticulating power relations

Interviewer: From your perspective, what is the relationship between the AMGX and ethnic minority groups?

Interviewee: The first aspect is that we research them. Secondly, our collections have been originated from ethnic minority villages…As for the third aspect, for example, our educational activities such as *Guangxi Folk songs* engaged with ethnic minority groups. (We) went to ethnic villages to invite them…this activity brought them to the museum. They were not only beneficiaries (受惠者) of this activity, but also performers of our shows. This is a mutual interaction between us. We also conducted some educational activities in remote rural areas to present local ethnic communities their cultures… (the connection with) ecomuseums is encompassed by the research purpose. (Interview 1, 10/05/2018: Yao)

This informant from the AMGX provides a brief overview of how the AMGX thinks about its relations with ethnic minority groups. As we saw in the previous chapter, the AMGX "researches" ethnic minority groups through recognising, collecting, interpreting, and displaying their cultural expressions as heritage, which validates its hegemonic depiction of ethnic minority cultures. Affected by the idea of threats of deterioration, *minzu* museums used to preserve intangible heritage by fossilising cultural practices as objects. The analysis of collecting, classification and exhibitions, as the AMGX's conventionally and professionally representational strategies and a part of heritage making processes, has unveiled the exclusion of ethnic minority groups and chronic representational problems at the AMGX. The absence or marginalisation of ethnic minority groups can be construed as the embodiment of unequal power relation between them and the museum. However, this does not necessarily mean that the museum's interpretation and representation of heritage is an 'exclusively exploitative experience' (Witcomb, 2015). A thorough naturalisation of the public museums' authority and operations over heritage matters needs to be taken into account. In heritage industry, museum practices and power relations are

changing and unstable.

The AMGX develops fruitful activities and programmes inside and outside its wall, in order to claim its legitimacy as an institution of heritage and authority of cultural representation. Rather than researching *minzu* museums as exhibitionary apparatuses, this chapter investigates educational activities or events and outreach programmes as 'the museum frontiers' (Golding, 2016, p.6), an interactive space between museums and visitors, but also a dialogical and disputed zone between museums and ethnic minority groups. Besides visitors, the AMGX maintains minimal connections with different ethnic heritage practitioners beyond exhibitions, by employing them as interpretative vehicles to stage intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and a few community members from ethnic ecomuseums. Examining the AMGX's interaction with ICH practitioners can tease out what the museum means to them and contemplate the divergence of perceptions regarding their relationships. The two-day observation of a quiltmaker performing in the AMGX, and personal conversations with her during my fieldtrip in 2018, provided me with a divergent angle, from which ethnic minority individuals and communities might look at their relationship with the AMGX.

This chapter begins with a story of the quiltmaker. Ms Huang, a quiltmaker, has often been invited by the AMGX to perform traditional quiltmaking. When performing at the hall of a temporary exhibition *Quilting Arts and Tradition: People, Handcrafts, and Community Life* in the AMGX, she mentioned to me that she informed curators of the incorrect installation of the bed and the misplaced quilted bedcover in the exhibition, but no one corrected these problems. In her words, 'it is not good to say too much' and she just helps the museum to display quilts as a type of ethnic minorities ICH.[18] Struggling for power in the museum space to challenge the museum's narrative is not where her interests lie. In contrast to working for the AMGX, she detailed that there were more crucial things for her to do, for instance, making cultural products,

---

[18] Personal conversation with the quiltmaker Ms Huang, 22/07/2018.

managing her work studio, establishing a private museum and applying for the official designated ICH transmitter (discussed below). Instead, the museum relies on her heritage practice to impart the 'authenticity' of living cultures.

As distinguished from the museum worker's opinion that ethnic minority groups are objects of cultural preservation and research, performers, and 'beneficiaries' for the AMGX, researching from Ms Huang's perspective can offer a glimpse into the interplay between the museum's and ethnic minority individual's heritage making and cultural representation. Ethnic minority groups are 'agents in the heritage enterprise itself', apart from 'cultural carriers and transmitters' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2014, p.169) that the museum utilises to underpin its representation of authenticity. The anecdote about Ms Huang and the AMGX, which is not sufficiently representative, gives rise to three specific research sections discussed in this chapter: the impact of the official heritage discourses (ICH programs and ethnic ecomuseums project), the role of the AMGX as a stakeholder, and the predicaments of the AMGX in the heritage context.

Both this chapter and the subsequent Chapter Six call for the re-articulation of power relations through dissecting *minzu* museums' and ethnic minority groups' construction and capitalisation of heritage, implicated by top-down heritage discourses in the AMGX and the LLZE. The dilemmas faced by the AMGX and the LLZE indicate that their power over heritage, drawn from regional heritage discourses, has been challenged by ethnic minority individuals and communities. Crucially, the detailed research findings have been digested into these two chapters to buttress the argument that heritage discourses, where ethnic minority individuals and communities are situated, and their heritage practices can both shape and appropriate museums' authoritative representations of their heritage and cultures.

The intersection of these two chapters is the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project'. I discovered this

project when working on my undergraduate dissertation about ecomuseums of the Guizhou province in China. The AMGX was constructed in conjunction with the implementation of this project. It branded its affiliation with ethnic ecomuseums in Guangxi. At first, I was astonished by the collaborative model of the ecomuseum and this holistic approach to heritage protection. After three years of research, in 2018, my research findings told me another story. Two different dimensions of scrutiny of this ethnic ecomuseum project emerge from this chapter and the next, which detach the research on the AMGX and the LLZE from the discussion of ecomuseological theories.

This chapter seeks to contextualise the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' as the official heritage discourse, where the AMGX works at the frontline of heritage protection and bolsters the sustainable development of ten ethnic ecomuseums through making exhibitions for them and implementing community engagement projects. By providing the backdrop of the ecomuseum project, it then looks at how the discursive power of the AMGX has been decentralised within this project. Another dimension in the next chapter conveys that the LLZE is an outcome of the regional heritage discourse, which can be contested by the other stakeholders in the local community. It also enlarges the discussion of the alienation between the AMGX and ethnic ecomuseums, and explores how an ethnic minority community challenged its representational practices.

5.1 A glimpse of the AMGX's relationship with ICH practitioners

In May 2020, the AMGX (2020c) announced that Ms Huang had donated two embroidery silk balls with a theme of anti-epidemic to the museum and underlined her new social role as a regional level ICH transmitter of "Longlin Zhuang quilted baby carriers (隆林壮族背带)" since 2019. On the official website of the AMG, the name of Ms Huang, as a performer, first appeared in a web page illustrating the launch of an exhibition about Quilts of Zhuang people in 2015 (The

AMGX, 2015). In fact, the interaction between her and the AMGX was initiated from a quilted bedcover (see Figure 5.1) that she had made for her son before she was pregnant. The bedcover is made from many small and triangle pieces with appliquéd patterns. Preparing a quilted bedcover with meaningful embroideries for her son's wedding in the future embodies 'a mother's love for her child' (MacDowell and Zhang, 2016, p.58). This is what she told the AMGX researchers when they interviewed quilt-makers in 2015 for the collaborative project on quilts with the US museums. She sold this bedcover to the museum at a low price, which is by virtue of the good relationship with the director of the collection research department. The bedcover has turned into the iconic quilt collection in the AMGX.

Figure 5. 1 The display of a quilted bedcover made by
Ms Huang in the exhibition *Quilting Arts and Tradition.*
Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

The turning point that the AMGX has added value to quilt making as one of representative ICH of the Zhuang people, is a touring exhibition *The Sum of Many Parts in China: 25 Quiltmakers in*

166

21st-Century America introduced from the United States in 2013 (MacDowell and Zhang, 2016). The AMGX, as one of five Chinese museums who hosted this exhibition, came to realise new possibilities of quilts and quiltmakers without the official ICH designation, rather than regarding them as a type of embroidery of less value, and commenced the collection of quilts. Ms Huang adds that:

> Quilts did not attract attention in China before…We (she and the AMGX staff) know each other very early, but they work on embroidery and ethnic costumes. My quilts for them were useless, and they did not collect them intentionally… too many people did embroidery, the museum rarely invited me before. (Personal conversation with the quiltmaker Ms Huang, 22/07/2018: Zhuang)

The AMGX, therefore, initiated a collaborative project 'Quilts of Southwest China' with three *minzu* museums in south-eastern China and the Mathers Museum, as well as Michigan State University Museum (United States) and their folklore society, to research intangible cultural heritage, especially quilts in Guangxi (MacDowell and Zhang, 2016). From 2015 to 2017, the touring exhibition *Quilts of Southwest China* was shown in the US and was a crucial part of their project (The AMGX, 2017d). Ms Huang, as one of artists and interviewees who contributed to the research on quilts in Southwest China, accompanied the AMGX staff to the US and gave performances in the touring exhibition held in several the US museums. Since then, inviting her to perform in the AMGX and help the AMGX's staff develop educational activities related to quilts has become more frequent. The connection between the AMGX and Ms Huang lays a groundwork for the museum's reliance on her in the interpretation and presentation of quilts. As an effort of the collaborative research in China, a temporary exhibition *Quilting Arts and Tradition: People, Handcrafts, and Community Life,* curated by an AMGX's researcher in July 2018, opened to the public.

The exhibition aimed to present ethnic minority quilts as ICH, together with quiltmakers (see Figure 5.2). The introductory panel expounded 'the quilt as textile tradition and art in southwest China…'.[19] It defined quilts as ICH shared by ethnic minority groups living in southwest China, their geographical distribution area. However, this exhibition concentrates on quilt making and its transmission by ethnic cultural practitioners, which does not circumvent representational issues – the imbalanced representation of ethnic minority groups. It displayed quilts collected during their collaborative fieldwork, documentaries on quilt making and panels with introductions of quiltmakers who came from Zhuang ethnic group. Moreover, Ms Huang was the only ICH practitioner who demonstrated quilt making skills for this exhibition. This is how Ms Huang explicates her relationship with the AMGX:

> I have no contract with the museum. The question is that it is hard to reject the invitations of performance. I am the only quiltmaker they can invite. Unlike the embroidery, if they cannot find Miao performers, Yao performers also work. Such as this year *Sanyuesan* festival, if I refused to go, they would cancel the performance. (Personal conversation with the quiltmaker Ms Huang, 22/07/2018: Zhuang)

---

[19] The temporary exhibition *Quilting Arts and Tradition: People, Handcrafts, and Community Life* panel, the AMGX, last visited August 2018.

Figure 5. 2 Text panels about the quiltmaker Ms Huang for the exhibition *Quilting Arts and Tradition.* Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

According to her words, the AMGX paid more attention to the actualisation of specific traditional practices as ICH. ICH practitioners and their ethnicity are secondary to the museum. Its process of making traditions visible connotes the instrumentalisation of ICH practitioners and the omission of others. However, ICH practitioners are key to keeping the past alive. ICH performances, as "a form of heritage exhibition", can only be achieved by them (Ogino, 2016). When Ms Huang demonstrates her craft skills through the performance, what she has done becomes the informal collaboration with the museum in the representation of quilts.

During the process of her performance in the temporary exhibition (see Figure 5.3), a visitor asked her whether what she was making was intangible cultural heritage or not. She confidently made a statement that quilt making is ICH of the Zhuang people by describing it as 'our own culture'.[20] She underlined the bond between Zhuang identity and quilts. Nevertheless, there

---

[20] Personal conversation with the quiltmaker Ms Huang, 22/07/2018.

were many quilts from other ethnic minority groups exhibited in the exhibitionary hall. The affirmation of her Zhuang identity, rooted in quilts, turned this cultural practice to the cultural uniqueness of her products and excluded quiltmakers from other ethnic minority groups. Additionally, she compared her quilts with another quilt maker's products when she performed in front of her and another quiltmaker's quilts exhibited by the AMGX. She explained why her quilts had become so expensive that fewer people could afford them, as her products were made of natural (天然的) or old materials and the colour juxtaposition and patterns on the quilts were more restful and attractive than others', which might have a higher aesthetic value.

Figure 5. 3 Ms Huang was making quilts at the exhibition hall of
Quilting Arts and Tradition. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

The AMGX for Ms Huang is a place to celebrate her cultural traditions and identities and promote her skills and products. The exhibition is the embodiment of the museum's authority over cultural representation, but the performances are where her power resides, and her voice comes within the museum context. This diffuses the idea that the dynamism of ICH makes it possible for ethnic minority groups to rewrite their stories created by others or write stories themselves (Yoshida, 2004). The AMGX's representation of ICH and its related ethnic cultures

can be deemed as the outcome of this kind of collaboration. Significantly, this collaboration is an equal-status interaction.

5.2 Stage ICH in the AMGX

> Museums have been criticised for creating one-sided images of cultures by displaying stereotypical objects. This illustrates that the museum has been creating a view of the world. If we change the way of representing cultures, we may change the view of the world. This is not all. As a place to store and develop intangible cultural heritage, the museum can function as an arena where people meet and develop their pride and identity, learn about their tradition and hand it down to the next generation, and make an appeal to the world (Yoshida, 2004, p.112).

Yoshida proposes that ICH can be an innovative representational strategy of museums, having an enormous capacity to reinvent museums, from a 'depot' for the material culture to cultural practitioners' ways of thinking and doing (Yoshida, 2004, p.110). Alivizatou (2012, p.16) also shares a similar view on museums' engagement with ICH, which can elicit the framework shift of museum practices from object-centred to people-centred. In a direct application of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (2004, p.1; 2014, p.52) argument, intangible cultural heritage as 'metacultural production' can 'extend museological values and methods (collections, documentation, preservation, presentation, evaluation, and interpretation)' to dynamic and living cultures. They all hold that ICH can be an impetus for museums' renovation and prompt the museum to be attentive to community engagement. Nonetheless, engaging with ICH, embedded in the AMGX's political agenda, may not be its solution to managing cultural difference without impairing political unity (Hafstein, 2018).

ICH is 'ripe with possibility and paradox' (Hafstein, 2018, p.3). The dominant heritage discourses can alter the AMGX to work in partnership with ICH practitioners, and dilute this museum's monopolistic role in the cultural representation enhanced by objects collection and exhibition-making. On the other hand, they exacerbate the imbalanced representation of ethnic minority cultures and the deprivation of ICH practitioners' agency in the museum.

5.2.1 Exclusion: the disparity in the ICH recognition and representation

A Niu: What is it that do somersaults on the water?

What is it that build tall towers on the water?

What is it that set up an umbrella on the water?

What twosome share a single head on the water?

Liu Sanjie: The duck somersaults on the water.

A big moving boat built tall towers on the water.

The water lily sets up an umbrella on the water.

A pair of mandarin ducks look like they share one head.

This is an excerpt quoted from a classic folk song in the popular film *Liu Sanjie* (Changchun Film Studio, 1960).[21] The story of *Liu sanjie* has been conveyed as a part of Zhuang folksong culture

---

[21] The character *Liu Sanjie* was derived from a folktale in Guangxi regarding a young Zhuang lady, who was known for singing folk songs to express her discontent of oppression and injustice. *Liu Sanjie* has been viewed as a representative of Zhuang culture and a symbol of the ICH in Guangxi.

in the *Hexieyuezhang* section of the *Wucaibagui* exhibition. Students from elementary schools were encouraged to sing this song in a session regarding "what is ICH", delivered by museum staff from the educational department. Museum staff purport to transmit "an established knowledge" that folk songs, such as this one, are ICH. This session was an induction of the five-day activity *Summer Camp of ICH* (非遗之夏). Guiding students around exhibitions and interpreting craftmanship and related ICH knowledge embedded in exhibits and attending craft lessons framed the main contents of this summer camp.

ICH information instilled to students during these five days derives from museum exhibitions and craft skills related to ethnic minority exhibits, such as costumes, embroidery, and quilts. Museum practitioners intended to impart the idea that selected ICH knowledge of ethnic minorities is the "tradition (传统)" of this region. Without the involvement of any ethnic minority ICH practitioners, they formulated this activity by relying on research materials from museum professionals and information gained from ICH practitioners. The ICH they engaged with was recreated as 'adequate contextual knowledge connected to objects in their custody' (Svensson, 2018, p.85) and alienated from ICH practitioners or ethnic minority groups through transforming it into the representation of *minzu wenhua* (ethnic minority cultures). The selective representation of ICH and the exclusion of cultural practitioners in this activity raises questions regarding the recognition and misrecognition of ICH in the AMGX (Maags, 2018), and what kind of roles ethnic minority groups play in the AMGX.

Aside from the reification of ICH, turning ICH into tangible forms, such as exhibits, photographs, films and sound recordings, the AMGX makes ICH visible by adopting a popular strategy in China – the convergence of static and dynamic presentation (动静结合) (Bortolotto, 2007, p.28; Song, 2010). The director of the curatorial department accounted for ICH and stressed the modification of their practices:

Exhibiting intangible cultural heritage occupies a considerable amount of our work …We expect to have a better exhibiting paradigm combining static (静态的) and dynamic presentations. Activities such as intangible cultural heritage week and *Guangxi Folk songs* all jump from the [traditional] system of museum…. (Interview 3, 11/05/2018: Han)

Inviting ICH transmitters to perform is a settled method of the AMGX and a multitude of other museums in China to produce dynamic images of ethnic minority cultures. *Everyday Intangible cultural heritage* (非遗天天见) and numerous museum activities exemplify this approach applied to the representation of dynamic ethnic cultures.

Everyday Intangible cultural heritage is a series of events developed by the AMGX from 2014 to 2017. ICH practitioners were invited to perform at the start of the exhibit's run. The director of the educational department expected to make ICH more accessible to the public by use of these events and assist people in understanding material forms of ICH displayed in the museum (The AMGX, 2017d). This type of activity has been of critical importance in contextualising tangible collections and interpreting ICH. Celebrating ICH through cooperating with heritage practitioners is a prevailing museological approach worldwide, but out of disparate considerations. ICH performances can create opportunities for ICH practitioners to foster intercultural dialogues with museums and express their cultures and identities through the medium of museums. On the contrary, take Alivizatou's case study regarding Intangible heritage performances at the Quai Branly Museum as an example, she discusses concerns around the authenticity of cultural performances in museums, which are summarised as two questions: 'How far can we go in showing on a theatre scene, things that don't take place on a scene' (2012, p.185)? And can the performers have the freedom to renew their traditions? In

light of these two questions, further issues can arise from live performances of the AMGX, which are generated by the museum's use of ICH performances as a channel of essentialisation.

Ostensibly, the AMGX cooperates with cultural practitioners to display ICH, tailoring its static representation of ethnic cultures beyond exhibitions and bringing individual cultural stories into its monopolistic narratives. Yet, the AMGX's heritage work has focused on suiting the political objectives of heritage preservation and expanding its presence in the social learning of ethnic cultures. The consumption of cultural experiences in the museum has been integral to its authoritative narrative of ethnic minority cultures, which is 'a process of essentialisation and a door towards the commodification of heritage' (Naguib, 2013, p.2187). ICH is essential for the AMGX to brand itself as one of the leading institutions in protecting and transmitting ethnic minority cultures in Guangxi's cultural and tourism industries (The AMGX, 2020). For the AMGX, ICH performances are productive in educating the public about what ICH and ethnic minority cultures are. In this respect, ICH practitioners are merely treated as exhibiting vehicles.

When inquiring how the AMGX identifies ICH and their practitioners to present ethnic cultures, two informants from the AMGX note:

> Intangible cultural heritage, to some degree, influenced the museum's practices, especially the state of its transmission…Without the ICH lists, the audiences can't notice ICH, and it is difficult for the museum to collect the information regarding ICH. (Interview 4, 15/05/2018: Han)

> [w]e have a list of ICH practitioners, and most of them are officially designated ICH transmitters…We contacted them based on this list. (Personal conversation with one of

the AMGX staff from the social publicity and educational development, 17/08/ 2018)

The AMGX's recognition of ICH values mainly hinges on the official ICH items and transmitter programs, as well as museum professionals' identification during their fieldwork. Heritage listings funnel resources to the AMGX's preservation and representation of ethnic minority cultures. It is not surprising that the selection and exclusion that accompany the structural system of heritage governance affect the AMGX's heritage making and representation. The value of ethnic minority heritage without a state-approved designation has always been neglected in the national narrative construction and labelled as unimportant, which signifies 'the bureaucratisation of culture' (Alivizatou, 2012, p.42; Byrne, 2009; Blumenfield, 2018).

Many scholars, such as Hafstein (2009; 2018), Maags (2018), and Alivizatou (2012), criticise and elaborate the problem of exclusion and the imbalanced heritage representation in the discussion of UNESCO framework of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage by establishing heritage lists. The listing of traditional practices and their practitioners as a political recognition system performs as a 'marker of identity' and are embedded with inequalities (Maags, 2018, p.139; Blumenfield, 2018; Hafstein, 2009). Granting the title of representative ICH, or ICH transmitters, does not signify the deprecation of others' cultural practices. Notwithstanding, distinguishing "transmitters" from cultural practitioners negatively results in people who are misrecognised and confronted with an identity crisis or who must continuously defend the authenticity of their ICH practices (Maags, 2019). The ICH transmitters programs embolden heritage practitioners to climb the hierarchical ladder, from the local to higher levels, which bring them into broader concerns (ibid.; Hafstein, 2018).

While ICH practices displayed in the museum come from diverse ethnic communities, they have already undergone different levels of social and political evaluations (county, municipal,

provincial, and national levels of heritage recognition). ICH lists are devised to enhance the vitality of conventional ethnic cultural practices, which can rekindle a number of ethnic groups' interest in their cultural traditions (Hafstein, 2018). However, by valuing a single cultural practice or people as the representative ICH or the ICH transmitter, it glosses over differences between diverse ethnic communities or people (Maags, 2019). A specific ICH practice, embroidery for instance, can be demonstrated by different ethnic communities or individuals in multiple ways.

Influenced by Chinese authoritarian recognition of ICH, the AMGX appropriates ICH as representational practices, which heightens the uneven representation and exclusion of ethnic minority groups. The AMGX prefers to showcase specific types of ICH, such as embroidery skills and brocade making, which is exercised by certain ethnic minority groups. The selective presentations of ICH, deepening the exclusion and assimilation generated by the official heritage programs, manifests how political the AMGX's recognition of ICH can be. After being 'filtered' by the museum, they can be applied to reconstruct the regional narrative of ethnic cultures within a multi-ethnic nation, which 'fuels contestation' (Maags, 2019, p.791).

5.2.2 Inclusion: more than performing

The process of remaking heritage through sharing feelings, to some extent, can mute the didactic voices from the AMGX. For instance, Ms Huang, during her performance in the museum, delineated the value of quilts by explaining images on bedcovers and the procedures of quilt making. The social interaction between her and the visitor changes her role to help visitors learn more about the contemporaneousness of quilts and makes their past, represented by exhibits, meaningful for visitors. Impressively, when talking to visitors, Ms Huang declared that 'sincerely love is the premise of insistence; otherwise you cannot devote yourself to one thing without a spiritual support'.[22] She learns craft skills from her mother and

---

[22] Field note regarding the observation of Ms Huang performing in the AMGX, 22/07/2018.

makes quilts as her interest. The delivery of personal emotions and cultural feelings affirms her Zhuang identity, rooted in quilts, and provides visitors with different cultural experiences and appreciations of quilts and their cultural uniqueness.

Guangxi Folk Songs (畅享民歌) expands the museum's interaction with ethnic minority people through looking for participants in various ethnic minority communities of Guangxi. *Guangxi Folk Songs* Biennial Competition, aiming to preserve and transmit the regional-approved ICH of many ethnic groups through folk songs, is an important event put on by the AMGX since 2010 (The AMGX, 2017d). The AMGX practitioners believe that this event showcases 'voices from ethnic minorities (民族的声音)', which can help ethnic minority people to reframe their cultural identities and self-esteem.[23] They clarify that this event emerges to empower ethnic folk song singers to present their own cultures and share understandings of songs they sing. In this case, the AMGX appears to include more locals from ethnic minority communities and provides a stage for them to share their interpretation of their heritage. While this activity provides ethnic minority groups with a channel of self-representation inside the wall of the AMGX, the museum has no intention in sharing its authority with these cultural practitioners, but rather performing its safeguarding function and assembling folksongs from varied ethnic minority groups to promote the folksong culture in Guangxi and its heritage value.

5.3 The marginalisation of the AMGX

The hierarchisation of heritage practices determines that certain things are endowed with value above others. Given the inequity rooted in the administrative system, the earlier section considers how the dominant heritage discourse of ICH lists and ICH practitioners shapes the AMGX's institutional heritage making and presentation. This section further ponders its role as a heritage agency in the regional heritage context. It sets forth that ethnic minority cultural

---

[23] Personal conversations with museum staff from the educational department, April 2018.

practitioners are subjects of cultural heritage preservation and presentation in their collaboration with the AMGX, unearthing that the AMGX is one of their theatrical stages and representational platforms. The principal preoccupation of ethnic minority individuals and communities, who transmit their cultural traditions, is to put themselves in a comparatively advantaged position in the commercialisation and commodification of ethnic heritage.

5.3.1 *Sanyuesan* (三月三) **Festival**

The 18th of April might have been one of the most hectic days for the AMGX in 2018, while its main building was closed to the public. It undertook a political mission, assigned by the Regional Ministry of Culture, to hold a celebration event *Sanyuesan of Zhuang, the Carnival of Guangxi* (壮族三月三， 八桂嘉年华) for the *Sanyuesan* (3rd of March) Festival. Before this day, the AMGX posted a video on social media (WeChat and Weibo) to greet visitors, which showed museum staff having matching outfits dancing to the theme song of this festival - *Guangxi Ndei ha* (Fantastic Guangxi 广西尼的呀). The outdoor display garden of the AMGX was this event's main site (see Figure 5.4). [24] Walking along the road from the AMGX's main gate to the outdoor display garden, visitors could hear the beat of the drums, including Yandun big drums (烟墩大鼓) and Mashanhuigu of Zhuang(壮族马山会鼓), appreciate Zhuang field dance (壮族田间舞), and listen to folk songs. They could also consume traditional food from different areas in Guangxi, observe or experience diverse craft skills and purchase artworks or products from ICH practitioners. ICH from different ethnic groups or individuals all converged on this "carnival".

---

[24] The AMGX comprises two areas, the main building and the outdoor display garden as described in the introduction chapter. The garden was designed as an extension of the main building of the AMGX in order to create a living exhibition centre by using intangible cultural heritage. The AMGX constructed 12 traditional buildings of Guangxi ethnic minorities in this garden. However, the AMGX hardly uses this space except for significant events.
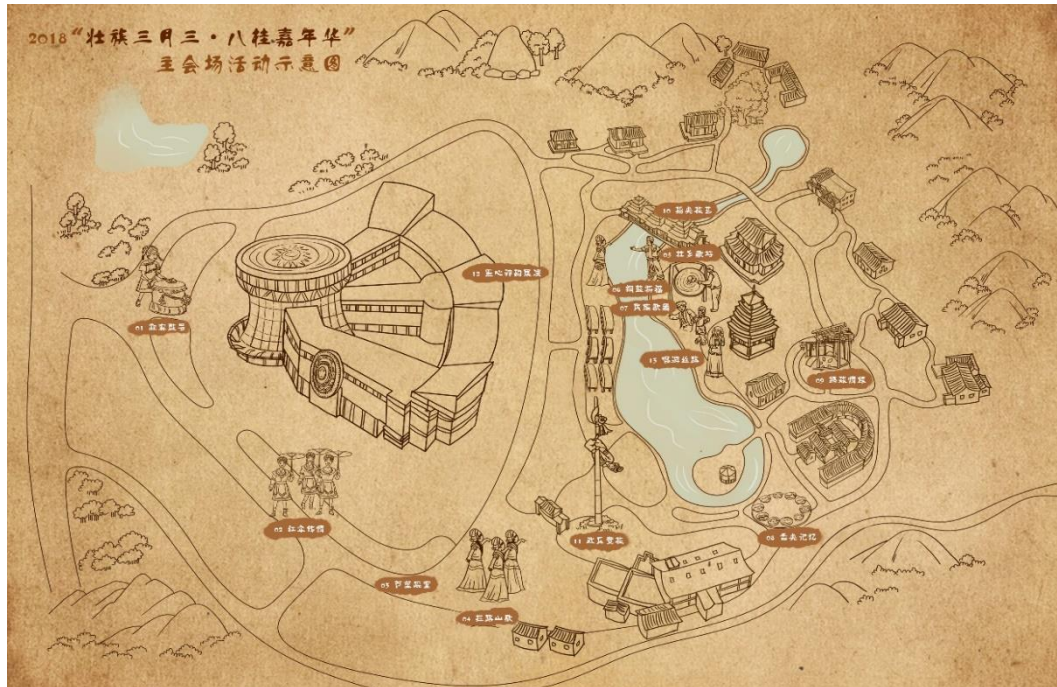
Figure 5. 4 The 2018 map of *Sanyuesan* activities in the AMGX ©The
Anthropology Museum of Guangxi.

Sanyuesan (Third March) in the Lunar calendar is the date of the biggest festival of the Zhuang ethnic group to perform ritual activities and sing folk songs in an antiphonal style. Since 2014, "*Sanyuesan* of Zhuang" has been inscribed in "The fourth batch of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China (第四批国家级非物质文化遗产代表性项目)" (State Council, 2014). The Regional Government of Guangxi, therefore, formulated political and cultural strategies, such as designating *Sanyuesan* as statutory holiday leave for two days, to facilitate the party-state's commercial-led heritage discourse and the regional identity construction. The regional authorities not only turned the *Sanyuesan* Festival into a grand celebration of all ethnic groups in Guangxi, but also a 'cultural tourism brand (文旅品牌)' or 'cultural tourism intellectual property (文旅大 IP)' to generate tourism-oriented revenue (Department of Cultural and Tourism of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, 2020). Ethnicity and heritage are manufactured to bolster the tourism industry and assist with marketing. Many areas in Guangxi have been encouraged to organise their carnival to attract visitors.

Capitalising on the *Sanyuesan* Festival to drive regional cultural tourism development is in line with new national-level cultural policies in China, begun in 2018, that all provincial departments of culture should merge with departments of tourism to enhance the convergence of the cultural and tourism industries (文旅结合) (Economic Daily, 2018). The imposition of these heritage policies and the restructuring of the administrative system creates an "unproblematic" narrative in Guangxi. They legitimise tourism as the "right" way to achieve the political unity and social cohesion, and integrate heritage work with economic development (Chan, 2018; Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013; Zhu and Maags, 2020). In Chan's (2018, p.159) view, 'unity among ethnic groups is often a theme found in the heritage preservation projects for ethnic minorities'. *Sanyuesan* used to be a typical celebration of certain ethnic groups, such as Zhuang, Yao, Miao and Dong. As the branding slogan "Sanyuesan of Zhuang, the Carnival of Guangxi" indicates, it thus has been instrumentalised and recreated as a privileged assemblage of ICH performances (see Figure 5.5). This conceals that some ICH presentations are the local cultural practices or regional traditions shared by many ethnic groups, instead of cultural traditions of certain ethnic minority groups.

Figure 5. 5 ICH performances in the AMGX: Oil Tea (left) and Longlin Miao costume making (right). Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Sanyuesan and ICH performances during this festival are redefined as "cultural commodity productions" by the government and the AMGX to encourage the commercialisation and commodification of ethnic minority cultures. This type of "carnival" stimulates staging heritage resources as cultural authenticity by diversified ethnic communities or individuals to create a collective memory, strengthen cultural ties, and foster the development of regional tourism. The political impact on the resurgence and transformation of ICH positions the AMGX as one of the regional government's cultural stages. However, at the same time, its space has been altered to a cultural centre where ICH practitioners share their cultural stories and interact with visitors directly without the medium of museum practitioners or professionals.

In speaking with ICH practitioners performing at the AMGX during the *Sanyuesan* Festival, I realised that they were invited by the regional ICH department and knew less about the AMGX. Some of these practitioners had not even entered the AMGX before and had no connection with the museum. An officially recognised ICH transmitter of Longlin Zhuang costumes (隆林壮族服饰) said that she performed at different places every *Sanyuesan* and the AMGX was just a new place for her to show the traditional skills of making costumes. After communicating with twelve ICH transmitters in this event, I found that they did not perceive the museum as a critical space to perform and transmit their heritage, and where they needed to contest its authority of representing their cultures (Maags, 2018).[25] Even though the AMGX, evidently, emerges as a political venue for the regional government to exert control through the display of ethnic cultural heritage, these ICH transmitters seemingly overlooked and excluded the AMGX from their heritage work (Denton, 2005).

---

[25] Personal conversations with ICH transmitters during the Sanyuesan Festival in the AMGX, 16-18/04/2018. Twelve ICH transmitters are practitioners of the officially recognised ICH, including wheat-straw basket (麦秆花篮), costumes and embroidery of the Jing people (京族服饰和刺绣), mascots of the Zhuang people (壮族麼也), Sanjiang oil tea (三江油茶), Longlin Zhuang costumes, embroidery of the Dong people (侗族服饰), stone inscription rubbing (石刻拓印), Jingxi field snail whistle (靖西田螺笛), elves' field dance of the Zhuang people (壮族矮人田间舞), Zhuang Brocade, Dyeing, Shui horsetail embroidery, and Zhuang Quilts.

5.3.2 'It is impossible for us to inherit directly'

The form of ICH inheritance rests with the present and even the future choices made by different stakeholders. The state capitalises on ethnicity to define and make heritage, purporting to consolidate the political control of ethnic minority groups and steer their cultural and economic development (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013; Ludwig and Walton, 2020). Upholding national heritage policies regarding heritage protection and tourism development, the regional, municipal and local governments and cultural bureaus can pursue their social and economic objectives and interests by formulating and deploying their own heritage strategies and approaches (Zhu, 2019). Apart from heritage lists, boundaries among different administrative levels and regional differences of heritage policy implementation generate various forms of heritage protection projects. When positioning *minzu* museums in the hierarchical administrative system of ICH, a revealing fact is that most museums that are shaped by the dominant heritage discourses play a marginalised or limited role in the top-down heritage administration. Surely, *minzu* museums can produce and proclaim their own heritage discourses, but meanwhile become marginalised by or embroiled in disputes with the other heritage agencies and grassroots stakeholders in the course of making ICH.

During the *Sanyuesan* Festival, the AMGX has provided a platform for this "carnival" since 2017 and participated in the event arrangements, but has had less voice during the organisation of this event and has had to follow the procedure manipulated by the regional government. Hence, a temporary stage was set in a shopping mall to display Zhuang Brocade (壮锦), dyeing (蜡染), Shui horsetail embroidery (水族马尾绣) and Zhuang Quilts, which was the AMGX's own showcase of ICH outside the museum. Celebrating and commodifying ICH of ethnic minority groups through the collaboration with shopping malls has become the AMGX's new representational strategy. In the shopping mall, ICH transmitters are seated at their stations to perform their craft skills or sell their (handmade/machinery) products with the label of "ICH" and "ethnicity", which represent their cultures without needing bargaining power with the museum. Conversely, the AMGX strives to extract power from these transmitters in order to underpin its social and cultural status in the

regional administrative system of heritage (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013). The museum even regards the celebration event of *Sanyuesan* as its one of foremost educational programmes (The AMGX, 2020a).

Tying the representation of ethnic minority cultures to a wider context, ICH practitioners demand arenas provided by museums, other heritage institutions and heritage events to enhance their influence and standing in heritage transmission. Performing in the AMGX, as discussed above, is a social resource allocated to them. In the competition of ICH practitioners, "valuable" ICH or creative heritage making can be supported by various social resources, including the cooperation with many official heritage agencies (Maags, 2018). Some of them tend to beautify their intention of persisting ICH practices and highlight their contributions to safeguarding ethnic cultures. Because of the heritage commodification for tourism, numerous ICH practitioners seek for more "authoritative" social and political recognition or economic returns of ethnic cultural value, which can legitimise their cultural heritage and representation. Through cementing social connections (关系) with heritage agencies or the government, ICH practitioners are likely to access to local, regional or even national programmes of ICH transmitters, get more funding opportunities, and raise the value of their traditions to a higher level (ibid.).

Nong Xuejian, the former vice director of the AMGX, highlights that a focal point of cultural preservation in the AMGX is to act as a process of ethnic cultural transmission:

> …It is impossible for us (the AMGX) to inherit directly. We cannot transmit and exercise (traditionally cultural practices of ethnic minorities), but our work can achieve this end. Through our platform, the public will know more about ethnic cultures and recognise their cultural value, facilitating the transmission and promotion of ethnic cultures (民族文化传

184

承和发扬).

Although the AMGX upheld its authoritative definition of "authentic" tangible heritage and is dominated by the Chinese AHD, it had to admit the centrality of ICH practitioners who directly engage with ICH in the creation, interpretation and transmission of their ICH (Hafstein, 2007; Su, 2018). Su Junjie proposes a concept of 'subjective authenticity' to advocate that the authenticity of ICH depends on how ICH practitioners convey 'their intrapersonal and interpersonal subjective wellbeing, or the values of ICH' (2018, p.924). Beyond the idea of salvage, ICH should be the renewable cultural practices that creating new forms of cultural transmission (Alivizatou, 2012). It is argued that ICH practitioners are supposed to mainly control the identification and management of ICH (Hafstein, 2007). On the ground heritage practices of ethnic minority groups empower them in dialogue with authorities, i.e. government agencies and social heritage organisations. Ethnic minority individuals and communities have not merely complemented the imposition of official heritage discourses and claim their cultural status through endeavouring to be inscribed in heritage lists, but also resist, negotiate and appropriate official heritage work (Zhu and Maags, 2020; Ludwig and Walton, 2020; Svensson and Maags, 2018). ICH practitioners' or practicing communities' authority in the ICH making can be the alternative heritage discourses for negotiating ideas of identity and determining values of ICH in line with their anticipations and needs. Tensions between official and non-official actors at different levels can display unstable power structure in the cultural heritage industry. This entails the reshape of relationships between *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups. The section 5.4 is going to further this discussion by centring on the AMGX's outreach programme – '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project'.

5.4 Bridging the AMGX with ethnic minority ecomuseums (communities): '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' as the regional heritage discourse

Ethnic ecomuseums, a unique type of *minzu* museum in China, have transitioned to be the manifestations of the expansion of AHD at the local level. Appropriating them to be community-based projects and incorporating them into the administrative system for heritage protection affirms their official role as heritage institutions. In Guangxi, the Regional Department of Culture's deployment of 'the 1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' has become an alternatively regional heritage discourse, where the AMGX can undertake the administration of ethnic minority communities' heritage outside its walls. While the AMGX builds this project as its 'cultural brand (文化品牌)' (AMGX, 2020) to expand its influence in society, it faces the predicament of marginalisation mainly caused by the discordant heritage making among stakeholders in local villages. The premise of dissecting power struggles built upon ecomuseums' manifold functions is to unmask how they came to be heritage governance tools from their original ideology.

5.4.1 From the ecomuseology to an official heritage discourse

The concept of the ecomuseum was put forward by Hugues de Varine at the 9th International Museum Congress in France in 1971, and persistently developed and refined by a group of scholars such as Georges Henri-Riviere, René Rivard, Peter Davis and Gerard Corsane. The growing concern about the environment and the attention paid to the value of local communities motivated the formation of ecomuseology in France. Initiating from the experimental practice at the Regional Natural Parks in France, ecomuseums have gradually been founded around the world as a manifestation of a new museology movement. The ecomuseum as a new concept is often misunderstood by many practitioners or the public (Varine, 2006; Su, 2008; Yin, 2017; Jin, 2012). Accordingly, Hugues de Varine (2006, p.226) set forth a more definite interpretation of this term:

The "eco" prefix means neither economy, nor ecology in the common sense, but essentially human or social ecology: the community, society, and even mankind in general, are at the core of its existence, its activity, and its process.

Su Donghai (2008, p.33) also construes the connotation of 'eco' as 'a balanced system between society and the environment'. The ecomuseum model has been produced and reproduced by many scholars to break through the physical wall of conventional museums, challenge the object-centred curatorship, and act as a new form of heritage management. [26] Engaging a sense of place by connecting the local community, its natural and cultural heritage to its territory becomes the core of building up ecomuseum theories and practices (Davis, 2007; Corsane, 2017). The ecomuseology promoted by Corsane, Davis, Hawke and Stefano (2009) enhances the theorisation of the relationship between places, communities and their heritage. Corsane (2017, p.254, p.258) then introduces 'three pillars and twenty-one characteristics' to frame the ecomuseology. The ecomuseological philosophy spotlights community participation and authority over the use of intangible and tangible heritage resources, while diffusing that 'an ecomuseum should be a living organism that from its formation should be evolving to meet specific localised environmental, economic, social, cultural and political needs' (Corsane, 2017, p.255).

In the 2005 international ecomuseum forum held in China, the ecomuseum was already identified as an evolving concept without a fixed form (Su, 2008). There is no standard for creating ecomuseums and no universal criteria to judge whether these ecomuseums are successful or not (Nitzky, 2014, p.11; Pan, 2011). The openness of the ecomuseum's definition

---

[26] For example, Rivard's the components of a traditional museum contrasted with the components of an ecomuseum (Davis, 2007); Davis's (2007) necklace model; and Corsane's (2017) 'twenty-one' principals.

and mobilisation brings about constant negotiations and debates, while over 400 ecomuseums have been established around the world. Yet, the nature of the ecomuseum as a dynamic process enables the government authorities and museum or heritage professionals in China to manipulate it as an innovative approach of heritage protection. Qinpu (2009), the leading pioneer of ethnic ecomuseums in Guangxi, avers that the appearance of ecomuseums in China is essential to the implementation of ethnic policies and the development of ethnic minority concentrated areas.

Davis (2008) pinpoints the political expediency of ecomuseum and suggests the potential of the ecomuseum model for multiple functions and purposes, manifesting that an ecomuseum is 'a community-driven museum or heritage project that aids sustainable development' (Davis, 2007, p.199). In China, practising the ecomuseological approach involves more ambitious development attempts, i.e. poverty alleviation, aiding the economy and cultural governance. Ecomuseums are not only nurtured to 'work with local communities to respond to their development needs' (Davis, 2008, p.400), but also to revitalise disadvantaged communities in rural areas and maintain cultural diversity (文化多样性) and sustainability (Su, 2008). Since the first ecomuseum launched in Suojia, Guizhou in 1998, the adoption of the ecomuseum projects has always been associated with multifaceted meanings.

Su Donghai and An Laishun are the first group of scholars in China committed to the ecomuseum movement. Both participated in the planning and construction of the first Chinese ecomuseum (Liuzhi Suoga Miao ecomuseum) as leading specialists during the 1980s. In Su's (2008, p.34) view, the ecological crisis caused by the 'advanced industrialisation' and the prevailing ideology of new museology brought ecomuseums into the cultural heritage protection discourse in China. Ecomuseums appropriated by government authorities, heritage specialists and museum practitioners have been reproduced with 'characteristics of China' (中国特色), which breaks away from Western ecomuseology (Nitzky, 2012). They rationalise the

Chinese version of the ecomuseum paradigm as an institution of heritage led by the government, guided by experts and with community involvement (Su, 2008). A proposed community-led ecomuseum ideal has been radically localised as the AHD (Waterton and Smith, 2010, p.12; Nitzky, 2014).

Nitzky (2014, p.26) argues that deeming ecomuseums as advanced community museological practices 'only scratches the surface' of the issues with ecomuseums. He scrutinises the institutionalisation of Chinese ecomuseums by perceiving Chinese museums as an 'exhibitionary complex' (Bennett, 1998, p.74) and ecomuseums as assemblages of government (Nitzky, 2012). In his perception, the top-down leadership and management approach symbolises the paternalist governance of Chinese ecomuseums and shapes them as appendages of the national heritage discourse (ibid.). Community participation has been reinterpreted, from community empowerment and cultural autonomy (文化自主) to community involvement, where community as 'culture owner (文化的主人)' should be guided by 'cultural agencies (文化代理)', i.e. government authorities and heritage specialists (Su, 2008). As museum scholars involving in the Chinese ecomuseums construction distrust the capacity of local people to determine and manage the values and utilisation of the pasts.

Su Donghai (2005, p.16) classifies Chinese ecomuseums into three generations. He identifies ethnic ecomuseums in Guangxi as the second generation, because of their increased 'professionalisation' (专业化) and 'museumification' (博物馆化). In other words, the AMGX's "professional" curatorial methods and "scientific" heritage protection and research approaches reinforce the governance of communities' heritage preservation and cultural representation (Su, 2012; Wu, 2007). '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' is meant to facilitate the intercultural dialogues between cultural institutions and ethnic minority communities, through creating a long-term stable collaborative relationship between the AMGX and ethnic ecomuseums. The combination of the traditional museum and ecomuseum enables the AMGX to have more

fieldwork sites and present ethnic minority cultural heritage beyond its physical building, which is believed to have the potential for holistic representation of ethnic cultures (Qin, 2009). Working in this unifying operational scheme is the essence of '1+10' project.

The incorporation of the AMGX and ethnic ecomuseums as the regional heritage discourse enables the AMGX professionals to intervene in every phase of ethnic ecomuseum work: from the site selection, heritage identification, the exhibition centre construction, exhibition-making through to future operations. Moreover, they can help the cultivation of the local heritage "protectors", since the Guangxi ecomuseums hire community members as staff who are responsible for their daily operation. Empowering small groups of community members has been viewed as a breakthrough of Chinese ethnic ecomuseums. Defined in 'the Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseums Administrative Approaches', the ethnic ecomuseum is a non-profit institution providing the public with cultural service as a community museum that protects and preserves the natural and cultural heritage of a specific community in situ (Mo, 2009).

5.4.2 The formulation of '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project'

Year	Progress	Milestone	Participant
1999	Discuss the potential of constructing ethnic ecomuseums in Guangxi		Guangxi Regional Department of Culture （GRDC）
2002	Investigate Liuzhi Suoga Ecomuseum (the first ecomuseum in China) in the Guizhou province		GRDC; the research team of cultural properties
2002	Initiate the investigation and research of ethnic cultural resources in Guangxi; Discussing and negotiating with local governments	Determine the construction of ecomuseums	GRDC; elites and professionals from mutiple disciplines; local governments
2003	Discuss the feasibility of the pilot ethnic ecomuseums project; sites selection and the empirical research of local cultural resources and their preservation	The official implementation stage of the ethnic ecomuseums pilot scheme	GRDC; an interdisciplinary team of government officials, ethnologists, archaeologists, museologists, historians and anthropologists (including staff from the AMGX)
2003	Select Nandan Lihu White Trousers Yao village, Sangjiang Dong Miaojiang Dong village and Baise Jingxi Jiuzhou Zhuang village as the ethnic ecomuseum sites		
12/2003	Organise a session regarding Guangxi ecomuseums' construction and development	Put the proposition that constructing ethnic ecomuseums guided by experts from the AMGX as the research centres of the AMGX	Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX); A prestigious museologist Su Donghai; museum directors or staff of the cultural bureau from different areas in Guangxi
2004-2005	The construction and establishment of Nandan Lihu White Trousers Yao Ecomuseum, Sangjiang Dong Ecomuseum and Jingxi Jiuzhou Zhuang Ecomuseum	Preparing for the implementation of '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project'	Guangxi Regional Government; GRDC; AMGX; local governments; other stakeholders
2005	The launch of '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project'		
2005-2010	The construction and establishment of Hezhou Hakka Ecomuseum (2007), Napo Black Clothes Ecomuseum (2008), Lingchuan Changgangling Trade Route Ecomuseum (2009), Dongxing Jing Ecomuseum (2009), Rongshui Antai Miao Ecomuseum (2009), Jingxiu Aoyao Ecomuseum (2011) and Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (2010)		

Table 5. 1 The timeline of the ethnic ecomuseum construction in Guangxi (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team, 2005; Mo, 2009; Lai, 2013; Gong, 2016; The AMGX, 2017c).

The timeline above (see Table 5.1) clearly demonstrates how the ethnic ecomuseum project has been built up as a regional heritage discourse and shows the AMGX's irreplaceable role in the discourse creation. Informed by the ecomuseum practices in Guizhou province since 1998, the

Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region intended to foreground the way of deploying the ecomuseum model to 'wrestle with the urgency of *minzu* cultural protection' (Qin, 2009, p.5). After visiting the Suoga ecomuseum in Guizhou in 2002, the Guangxi Regional Department of Culture, directed by Rong Xiaoning, and the AMGX, administrated by Qinpu (previous director of the AMGX), began to search for suitable ecomuseum sites (Nitzky, 2014). The project team they led, together with specialists from different disciplines (including ethnology, archaeology, museology, and anthropology), explored the feasibility of adopting the ecomuseum model in different ethnic minority communities. Experts offered scientific and specific guidance on the design and the development of the pilot ethnic ecomuseum project.

The AMGX, under the supervision of the Regional Department of Culture, also participated in the project team in 2003. The association of the AMGX and the ethnic ecomuseums was formed after the establishment of three experimental ecomuseums in 2004: Nandan Lihu White Trousers Yao Ecomuseum, Sangjiang Dong Ecomuseum and Jingxi Jiuzhou Zhuang Ecomuseum (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project Team, 2005, p.2). As planned in the proposal for the ecomuseum project, from 2005 to 2011, there are seven ethnic ecomuseums created in Guanxi. They include six ethnic groups: Hakka, Black Costume Zhuang, Han, Jing, Miao, Zhuang (two ecomuseums), and Aoyao (ibid.). The AMGX takes a pivotal role as administrators by offering persistent professional guidance on ecomuseum work and activities. The AMGX's involvement incorporates ethnic communities more firmly into the regional cultural protection. Ten ecomuseums are allied with the AMGX to establish a "museum complex" or an "association (联合体)" to achieve the sustainable and integral protection of the cultural heritage of ethnic groups in Guangxi. Seeking to maintain this stable interaction, the AMGX's control of ecomuseums built upon the '1+10 Ethnic Ecomuseums project', operating as 'effective administrative measures of the regional government of Guangxi (行政措施)' (Qin, 2009, p.7).

5.4.3 The museumification (博物馆化) of ethnic communities

Establishing ethnic ecomuseums needed a series of actions, undertaken by AMGX professionals, other specialists, and government authorities, which encompassed site selection, fieldwork, exhibition making and establishing 'Cultural Family Models' (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team, 2005).[27] This process of drawing ethnic minority communities into AHD and converting them into ecomuseums that exhibit themselves, without allowing them to make decisions concerning how to protect and manage their cultural heritage (Smith, 2006), can be summarised as a form of heritage making – museumification. How are they selected to be "museumised"? The criteria of choosing ethnic communities and designating ecomuseums can be summarised from three aspects: 'the representativity of ethnic cultures, local distinctiveness, and cultural distinctiveness' (Mo, 2015, p.34). These are outlined from the pilot practices of ecomuseums before 2005.

Recognising tangible and intangible heritage in this project serves to guarantee and legitimise the cultural standing of ethnic communities as "representative", and reframe community members' cultural identities (Nitzky, 2014). The exhibition centres in the Guangxi ecomuseum model, as the AMGX research stations are set up, strengthen its interaction with the community and convey its storytelling (Su, 2008). As Nong Xuejian, the vice-director of the AMGX explained, 'when we attempt to know an ethnic minority group, the representative ecomuseum can be the appropriate place to go'.[28] This makes the criteria of representativity more indeterminate. How did they justify whether an ethnic village or its culture was representative or not, and worth protection or not? He further illustrated that they only took account of the ethnic-cultural features. For example, as Mo (2015) explains, well-preserved traditional architecture and other tangible heritage (完整性), the primitivity (原生性) of the

---

[27] The AMGX identified three to five local families living in traditional ways as 'Cultural Family Models' and sponsored them to preserve their houses and objects in situ. They are considered to be the extension of the permanent exhibitions in exhibition centres.
[28] Interview 8, 21/05/2018: Zhuang.

community, and the authenticity (真实性) of cultural practices can make an ethnic community unique enough to be rescued as an endangered culture and officially valued as an ecomuseum.

The location of the first ecomuseum in an ethnic minority village had already lain the foundation for Chinese ecomuseums' site selection criteria, which mainly concentrated on the capitalisation of ethnic minority culture for its economic and social development. Inspired by the idea of ethnicity and cultural heritage as resources in poverty alleviation and development, the Guangxi Regional Department of Culture and the AMGX straightforward paid more attention to ethnic villages with underdeveloped economies, 'outstanding cultural characteristics', and 'rich cultural heritage' in remote areas (Mo, 2015, p.34; Mo, 2009). "Ethnicity" is a core of the construction of ethnic minority ecomuseums, creating a bond between local identity construction and the representation of multiculturalism in this region. The ethnic ecomuseum project team attempted to select twelve 'representative ethnic villages' (民族文化代表性的民族村寨) to represent ethnic groups in Guangxi (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team, 2005). It was a strategy for the regional government of Guangxi to align itself with this ethnic theming project. There are twelve ethnic groups in Guangxi. Ideally, every ethnic culture should have its corresponding ecomuseum.

Transforming a specific ethnic community into an ecomuseum can expand the AMGX's representation of ethnic cultures and its research field. The network created with the ecomuseums becomes a starting point for the AMGX to add local ethnic cultures into its authoritative narrative. This project enables the Guangxi region to act as a capacious showcase, by displaying these ethnic minority communities, in order to stress the collectivity and multiculturalism. Nonetheless, in Guangxi, the ten ecomuseums do not contain Shui, Mulao, Gelao, Yi, Maonan or Hui ethnic minority communities. [29] They are under-represented in this

_____

[29] Two Han ecomuseums (including one Hakka), two Yao ecomuseums, three Zhuang ecomuseums, one Jing ecomuseum, one Miao ecomuseum, and one Dong ecomuseum.

project, but Zhuang, the symbolic ethnic minority group in Guangxi with political importance, is represented by three ecomuseums. The unequal representation of ethnic minority cultures has even been exacerbated during the selecting process. Mo Zhidong (2009, p.37), one of the leading ecomuseum practitioners, elaborates:

> Zhuang, Han, Yao, Miao, and Dong ethnic groups make up ~~of~~ a large proportion of the Guangxi's population. They have more branches than other ethnic groups, which is convenient for us to reselect according to cultural distinctiveness, population distribution and the preservation of original cultures. For example, three Zhuang ecomuseums represented different branches of Zhuang culture respectively: Zhuang culture in the north and south part of Guangxi.

This project accentuates the essentialisation of different ethnic minorities by privileging certain communities despite the differences among the different communities. Yin (2017, p.67) attributes such representations of ethnicity to 'the early practice' of ecomuseum projects in China, criticising the overemphasis on distinct cultural features and the political imagination of ethnic minority villages instead of accommodating the needs of ethnic communities. The institutionalisation and instrumentalisation of local cultures brought the idea of cultural heterogeneity into local people's daily lives (Wei, 2010; Nitzky, 2014). The current ecomuseum practices of Guangxi convert the ethnic minority communities' local distinctiveness into cultural distinctiveness in the regional narratives of ethnic minority cultures. They have set the tone for the underlying relationship between ecomuseums and the AMGX: the AMGX's practices in ethnic ecomuseums enlarge the scope of its cultural representation and heritage management. The ecomuseum construction disregards the demands of community participation in the heritage recognition and exhibition making. Instead, it centres on the museumification of local ethnic cultures in traditionally authoritarian museum approaches.

5.4.4 Community engagement as a tool for strengthening control over heritage

> 1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project could not be simply understood as an assemblage of museums, but a creative approach the AMGX adopted to protect *minzu* cultural heritage, especially the intangible cultural heritage. (Nong, 2009, p.21)

The key characteristics of this project were to interpret and present tangible and intangible cultural heritage within their original cultural context. In Qin's words, 'fish cannot live without water (鱼儿离不开水)' (Qin, 2009, p.12). Ironically, this project's attempt was to provide context, but some of the exhibitions in ecomuseums resulted in the decontextualisation of the cultures, alienating villagers from their cultural resources within their original cultural environment. The AMGX operates beyond the border of the physical museum space, expecting to extend its conception through offering professional help to ten ecomuseums located in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Province, and using them as its subsidiary research centres or ethnographic data-sharing platforms (研究工作站/资源共享平台) to gather resources and produce extensions of exhibitions (Gong, 2016; Ye, 2009). Displaying local cultures as heritage recapitulates the dominated expert knowledge created by the AMGX. The construction of ethnic ecomuseums was not enabling local communities to combine their museum visions and knowledge with museum practices from the outside but letting them accept the AMGX's participation in their local affairs and cultural heritage preservation as experts with the authority.

The AMGX, therefore, set up a research department (Department of Ethnic Cultures Research) and its researchers serve as liaisons with different ecomuseums to conduct these two programmes (联络人制度) and record local culture traditions. Thinking from the dimension of the AMGX, ecomuseums are shifted from independent heritage agencies, where the AMGX exerts itself to foster its community participation, to "source communities" that it interacts with. The sustainability of the '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' requires the maintenance of

the continuous connection between the AMGX and ethnic ecomuseums. The AMGX proposed a series of actions to strengthen the involvement of local people, including putting 'the cultural memory project' and 'the ethnographic film festival' on its agenda, bringing multiple voices from ethnic minority communities to the museum. These programmes mark the AMGX's endeavour and ambition of applying community engagement to intervene in local heritage management; in the meantime, it associates itself with the complex social relations in ethnic communities, which changes the AMGX and ecomuseums to be the site of contact and friction.

Community engagement is a constant theme for the contemporary ethnographic museum to persist with dialogues with Indigenous communities and develop 'more inclusive, collaborative, and culturally relative museological approaches' (Kreps, 2011, p.458). Yet this concept, for *minzu* museums in China, used to be "untranslatable" and irrelevant under their monopoly on representation of ethnic minorities (Varutti, 2014). These two entangled programmes flow from the AMGX's ecomuseological practices, enabling the museum to seize the opportunity to reinforce its role as a cultural centre and accommodate excluded ethnic minority communities in its' representational practices. Meanwhile, they are reframed as "community engagement" projects of the AMGX to strengthen its hegemonic control of local heritage, which is problematic and open to dialogue and opposition. As it does not 'fully address the practical challenges of sharing power', 'take on community concerns and adapt', to 'give engagement the validity and integrity to improve current relations and approaches to representation' (Onciul, 2013, p.93-94).

Cultural memory project

The cultural memory project, a 'cultural heritage protection and transmission project (文化遗产保护与传承项目)' learned through work in Guizhou, is one of the principal ecomuseological practices that the AMGX has used to sustain the '1+10 ecomuseums model' (The AMGX, 2016).

This programme is an endeavour by the AMGX of applying visual anthropology as a working tool in ecomuseums to ensure the participation of local communities. It is dedicated to evoking community members' cultural self-awareness and training them to identify and record their cultural assets and lives through producing voice recordings and videos, taking ethnographic photos and writing fieldnotes. Such way of helping people involve in the interpretation and presentation of their places is regarded as 'cultural mapping' (Taylor, 2013). Cultural mapping, according to the Duxbury (2015), is an instrument to encourage communities' participation in cultural heritage preservation. This community-based participatory approach serves as a practical tool for the community to 'capture more symbolic and intangible aspects of place' (Duxbury, 2015, p.1) from their insights, empowering community members to celebrate their cultural distinctiveness and sustainability. This is a start for the AMGX to give prominence to overlooked knowledge and perspectives, which can overcome the limitations of its expertise.

After the first 'village video documentation' training sessions held in the Rongshuiantai Miao ecomuseum (Xiaosang village) in 2011, the working contents of a cultural memory project have changed to centre on video-making training (The AMGX, 2016). This rests on the AMGX's expectation to address the continuing reduction of the number of ecomuseum participants in communities, reconnect ecomuseums, and cultivate local pioneers of ethnic cultural protection. The AMGX staff organised training sessions at different ecomuseums annually, but most participants were ecomuseum employers. Museum staff, and specialists in the field of visual anthropology, disseminated the value of village documentary video in the preservation of local culture and teach villagers basic principles of shooting, how to use video cameras, and editing software and operating skills during training sessions (The AMGX, 2014). The AMGX engaged with local communities through this project, embracing and respecting community members' diverse forms of authenticity. The contribution of this program on community participation is that some community members who concern their local knowledge and identity found ways of recognising and presenting their cultural heritage in their own "languages" (videos) and with a

medium of self-expression, without judgement from museum practitioners and specialists (Liang, 2017).

Ethnographic film festival

Responding to the cultural memory program and the village video documentation training sessions, the first Ecomuseum video documentation festival in 2012 provided channels for community members to present and represent themselves at the AMGX through videos. It was a breakthrough of the AMGX representational strategy that it empowered ethnic minority communities to make their voices heard in the interpretation of cultural heritage, as well as express their sense of place and belonging in the regional narrative space in terms of ethnic minority cultures. To promote village documentary videos to the public and showcase the recognition and translation of ICH from community members' perspectives, the AMGX decided to curate the ethnographic film exhibition in the name of 'Guangxi biennial ethnographic film festival', starting in 2014 (The AMGX, 2014). It is vital to note that the AMGX did not merely collect and document videos submitted from ecomuseums, but respected and revitalised them through the film festival. Moreover, ethnographic films have become part of the AMGX's collection in its ethnic minority cultural videos database. They are exhibited in the cinema of the AMGX, which have open access to the public through the AMGX's website. The ethnographic film festival includes four units: *Gala show*, *Rural Image*, *New Talents* and *Specially Invited* (The AMGX, 2014). The *Rural Image* is designed for local participants of the cultural memory project, and they can communicate their thinking and why they view their cultures in these particular ways.

The cultural memory project and the ethnographic film festival offer processes through which ethnic community members from ecomuseums can bring the attention of the AMGX as the dominant decision maker to their voices and share their experiences. The director of the film festival events and cultural memory programs, nonetheless, noted:

They always asked us what they can film when we had training sessions. They rarely

observed their cultures under the gaze of themselves. (Interview 11, 02/08/2018: Han)

The AMGX used to stipulate that participants needed to film officially recognised ICH

transmission bearers. It allocates funds to ecomuseums annually to ensure this program,

enforcing ecomuseum employers to work according to the outline of this project and submit at

least two films to the ethnographic film festival. In doing so, it can make sure of the

ecomuseums' regular operation and their cooperation, avoiding a complete transformation into

folk or village museums. For some community members involved in this program, taking videos

is similar to homework and the AMGX takes on the role of teacher. Such working style confers

legitimacy to the museum's claim of the sustainability of ecomuseums. The cultural memory

project sponsored by the AMGX and the film festival do not really resolve the obstacles to

provoking community participation in ecomuseological practices. The merits of these projects

outweigh the AMGX's operative flaws. Community members who are willing to produce their

self-representations through the platform of the AMGX can still grasp opportunities of taking

ethnographic films. While submitting two videos or films taken by local people to the AMGX is

compulsory for every ethnic ecomuseum to get funding, overall, the cultural memory project

and film festival facilitating an intercultural dialogue between communities and the AMGX is

meaningful to them (Taylor, 2013).

To cite one example, Mr Cheng is a video-taking devotee living in a village next to the LLZE. His

video about the Zhuang people's papermaking skill was entered into the competition at the

ethnographic film festival. It took two years for him to film the whole papermaking process in

Mahai village (Zhuang village) close to the LLZE. He noticed the picture of the papermaker

displayed in the AMGX on a visit and was motivated by it to record more detail and intangible

aspects of the practice beyond this simple material form.[30] Many works in the festival, such as this video, flowed from the cultural memory project, which embodied ethnic community members' abilities to reinvigorate cultural heritage, both recognised and misrecognised by museum professionals, and their eagerness to express it. Moreover, the film of Mr Hou living in the LLZE, 'Jiuben (Yeast for making alcohol)', has received the award in recognition of his contribution to recording the local ICH in 2020 (The AMGX, 2020b). The Water Liquor (水酒) has been listed as ICH preserved by the LLZE. However, designating it as ICH that symbolises the local Zhuang culture, the AMGX did not explore how it was produced and the knowledge behind it. These villagers used cultural mapping techniques to engage with their cultural practices, which exerted their abilities to pursue, convey and appreciate the value of their heritage as knowledge instead of iconic symbols. Countering the essentialisation of their cultures in the AMGX and the LLZE, their interpretation unmasks an inextricable connection between people, their places, and the living pasts.

5.4.5 Where do dilemmas arise

Viewing an ecomuseum as a process instead of an established result, Gong (vice director of the AMGX) and Wu raise awareness of challenges they faced in terms of the sustainable development of ecomuseums: 'community members' inaction, cultural heritage protection, funding for operation, lack for ethics and legally regulations' (2016, p.147). However, they do not touch on the key point: what generates frustration in both the AMGX and community members from ecomuseums. A discerning ecomuseum practitioner from the AMGX points out:

…[w]hatever the physical building it is or enlarge it as an invisible protection area [The matter is] how villagers acknowledge your endeavours, how they participate in your

---

[30] Interview 21, 17/06/2018: Mahai village.

work and what alleged cultural benefit you can really bring to them? (Interview 2, 11/05/2018: Han)

The ultimate issue with this project is that the top-down imposition of community-based heritage projects and these new concepts have not taken ethnic community members' perspectives and their economic motivations into consideration (Labadi and Gould, p.2015).

Ten ecomuseums exist in a state of "free development (自由发展)", and fewer community members are involved in the practices of ecomuseums. At the beginning of this project, the AMGX and ecomuseums held annual meetings. They worked collaboratively to discuss the practical operational approaches and reach consensus on their work. However, in recent years, it has become overwhelming for the AMGX to monitor this project and the ecomuseums. The heritage governance tools, ethnographic film festivals and the cultural memory project, cannot address the fundamental dilemma the AMGX faces – limited authority over heritage management and cultural representation at local levels and the failure of cooperating with community members.

The above sections recount the origin of creating ethnic ecomuseums in Guangxi. The emergence of this ecomuseum project was certainly done with good intentions. Heritage in the shape of ecomuseums integrates with tourism and turns ethnic minority communities into touristic destinations, which can drive the revitalisation and economic recovery of local communities (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p.151). As Nong (2009) declares, the preliminary stage of ecomuseum construction is rescuing and recording authentic ethnic minority cultures before the disappearance and transformation of them. Ecomuseum practitioners chose to locate ecomuseums in impoverished areas. They realised that they could not just work on the protection of cultural heritage and ignore the sustainable development of local communities (

协调发展). Tourism could make ecomuseums economically viable. On the other hand, it means that the AMGX must deal with actors with divergent values and the complicated situation of ecomuseums that they involve in conflicts engendered from cultural heritage protection, a booming tourism industry, agricultural protection or a mass migration movement (Mo, 2009).

The lack of clarity of the ecomuseum project and community participation increased the difficulty for ethnic minority communities to form the idea of ecomuseums and be involved in ecomuseums' practices. This alienated the AMGX from ethnic minority communities. In the analysis of Chinese ecomuseums of ethnic minority regions, Zhong (2008) points out the fact that it is difficult to entirely convey the original conception of the ecomuseum due to the existence of cultural differences. Ecomuseum practitioners believe that their remarkable achievement is bringing the museum culture to ethnic communities in rural areas (Qin, 2009, p.12). A growing body of literature with reference to the development of ethnic ecomuseums in China and reflect on the phenomena of constructing ecomuseums. Cultural empowerment in communities, and tensions between cultural heritage preservation and economic or tourism development, are topics of intensively scholarly debate (Wei, 2010; Zhang, 2011; Davis, 2011). There is a marked contrast between flourishing theories on ecomuseums and practices in the bottleneck stage. Delineating the value of ethnic ecomuseums in China from a top-down perspective seems to be untenable. In Guangxi, it takes a long time for community members to digest a word unrelated to their daily lives. Predicaments or contradictions of the first ecomuseum in China have still been encountered by other ecomuseums (Yin, 2017b).

The Guangxi ecomuseum model follows the ideal proposed during the construction of the Guizhou ecomuseum. Compared to Guizhou ecomuseums, it seeks to disentangle issues raised in the Guizhou model, like the community participation crisis, by employing at least three local community members and boosting more activities in communities with the assistance of experts from the AMGX. Yet, most employers in ecomuseums are assigned by the local cultural

bureaus (文化局). The operation of ecomuseums and employers' salaries predominantly rely on long-term capital investment from local governments. The leadership of the local governments decides their dominant voice in the ecomuseum and the development of communities. An ecomuseum practitioner from the AMGX complains about the cultural preservation in the LLZE:

> … the local government manages the ecomuseum…we can only give them (community members) guidance. We do not have a voice there. No one hears us. (Interview 11, 02/08/2018: Han)

The AMGX has less impact on community affairs and how they utilise heritage. The local heritage discourses created by local governments or communities are difficult to challenge by the regional heritage discourse it works within (see Chapter Six).

Taking the LLZE as an example, this ecomuseum transitions from the subordinate research site of the AMGX to a village museum in the form translated by community members (Clifford, 2013). Community members place ecomuseological practices at the periphery of their heritage making. Besides this, the AMGX is incapable of capitalising on local heritage discourses to obtain the legitimacy for heritage in every ecomuseum. It implies the transformation of power relations between museum professionals and ethnic minority communities along with the alienation between the AMGX and the ecomuseums (elaborated on in Chapter Six). This results in ecomuseum practitioners' diagnosis of ethnic communities' passive community participation.

Preserving cultural and natural heritage in situ is the basic principle to constructing ecomuseums in Guangxi (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team, 2005, p.7; Mo,

2015). The principal values of ecomuseums are closely bound up with community participation. Varine (2006, p.226) provides a straightforward explanation that 'community museums are often called ecomuseums'. Community members are expected to assume the role of active agents in the construction and development of ecomuseums to preserve local cultures and cultural heritage in situ, for the sake of 'the sustainable development of the territory' (Varine, 2006, p.231; Su, 2008). Ecomuseum practitioners from the AMGX are not ready to risk more inclusive ways of working and treat community members as a partner on an equal basis, which takes for granted that community participation means it is the community members' responsibility to follow their guidance (Nitzky, 2014). Practices ecomuseum practitioners carry out demonstrate their intention of utilising community participation as an effective strategy to include the way community members' express their cultures and how they use heritage in their AHD (Waterton and Smith, 2010).

The AMGX encounters power struggles and contestations within different ethnic communities, which has resulted in the decentralisation of the AMGX from this ecomuseum project and the deconstruction of its discursive power. Ecomuseum practitioners from the AMGX grant the existence of local heritage discourse. The crisis of the ethnic ecomuseums project lies in the factors of an unclear mission, objectives and administration of this project, and contested interests with local stakeholders. From another angle, ethnic communities are the shapers of their own cultures (Onciul, 2013), but the AMGX intends to be the shaper of these communities' cultures and the dominant power in ecomuseums' heritage making, which leads to the status quo of the ethnic ecomuseums project. The ecomuseum practitioner, mentioned above, adds:

Only the ethnographic film festivals and cultural memory project sustain our weak relationship with ethnic ecomuseums. I feel powerless to resist the failure of this project and alter the status quo. Therefore, I intend to respect the communities' choice. If

several ecomuseums have community members with cultural awareness that are willing to use the ecomuseological approach to manage their cultural heritage…We can share power. What we should do is to support them and liberate them from principles formulated by us…do not think others touch my "cake". It is also good when my "cake" is turned to be a "biscuit". It is still eatable. Everyone likes it. (Interview 2, 11/05/2018: Han)

Some informants clearly reveal the alienation between the AMGX and associated ecomuseums, and the disconnection between the AMGX and local community members. In their opinion, the AMGX can let the power out and uphold communities' decisions, welcoming different uses of ecomuseums for heritage protection. Ecomuseums are not merely tools for the AMGX to consolidate its position in the regional heritage discourse.

Evans and Rowlands state that 'heritage is a problematic term and practice, involving competition, conflict and new hierarchies of power in local communities' (2014, p.272). Although the notion of the ecomuseum and its heritage model are imposed by ecomuseum practitioners, the local heritage discourse of ethnic communities may enable them to shape its heritage making. Likewise, communities may employ the concept of ecomuseums for their heritage protection or representation. Nandan White Trousers Yao ecomuseum is a typical example. Without the intervention of museum professionals from the AMGX, local employers of this ecomuseum compiled a textbook about their White Trousers Yao culture for students of the community, disseminating their cultural message and the idea of cultural heritage protection to the next generation. Furthermore, they show ethnographic films made by their own community in public spaces of villages and organise a performance team to preserve the bronze drum dance as their cultural heritage. The crisis of the ethnic ecomuseum project mirrors the powerlessness of the AMGX. Conversely, it can mean ethnic communities have the opportunity to discover proper ways of arranging their heritage.

5.5 Conclusion

Within the AMGX's walls, ICH performances intensify and bring ethnic-cultural practitioners' voices into its dominant storytelling of ethnic minority cultures. For ICH practitioners, the AMGX acts as a promotion platform. Meanwhile, the ecomuseum project, linking the AMGX to ten ethnic minority communities, is reinterpreted as an official heritage discourse the AMGX works within. The AMGX's connection with ethnic ICH practitioners and the dissolution of its partnership with ethnic communities manifest that the AMGX and ethnic minority groups are equal stakeholders in the power structure formed in official heritage discourses. The next chapter will mainly focus on the LLZE as an AHD and how the local community's heritage discourse question and appropriate the ecomuseum project.

Chapter 6 Rethinking the ethnic ecomuseum

This chapter furthers the discussion from Chapter Five to reconsider power relations between *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups, and how they have played out within the domain of critical heritage studies. It identifies understandings of the ecomuseum from two aspects. This chapter partly places emphasis on how the ecomuseum has been constructed as the top-down ecomuseums project and an official heritage discourse. It also explores the Longji village's heritagisation, to inquire how most community members question and reframe the LLZE as an authorised heritage discourse, and draw on it as a village museum and ecomuseological practices to shape their representation of the local Zhuang culture.

Five sections constitute this chapter. In light of the fieldwork findings that community members understand the LLZE as a village museum, the first section traces the site selection, construction, and development process of this ecomuseum and how community members form their current understanding of the LLZE. The following sections focus on how community members construct and utilise heritage for tourism into concern beyond the ecomuseum context. It notices the multiplicity of actors and their dissonant heritage making processes, aiming to view how community members declare their authority over heritage management and cultural representation through negotiating, resisting and shaping different heritage discourses, and how their representational practices modify and reinvent the concept of the ecomuseum and its practices.

6.1 The Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum as an AHD

> The exhibition centre is the ecomuseum itself, but the village gate, terraced fields, architectures and ancient culture like the stone bridge all belong to the protection area

of this ecomuseum. Thus, our village can also be recognised as a giant museum. (Interview 18, 19/6/2018: Hou Family village)

Now I think this ecomuseum not only exhibits objects in the building of the exhibition centre but also includes the natural and cultural environment of this village. (Interview 17, 23/6/2018: Pan Family village)

From these two villagers' descriptions, they appeared to offer the "perfect" answers to the question 'what is the ecomuseum?'. However, the reality is that they are two of only a few active participants in the ecomuseum project. The rest of the local informants resisted or were reluctant to accept the ideal idea of an ecomuseum. It is extensively acknowledged that the building of the exhibition centre represents the ecomuseum instead of the entire village. Community members' understandings and use of the ecomuseum were altered along with the ecomuseum's construction, which redefined this notion. Moreover, some villagers were confounded by "museum" with "ecomuseum". The absent prefix "eco", as many scholars also revealed, epitomised the marginalisation of the ecomuseum concept.

6.1.1 Initiation

Together, the Regional Cultural Department and the AMGX initiated the selection of the ecomuseum site as the preliminary stage of the ecomuseum project, starting in 2005 (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team, 2005). In 2008, they completed their fieldwork and exploration in the Longji area and determined to exercise the ecomuseum approach in the Longji village, because the Longji village featured terraced fields and representative White Zhuang culture as the ecomuseum site (Wu, 2007; Lai, 2013). Its traditional *diaojiaolou* (stilt style architectures 吊脚楼) were well preserved, and its authentic or "original" (Yuanshengtai

原生态) culture was less affected by the outside world, which suited their demand of "rescuing" endangered ethnic culture (The LLZE, 2008; Lai, 2013). Material authenticity and the historical value of local architecture had been imposed by official authorities to certify them as heritage that needed to be protected through the ecomuseum project (Zhu, 2015).

The controversies between the local government, the tourism company, and ecomuseum practitioners emerged from the decision-making process of the site selection. The local government and the tourism company were unsatisfied with the location of the ecomuseum selected by ecomuseum practitioners.[31] They insisted on building the exhibition centre at the front gate of the Longji Rice Terraces Scenic Area, in order to serve the tourism industry (Lai, 2013). The regional Cultural Department rejected their proposal. Therefore, the tourism sector tends to overlook the existence of the ecomuseum in local tourism development and collaboration with ecomuseum practitioners (The LLZE, 2018).

6.1.2 Introduction

…It is a government project. (Interview 17, 23/6/2018: Pan Family village)

A small group of villagers working as officials in Longji village, such as Pan Tingfang, were informed that the regional Cultural Department would implement an ecomuseum project without explicating what an ecomuseum was. It was a political task that they were supposed to accomplish. While the previous vice-director of the AMGX Mo Zhidong organised a meeting to further explain objectives of the ecomuseum to representatives of the villagers (officials, elders or villagers with high reputation), what the ecomuseum was and who it was for was still puzzling to them (Lai, 2013). Most of the villagers had no idea about it. They might have known

---

[31] Interview 11, 02/08/2018: Han.

that it was a government project launched by the government, but they did not know what role they should have or how it would be in once constructed.[32] Ecomuseum practitioners failed to promote the idea of the ecomuseum and cultural heritage and why they chose this village. At this stage, the ecomuseum was, therefore, a government project for some villagers.

6.1.3 Localisation

> I know the concept of ecomuseum a little bit now. It helps to preserve old objects (gudong 古董) of the past for the next generations. It is meaningful for the museum to collect our old objects. (Interview 23, 19/6/2018: Liao Family village)

This quote summarises the consequence of the ecomuseum's localisation, which is similar to a traditional museum comprising collections, exhibitions and architecture. With the help of several community members, the AMGX practitioners carried out collecting by visiting villagers' homes and purchasing numerous objects produced and used in the past. During this process, the abstract concept of the ecomuseum transformed into a concrete and imaginable form, a place for displays of the local Zhuang "lao gudong (historical objects 老古董)". The AMGX also funded the community to restore stone bridges, old houses and temples to demonstrate their interests in tangible heritage (The LLZE, 2008; 2018).

The construction of the exhibition centre commenced on the 8th of June, 2009. Before that, acquiring public land required the agreement of the entire village. After negotiating with community members, eventually, an abandoned location at Ping village of Longji village, where there used to be an elementary school, came to be appropriate for the exhibition centre site

---

[32] Personal conversations with five villagers who participated in the introductory meeting for the launch of the ecomuseum, June 2018.

(Lai, 2013). There was an underlying connection between the past school built in this land and the ecomuseum, as a villager mentioned that they existed for pedagogy. In order to translate the imported idea of ecomuseum into the local dialect, the exhibition centre was designed and built in the local *diaojiaolou* style, following the local Zhuang's construction customs. The LLZE's local staff member Pan Tingfang commented that 'this ecomuseum to preserve Zhuang folk customs was supposed to be in the local architecture style'.[33] The local community actively participated in this project by working as carpenters and preparing for the ritual of constructing the new house (*Shangliang* 上梁). During the local ritual of building the new house, ecomuseum practitioners invited villagers to throw sticky rice cakes (*Liangba* 梁粑) into the wooden structure of the building.[34] In doing so, they strengthened villagers' awareness of the exhibition centre and endeavoured to turn it into a part of living life.

Most community members were exposed to the term of ecomuseum, and even museum culture, for the first time when involved in the site selection and construction of the exhibition centre and during the collecting process. What ecomuseum practitioners have unintentionally done is transmitted a message that the ecomuseum is an alternative name of the exhibition centre. The emphasis on the tangible cultural heritage, especially architectures and objects, and the utilisation of the exhibition centre to attract visitors reinforces this idea, which is difficult to shake.

6.1.4 Continuity

I feel that I am running a cooperative (合作社) in the village and help them (villagers) selling their products. You know, the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi also has its shop…Every year I contacted them in private. I asked for embroidery products from *Apo*

---

[33] Interview 17, 23/06/2018: Pan Family village.
[34] Interview 17, 23/06/2018: Pan Family village.

(female elder) in the Liao Family village, helping to post to customers and bringing their payment to her. (Interview 16, 09/08/2018: Zhuang)

The director of the LLZE, Hou Wenqiang, endeavoured to carry forward heritage protection in the local community. The interaction between the LLZE and the local community is sustained by one local museum staff member and the director. Acting as an agency, the director interacts with many ICH transmitters and other ethnic minority cultural practitioners, by recommending or inviting them to perform in other museums or activities and promoting their products (The LLZE, 2018). In our conversation, he claimed what efforts he made to encourage ICH transmission and noted that 'I have a list of ICH transmitters. For craftsmen who are not designated, I also recommended them to do performances in the AMGX'.[35] Villagers gained many opportunities through him to participate in different activities. Beyond the LLZE, he collaborates with other ethnic minority communities, especially ICH transmitters, aiming to include more local communities under the umbrella term of an ecomuseum.

6.1.5 Alienation

No matter what type of institution this ecomuseum is (the governmental institution?), for me, it is just a building. It does not motivate us to do anything. If I have customers in my hotel, what I possibly say is 'you can visit the museum at Pingduan village to gain insight into the relatively primitive Zhuang culture'. (Interviewee 32, 06/2018: Liao Family village)

Until now, I do not think the museum can help the loss of our culture. I cannot feel any connection between it and us. It is there. For tourists, they can have a scenic spot to visit

---

[35] Interview 16, 09/08/2018: Zhuang.

as there is nothing to visit except for the terraced fields. (Interviewee 25, 06/2018: Liao

Family village)

In the above views, shared by locals from the Liao Family village, they both remarked that the presence of the ecomuseum (the exhibition centre) had less connection with their daily lives. The location of the ecomuseum centre at the Pan Family village allows some villagers from the Pan family to claim their ownership of the museum and use the museum as the tourism resource. Tourism is not only the catalyst for residents to actively shape and share knowledge, but also an arena for three Family villages in Longji to compete with each other (Silva, 2013). Ecomuseological practices have confronted challenges generated by dissonant voices on the use of the ecomuseum, between them and the local community.

The exhibition centre cannot become their cultural or social space, as one villager said, 'no one would like to visit it as we passed by it every day'.[36] Moreover, the guiding meaning of the ecomuseum as an instrument of heritage protection dissolved in the Longji village's appropriation of it. The primary concern of ecomuseum practitioners stemming from this fact is the passive community participation in local cultural heritage preservation. Ecomuseum practitioners attribute the submersion of the LLZE and their fruitless practices to the capital shortage and the explosion of the tourism industry. From their views, villagers without a higher educational background hardly realise the value of the ethnic ecomuseums project.[37] Their myopic focus on short-term economic gains results in their limited understanding of the idea of an ecomuseum and the necessity of protecting their cultural heritage. In the local community's perspective, they were always silent in this one-sided "government project" (see Table 6.1

---

[36] Personal conversation with a resident from the Pan Family village, June 2018.
[37] Personal conversations with ecomuseum practitioners from the AMGX, August 2018.

below). Their voices were hardly heard in the decision-making process and the implementation of the ecomuseum project.

The LLZE Project	Authorities			Community Participation
	The Regional Ministry of Culture and The AMGX	The Longsheng County Government	The director (designated by the Longsheng	
The selection of the ecomuseum site (2005-2007)	√	√		
Authorising the Longji village as an ecomuseum (2008)	√	√		
The selection of the exhibition centre site	√	√	√	√
The construction of the exhibition centre (2009)	√		√	√
The official opening of the LLZE (the exhibition centre) (2010)	√	√	√	√
The application for the 'National Ecomuseum (Community Museum) Demonstration Site'	√		√	
Designating the 'local cultural family models'	√		√	
Designated as an 'National Ecomuseum (Community Museum) Demonstration Site' (2011)	√		√	
The construction of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission Centre (2012)	√		√	√
The reconstruction of the exhibition centre (2015-2017)	√		√	

Table 6. 1 Authorities involved in the LLZE project and community participation (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team, 2005; The LLZE, 2008; The LLZE, 2011; Lai, 2013; The LLZE, 2018).

The establishment of the exhibition centre can be conceived as the culmination of outsider elites and practitioners' efforts on the ecomuseum development. In November 2010, the exhibition centre was opened to the public, signifying the official operation of the LLZE. It was supposed to be a fresh start for the ecomuseum. However, few community members were

responsive to it. Although the LLZE director promoted the concept of the ecomuseum through involving people in meetings, family gatherings and festivals, the ecomuseological practices he conducted were not enough to prompt villagers to gain insight into this term. They insisted that even though the entire village knew about the ecomuseum, no one understood what it was.

Tensions between three villages: Constructing an Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission Centre (ICHTC)

> It is challenging to remove divisions between them. There is the estrangement among these three villages. Pan Family village always thought that they gained nothing from ICHTC. (Interview 16, 09/08/2018: Zhuang)

Constructing the ICHTC was a significant part of 'the national ecomuseum model' project (The LLZE, 2011). [38] As the director of the LLZE revealed above, the site selection and use of an ICHTC meant that three villages competed for tourism resources. The director of the LLZE planned to make this centre a publicly accessible social and cultural space for community members to give performances, self-entertainment, conduct cultural practices, or sell handmade or machinery products for the entire village. The Hou Family village leased their land without charging any rent in order to construct the ICHTC and reached agreements with the director that they could use it for free. If villagers from the Pan Family and the Liao Family villages intended to perform at the ICHTC, they needed to pay electrical fees. Hence, they refused to use this centre. They believed that the ICHTC was a performing venue only for the Hou Family villages' benefit, while attracting visitors from the other two villages to the Hou Family village. These three villages reached a consensus before the emergence of the ICHTC, where they took turns giving song and dance performances. In reality, while the LLZE director

---

[38] One of five National Ecomuseum Models entitled by the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

announced that all villagers shared the ICHTC and it was not only for the Hou Family village, the other villages were still reluctant to work or rest in the ICHTC at the Hou Family village.

Although I employ the concept of "community" to refer to the Longji village, it cannot homogenise three lineage villages with different surnames, family memories and interests. Ecomuseological practices were subject to the three lineage villages' sensitive interrelation. It failed to effectively drive community participation, but this was also because of the historically grounded tensions among these three lineages with different surnames that have clear social boundaries and naturally occurring living spaces.[39] The unequal distribution of cultural resources, such as the exhibition centre and the ICHTC created by the ecomuseum project, led to the alienation between the LLZE and the three villages, especially the Liao Family village.

Ancestors of these three villages migrated to the Longji village at different times and acquired unequal natural and living resources. With the growing population, contradictions between these three villages were underpinned by the competition for limited resources, such as land and water. Guo Lixin (2006) advocates that the consanguine relationship and geographic area (locality) between these three villages determined their resource distribution and public social spaces. The internal contest for resources and sharing of spaces in Longji gave their recognition and value to the collective identity. These three villages are apt at balancing their interests[40] in order to sustain their harmonious relationship and display community cohesion, which was integral to the representation of "ethnicity" and collective identity or "a sense of place".

---

[39] Liao family village still kept its village gate.

[40] Tourists arrive at the parking lot and have a full view of the terraced fields and architecture of the three villages from the viewing platform. Then they can choose to walk to the three villages or take buses. From the viewing platform to the Longji village, there are three roads to the visitor centre (the junction of the Hou family village and the Liao family village), Ping village and Pingduan village.

Notably, villagers at the three villages in Longji had distinct attitudes regarding the ecomuseum. Those from Liao Family village were rarely involved in the ecomuseum construction or visited the exhibition centre. As mentioned above, the location of the exhibition centre is in the public field of the Longji village, Ping village (Pan Family village). Community members in this village sell souvenirs outside of the exhibition centre, and they deem the exhibition centre as the representation of their village in order to increase the number of tourists and income. The ICHTC turned into the performance venue of the Hou Family village. As for Liao Family village, the ecomuseum project does not have a tangible association with it and does not engage with villagers there. There is no stimulus for them to convert their village into a form of museum and repurpose their iconic cultural representations as cultural heritage protected by the ecomuseum.

6.1.6 Top-down heritage making

> If we thought that these things could be recognised as cultural heritage, we would list them on the panel. (Interviewee 11, 08/2018: Han)

An informant who participated in the LLZE construction explained how they identified heritage, and its vague criterion. Without consulting and informing the Longji villagers, ecomuseum practitioners from the AMGX and the Regional Department of Culture outlined the LLZE construction plan. In the plan, they had already identified and listed "ethnic cultural features" of the LLZE after only a few visits: the terraced fields, agricultural production, White Zhuang costumes, folk songs and dance, and stilted architecture (The LLZE, 2008). During the LLZE construction process, ecomuseum practitioners conducted further research of the local people's traditional cultural practices and tangible cultural heritage. In addition to making Zhuang exhibitions to display how they create heritage (discussed in Chapter Four), ecomuseum practitioners made lists of tangible and intangible cultural heritage (comprising official ICH items and transmitters lists), which were built from the local or higher level of "heritage

listings" administrated by the Ministry of Culture. They then displayed a panel (see Figure 6.1) on the exterior wall of the ICHTC to present the heritage lists they had made as 'the excellent traditional culture', stating the importance of protecting ethnic cultural heritage.

Figure 6. 1 The panel of heritage listings in the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum.
Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

In the ICHTC, ecomuseum practitioners displayed many different panels explaining the specific ICH found in the Longji village and their official or unofficial transmitters: these are *Daoshi* (Daoist priests 道师), Quilted Embroidery, Carving, Folk Songs, Water Liquor, and terraced fields making. Tangible cultural heritage (immovable cultural heritage), with a symbolic role in the visual depiction of cultural distinction and shaping a sense of place, has been stressed by marking their locations in the Longji village. The significance of heritage is more about the meanings placed upon them than their visible or invisible values identified by villagers (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000). A series of ecomuseological activities for heritage making aimed to substantially anchor the presence of the ecomuseum in the Longji village.

The AMGX maintains a limited connection with the LLZE, by requiring the local employee and the director to submit documentaries about the cultural heritage of the Zhuang community for the ethnographic film festival. However, many ICH practices in the village have already been filmed. They encounter more difficulties in doing their "homework" and getting operational funding. During my fieldtrip, the local employee decided to record Tofu-making, which already relied mainly on the use of modern machines. The authorised heritagisation of the Longji village, led by the AMGX, and the pursuit of "authentic" ethnic culture have urged villagers to retain the primitive and primordial aspects of Zhuang culture. To render Tofu-making as a traditional cultural practice and gratify the imagery of being a premodern or exotic other, the local employee suggested the tofu maker take out her old stone mill to grind down the beans instead of using a machine. This Tofu-making film submitted to the AMGX was saved directly in the AMGX's database as the record of the LLZE's ICH. He had internalised the definition of cultural practices tied to the "primitivity" as an essentialised notion of heritage, in order to satisfy the need of the AMGX. This form of connection and heritage management is just one example of the AMGX's weak governance of the LLZE and its futile ecomuseological practices.

6.2 Making heritage for tourism

This section concentrates on how residents from the Longji village construct and draw on heritage for self-representation and the consumption of the local Zhuang culture. The Longji village shares consistent heritage meanings and frames heritage within its tourism-oriented heritage discourse. Through celebrating their heritage as a valuable tourism resource, the local villagers strive to integrate their ethnic culture with tourism to reap economic benefits. Their autonomy in the mobilisation of the tourism industry has helped them exert a powerful influence on their own heritage, while strengthening their ethnic identity (Zhu, 2018; Yang, 2016).

When asked what their cultural heritage is, during conversations, community members sometimes looked at me in a state of bewilderment. Most, after a brief pause, mentioned their traditional architecture or linked it to "laogudong" (old objects) displayed in the exhibition centre. A few people briefly explained it as the traditional craft skills elders had, "original" lifestyles (原生态), or more specifically, intangible cultural heritage:

It is hard to express what cultural heritage is. Intangible cultural heritage is the representation of our Zhuang history and lifestyles without literary inscriptions. For example, ploughing fields is also an expression of our culture. Our Wan folk song as well… (Interview 17, 23/6/2018: Pan family village).

Oakes (2013, p.383) points out that cultural heritage is 'a knowledge of culture that emerges not from villagers themselves, but which nevertheless claims to represent them'. Villagers did not invent terms that have similar meaning with cultural heritage or widely appropriate this term. Nevertheless, they could give detailed answers to questions regarding what kinds of tourism resources they have or what can represent their culture or village. In their statements, representations of their place can include the terraced fields, the ecomuseum (the exhibition centre), century-old houses, and stone carving. A small number of informants made sense of the concept of cultural heritage when the ecomuseum was constructed, and the local cultural bureau applied for the national agricultural heritage.

Crooke (2008, p.423) makes the statement that 'rather than being fixed, heritage alters with changing circumstances, reinvented to suit the needs of a new situation better'. John Tunbridge (2017, p.47) suggests that the meaning of heritage evolves to cater to the ever-changing needs of societies, cultures, and policies, stressing the new use of cultural resources. In line with their work, the role of community-based ethnic heritage as economic and cultural assets has been

positioned or repositioned by various stakeholders (Graham, Ashworth and Turnbridge, 2000). Their disputations and negotiations alter heritage construction and consumption. Apart from ecomuseum practitioners and the experts from outside, as the earlier section mentions, heritage has been commodified by residents from three lineage villages of the Longji village, the local government (the Government of the Longsheng Ethnic Autonomous County), and the tourism sector (the local tourism bureau and the tourism company).

Silva (2013, p.618) defines heritagisation, distinguishing it from the conservation and preservation of heritage, as a heritage construction process for the social or political purpose of creating a sense of collectivity and the local distinctiveness through heritage tourism (Poria and Ashworth, 2009). Contesting the ecomuseum's emphasis on heritage's tangibility, the Longji village's heritagisation underscores economic opportunities provided by tourism and the fluidity of heritage. Colluding with the exoticisation and stereotypical representation of the local Zhuang culture produced by the local government and tourism operators and entrepreneurs, residents of the Longji village strategically adopt essentialism in order to authenticate their heritage. In doing so, they can bypass the hegemonic representation of ecomuseum practitioners (Harrison, 2013c; Zhu, 2018). Heritage made for tourism can be the embodiment of villagers' self-essentialisation and self-objectification. Meanwhile, villagers demonstrate remarkable resourcefulness in capitalising heritage, in order to establish the authenticity of the local Zhuang culture by experiencing and engaging with elements of the past (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; H. Silverman, 2015). Their production and reproduction of heritage result in a continually reformulated and multifaceted ethnic identity.

6.2.1 The status as a Longji Terraced Fields Scenic Spot

Through continual negotiation with the tourism company prior to 2005, the tourism company and community members came to terms on implementing the tourism development project in the Longji village, after the completion of formalising the tourism industry in Pingan (平安) and

Dazhai (大寨). Evoking the broader appreciation of the Longji terraced fields landscape was initiated from the tourism development of Pingan and Dazhai. As two ethnic Zhuang and Yao communities ran tourism from the 1980s, they capitalised on the cultural distinctiveness and the spectacular landscape of the terraced fields constructed and reconstructed over the centuries to achieve economic well-being and expand work opportunities (Choi, 2013). They were renamed and branded as the "Pingan Zhuang Terraced Fields Scenic Spot (平安壮族梯田景观区)" and the "Jingkeng Red Yao Terraced Fields Scenic Spot (金坑红瑶梯田景观区)" subsumed into the "Longji Terraced Fields Scenic Area (龙脊梯田风景区)". The Longji Terraced Fields Scenic Area (see Figure 6.2) has been identified as a 4A tourism attraction (5A is the highest in terms of the China National Tourism Standard), since it features natural and cultural tourism resources. In 2011, Longji village, therefore, became the "Longji Cultural Terraced Ancient Zhuang Village (龙脊古壮寨梯田文化观景区)" as one of three primary scenic spots of the Longji Terraced Fields Scenic Area. Henceforth, 'villages underwent the transition from unself-conscious community to the cultural landscape, from village to village display' (Oakes, 2013, p.384).
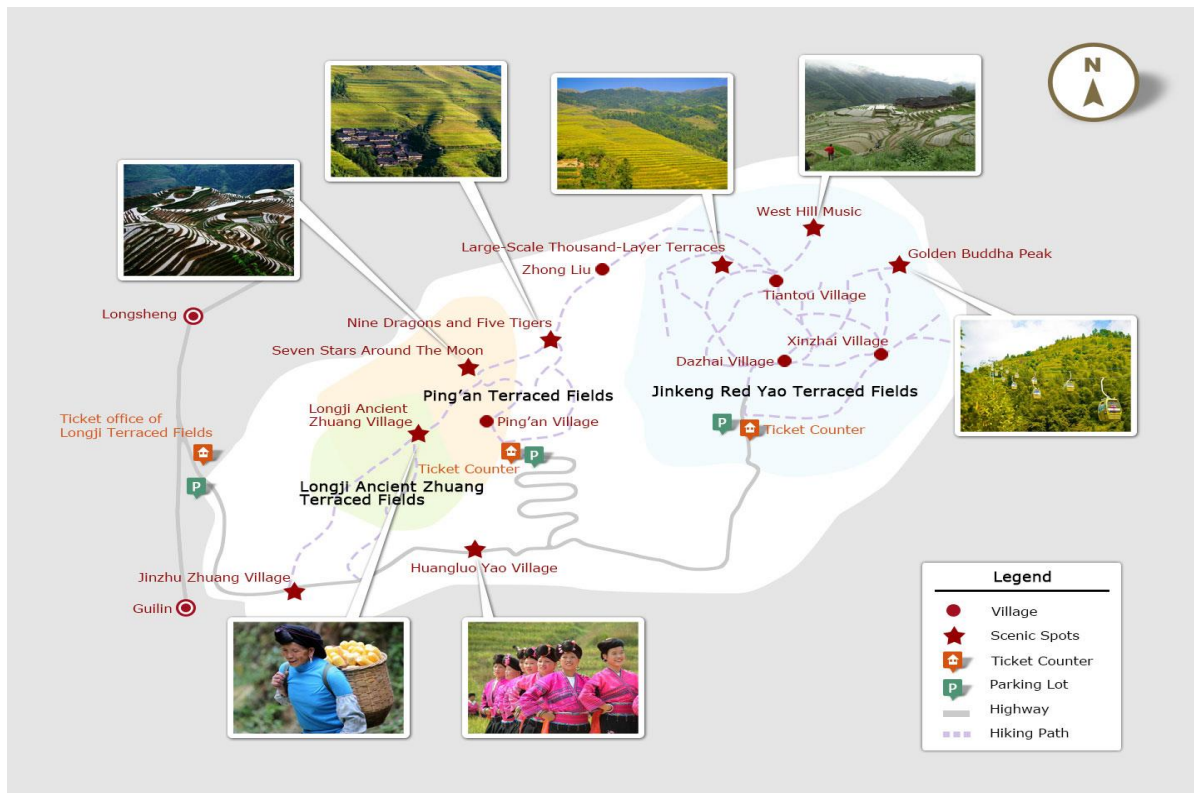
Figure 6. 2 The map of the Longsheng Terraced Fields Scenic Area. Photograph © China Highlights (n.d.).

Pingan, next to the Longji village, was the earliest terraced scenic spot opened to the public, and various entrepreneurs (including villagers and migrants) ran restaurants, hotels and tourism agencies in the village. Influenced by its tourism boom, villagers in Longji expected to increase their standard of living by using the tourism industry as a powerful tool and attract the governments' investment in their infrastructure. They urged the tourism company to expedite the tourism development project of the Longji Terraced Scenic Area. However, they were placed in the very last stage of the project. An informant explained,

Interviewer: Why did the tourism company not develop the tourism industry in Longji at the very beginning?

Interviewee: This is because that the view of our terraced fields was not as spectacular as Pingan and Dazhai villages. It was me on behalf of our village who constantly invited them to include us in the Terraced Scenic Area. (Interview 17, 23/6/2018: Pan Family village)

The tourism sector gives exclusive priority to the terraced fields in their marketing and promotion. However, within the Longji terraced area, different ethnic minority communities (Zhuang and Yao) share the same or similar cultural practices and traditions. Although visitors pay the entrance tickets to visit all three terraced scenic spots, they must decide where to visit first and where to have meals among the three scenic spots, as there is only one main road that runs between the different locations. Three Longji scenic spots challenge each other's claims of terraced cultivation skills and the best landscape of the rice terraces, applying themselves to offer distinct visual and cultural experiences (Lai, 2013; Choi, 2013). From the tourism company's and the Longji villagers' perspectives, compared to other scenic spots, the terraced landscape as a tourism resource in the Longji village (see Figure 6.3) is not spectacular enough to attract tourists from the other main scenic spots. For the sake of enhancing competitiveness and producing different tourist experiences, community members eagerly craft their own way of instrumentalising heritage resources and accentuating their local and cultural distinctiveness.

Figure 6. 3 The terraced fields of the Longji village. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Ancient Zhuang Village

While the Longji village has been officially designated as a Zhuang Ecomuseum, community members widely address their village as the "Ancient Zhuang Village" (古壮寨). The designation of "Ancient Zhuang Village" emerged after the Longji village was made into one of the terraced scenic spots by the local government and the tourism company. The notion of 'Longji' was appropriated and generalised to name a wide range of rice terraced scenic areas, highlighting the massive scale of rice terraces that resemble a dragon, in order to engage with more visitors and increase the value of them as shared heritage created by Zhuang and Yao ethnic minority communities. The local government and the tourism company bound the ethnic communities inhabiting the Longji terraced fields area to invent a new cultural group with the name of 'Longji Terraced Culture' (The Longji Terraced Scenic Area Administration Bureau, 2015).

226

As Choi (2013) points out, naming three scenic spots was the beginning for three ethnic villages to stake a claim on heritage and ethnicity and convert the distinctions into representations of villages as destinations to draw visitors' attention. The name-changing can be viewed as a process of identity reconstruction, in which there must hide the villagers' struggle for investigating or creating more representations to sell their culture. Bordering Pingan, another ethnic Zhuang village, the Longji village intended to divorce its Zhuang culture from Pingan. The adjectives "ancient" and "Zhuang", linking to two notions of heritage and ethnicity, were essentialised as tourism values of the Longji village. They were mobilised to stage the authenticity of its Zhuang culture and distinguish the Longji village from Pingan and Dazhai, majorly serving ethnic tourism. As a result of the late transformation as a tourism destination, the Longji village's well-preserved ways of life and architectures were regarded as distinct from Pingan village. Pingan's commercialisation (商业化) accelerated the destruction of their traditional architecture and a diverse range of migrants influenced its ethnic culture and heritage.

In the tourism development outline of the Longji Terraced Scenic Area, the goal of the local government and the tourism company was to turn the Longji village into a 'typical' primitive Zhuang village as an effective method for branding (The Longji Terraced Scenic Area Administration Bureau, 2015). They strived to commodify and reinterpret heritage as markers of ethnic difference, such as traditional architecture, stone carvings, costumes, and performances, in order to disseminate the Longji village's cultural and local uniqueness. The prevailing of "tourism-ified" ethnic identity shaped by these markers produces the exotic image of community members and drives them to sustain difference by disguising themselves under the tourism package (Salazar, 2009; 2012; Kolås, 2004). Moreover, community members acknowledge and utilise this new name extensively, demonstrating their initiative to attract the economic development project and their impetus of recognising and selling their heritage and culture – through tourism.

<u>Residents and the tourism sector in dispute</u>

On the morning of the 27th July 2018, most Longji villagers took the earliest bus from their village to Longsheng County. They were required to wear their traditional White Zhuang costumes and gathered at a square of the Longsheng County, where the opening ceremony of the 7th Longji Terraced Fields Cultural Festival was held. A splendid parade, including participants from local areas, took place after this. When the parade passed by, residents and tourists could distinguish where these performers come from, and which ethnic groups they belong to, just from flags they held and their outfits. This festival is a spectacular event of Longsheng County held every year. The Longsheng government created this festival for branding ethnic minority communities in the Longji area and enhancing the influence of the Longji Terraced Fields to raise local revenue. In 2018, its application for the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) had been successfully approved by the panel. The heritagisation of the Longji Terraced Fields Scenic Area enables the Longsheng government to publicise the Longji area as an international renowned heritage site.

Various ethnic minority people from divergent villages, dressed in colourful costumes, were treated as a tourist attraction to demonstrate the modern and romantic image of the noble savage (Zhu, 2018). Apart from the parade, the Longsheng Cultural Bureau carried out a range of events, such as the show of ICH programmes. Some villagers from Longji village sold bamboo rice during the festival, and two of them sang the folksongs as the representatives of traditional music in the Longji area. Other Zhuang villages showcased many ICH practices, such as Water Liquor and embroidery from the Longji village. Heritage that the Longji villagers presented for tourists did not embody the "representativeness" of its Zhuang culture in this local heritage discourse, which made it difficult for them to assert their cultural identity through shared cultural heritage. The local heritage discourse created by the local government and the tourism sector heavily relies on the rice terraces. Hence, when I communicated with local villagers, they

always laid emphasis on their marginalised position in the Longji Scenic Area, as their terraced fields and cultural practices were not "representative" enough to be intensively promoted.

Tourism has often created tension between community members and the tourism company. This contestation problematises the local tourism development in the Longji village, which implicated their cultural heritage. Thanks to the tourism development and the migration of younger generations, agricultural production is no longer the primary source of livelihood for some people in the village and many rice terraces are wasted. This poses threats to the cultural landscape of this village, as there are fewer community members to sustain the rice terraces. The tourism company encourages agricultural cultivation in the Pingan village by providing its people with allowances (£120 per acre of land), guaranteeing the continual safeguarding of intangible agricultural practices.

For residents from the Longji village, they did not receive any financial support from the tourism company. The tourism company's unequal and improper resources and capital distribution exacerbated the crisis of sustaining the cultural landscape. Eventually, the tourism company offered them rice seeds which can grow in up to five colours and suggested cultivating this type of rice to create five-colour paddies, which were eye-catching in order to attract more visitors and continue to stereotype the villagers as primitive (Blum, 2001). The re-creation of spectacles was the new marker of difference in the Longji village. Villagers were not opposed to these superficial and for-profit representations of their village as a tourism destination. On the contrary, they appreciated that it maintained their terraced fields as tourism commodity to continue meeting the tourists' curiosity.

The tourism company also ossifies and essentialises the local Zhuang culture, represented by the traditional architecture, as 'a symbol of cultural other' for the curiosity and appreciation of

outsiders (Oakes, 1997, p.49). To protect this typical representation and cultural landscape for its sustainable tourism development, the tourism administration committee, constituted by community members, was established to cooperate with the Longji Rice Terraced Scenic Area Administration that was directed by the tourism company. However, they did not regulate the construction of architecture, which escalated conflicts over land resources.

Community members imputed blame to the tourism company, as they invested in the first brick building – a hotel '*Shuiyunjian*' at Ping village (Pan Family village). It, expecting to receive more customers, was built beyond the maximum height agreed by all stakeholders. Community members, therefore, contested the tourism company's governance and asserted ownership of their own property to decide how their houses should be. This undermined the interest relations between villagers and the tourism company, intensifying the unhealthy internal competition and the negative impact on the local heritage (Xie and Mai, 2015). The compromise they reached was that the exteriors of new buildings were required to be clad in wood to demonstrate the cultural distinctiveness and resemble the traditional architectural style. It is a prevalent phenomenon in China. The increasing higher and new type of buildings appear to be 'new heritage' reproduced to embrace a 'second life as an exhibition of itself' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2014, p.166).

6.2.2 Heritage transformation and reproduction

Affected by tourism, the pressure of competition with two other scenic spots requires the commercialisation of the Longji village, in order to change how cultural practices and landscapes are shaped and ethnicity is meaningfully produced (Salazar, 2012). Light (2015, p.153) notes that 'new heritages' emerge continuously and are 'embraced by the heritage tourism industry'. Taken from her work, 'new heritage' here does not mean to create heritage out of nothing, but recreate and appropriate the past for contemporary purposes. The evaluation and selection of ethnic cultural representations is a fluid and dynamic process.

Residents in the Longji village alter their ways of life and cultural practices to meet various demands. For them, tangible and intangible cultural heritage can be 'an expression of changing identities rooted in a proud tradition, but also in flux and open to reinterpretation' through reviving it in a new and modern way (Alivizatou, 2012, p.75).

The commercialisation and commodification of heritage brought by the tourism economy in the Longji village might have an adverse impact on heritage and naturalise the internal otherness, which generates expected and unexpected heritage transformation (Handapangoda et al., 2019), such as the destruction of traditional buildings. It seems that the proliferation of tourism development challenges the notions of authenticity and heritage conservation. Notwithstanding, through negotiations between villagers and the tourism company regarding community heritage making, villagers selectively revitalised and reinvented the *Kaigeng* festival, Water Liquor and folk songs for the cultural tourism, crediting them with authenticity. Yujie Zhu (2012, p.1500) notes that 'authenticity is neither objective nor subjective, but rather performative'. The judgement of performative authenticity does not only reside in the commercial products, but also community members' memories, habitus, and experiences (ibid.).

<u>Destruction and Reconstruction</u>

When the local villagers saw and experienced the economic benefits provided by the tourism industry, they attempted to seek more working opportunities and generate more income apart from agricultural production. Opening family inns has been popularised in the village, leading to more reconstruction or destruction of the traditional *diaojiaolou* (stilted style architectures 吊脚楼)*.* While some villagers were aware of the issues of authenticity, they had attached less importance to such problems.

The beautiful scenery of this village before developing the tourism industry impressed me until now. Our traditional architectures made of wood were built in the same height along the mountain ridge, but now many new buildings are higher than old ones. (Interview 25, 17/06/2018: Liao family village)

This is a villager describing the change of village and its cultural landscape. The Longji village's well-preserved *diaojiaolou* constructed in the past have been promoted as the cultural uniqueness to increase its competitiveness in the tourism market. Nonetheless, they are confronted with the same issue of over-commercialisation and infrastructure construction as in Pingan village - the accelerating destruction of traditional *diaojiaolou* which are considered as their cultural representations. The local community members, notably those who run family inns, are dissatisfied with the living environment of their old houses. They are tempted to construct or reconstruct higher brick houses for comfortable living conditions and spacious spaces to accommodate more guests on account of scarce land resource and limited tourists. Without enough land resources, villagers must destroy old buildings to construct new ones or refurbish the inside of buildings to improve living conditions, beyond affecting their exterior wooden style. Few local people, though, replaced traditional buildings with Western-style ones, which were incongruous with the primitive imagination of the Longji village. The Western-style buildings triggered complaints and criticisms from different actors, but owners of such buildings were not concerned with others' opinions.

Festivals

Collaborating with community members, the Longsheng government and the tourism company have purposely revived and repackaged traditional festivals of ethnic communities living in the Longji area ever since proposing the Longji terraced fields as a global tourism site. These festivals have been manipulated and legitimised as the significant vehicle for the thriving agricultural tourism and heritage entertainment, beyond their original "superstitious" and

spiritual meanings to generate tourism revenue. Throughout the year, more than five festivals are held at different ethnic communities in the Longji Scenic Area, such as Long Hair Festival in March, *Kaigeng* Festival (开耕) of the Longji village in May, *Shuyang* (梳秧) Festival of the Pingan village in June, *Shaiyi* (晒衣) Festival in July, and *Kailian* (开镰) Festival in October.

These festivals are not inscribed as valuable ICH and respected as meaningful rituals or ceremonies. Instead, they are appropriated and modified to romanticise ethnic minority communities, which deviated from their original meanings and the local identities embedded in them (Maags, 2018, p.124). Their names and historical backgrounds turned into the new cultural economy with a collective title "Longji Terraced Cultural Festivals". The tourism company and community members negotiated to create some new procedures for this festival, such as a greeting ceremony and fish-catching competition in order to entertain tourists. Every village had to encourage a certain number of villagers to join and perform how they celebrate these festivals.

The *Kaigeng* Festival, held in the Longji village every spring, means the start of the ploughing season. This Festival used to be full of religious rituals associated with the local communities' agricultural production and nature worship. In the past, *Zhailao* (literally "the village elder" and means the local leaders 寨老) in the Longji village would invite *Daoshi* (Daoist priests) to enshrine and commemorate the land gods to pray for a good harvest and sacrifice livestock at the edge of the terraced fields. [41]

---

[41] Longji village is known for its special 'elder (*Zhailao*) regime' apart from the state political system. The elder chiefs of villages elected by villagers have a higher reputation and can help to coordinate contradictions or activities in villages.

Currently, community members dress up and go to the terraced fields to perform how they use their traditional instruments or buffalos to plough their fields. Female villagers are supposed to welcome tourists at the tourist reception of the Longji village. At night, they need to sing and dance in official performances. However, this festival has been instrumentalised as a cultural authenticity of the locals in order to pander to tourist interests in experiencing the "original" lifestyles of the village. The appropriation of this festival has deviated from its original cultural meanings and the local identities embedded in it (Maags, 2018, p.124). Community members barely respect and treat the *Kaigeng* festival as a meaningful ritual or ceremony anymore. As one of my local informants noted,

> Activities such as *Kaigeng* Festival are suitable and have a powerful influence from the aspect of the tourism industry. It must appeal to tourists. However, from our understanding, this festival is nothing special. I think it is an advertisement to attract tourists. (Interview 23, 19/06/2018: Liao Family village)

The Ghosts Festival in the seventh lunar month was one of the biggest festivals in the Longji village to venerate ancestors every year. Females who have married go back to their parents' homes and bring ducks and wines. Villagers used to celebrate it by organising many activities and performances. Affected by tourism development and the decrease of younger residents, however, family gatherings have replaced this festival as villagers feel too exhausted to hold another event.

Water Liquor

Villagers do not stage all their traditional practices for tourism when appropriating them within the heritage discourse. Even though these cultural practices without any designations are not celebrated as heritage, for local people, they are where their inherent identities rest. For

example, the Water Liquor (水酒) making skill is branded as intangible cultural heritage of the local Zhuang people. Owing to its sweet flavour, it becomes popular among tourists. After recognising the increasing consumption of Water Liquor as heritage and the marketing opportunities it offers, villagers commodify their homemade Water Liquor, made of sticky rice produced in the Longji area, at their family hotels or to sell to outsiders to increase family income. However, villagers prefer to drink another type of alcohol with a pungent taste in their daily lives, which is called Rice Liquor (小锅米酒), made of the local rice. After I participated in many family gatherings of community members and queried this practice, I found that the locals' consumption of the Rice Liquor is more than the Water Liquor. Intangible cultural heritage as 'second lives' of local cultural practices coexist with their 'original lives' in the village.

Display culture at home

Community members' agricultural production in the terraced fields as influential intangible heritage has transformed into resources for agricultural tourism. Many activities related to agricultural production have been altered and commercialised as economic resources to emancipate community members from their single source of income. With the growing demand for family accommodation and restaurants, a certain number of villagers operate family inns, which has caused the disputed transformation of traditional buildings detailed in the section above. In these family inns, owners prefer to decorate them by displaying photos of terraces and agricultural production which have been taken by tourists, family photos (wearing white costumes of the Zhuang group), agricultural tools (bamboo products) and other material culture. A large number of their displays are associated with the terraced fields. Choi elucidates two purposes for showcasing photos: 'to evidence the satisfaction of previous tourists' and 'to promote and sell the services of the family as local guides' (2013, p.154). The museumification of these family inns discloses the local villagers' intentions of self-expression and recognising themselves as owners and experts of the local heritage.

Figure 6. 4 Displays in the family inns. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

6.3 The reconceptualisation of the ecomuseum

Analysed in the previous sections, the exhibition centre of the ecomuseum has been appropriated by villagers as the representation of local distinctiveness, enhancing the idea that Longji village is the representation of Zhuang culture in the north part of Guangxi. This presents how villagers in the Longji village draw on the authoritative heritage making to represent their local Zhuang culture. The reproduction and reinvention of heritage engendered by community members beyond the ecomuseological setting indicates the community members' exercise of power over heritage construction and mobilisation. The Longji village apparently undergoes the transition from a Zhuang community to a heritage exhibition under the tourists' gaze, rather than an ecomuseum defined by outsiders. The reconceptualisation of the ecomuseum is deeply entrenched in the community's heritage making process for tourism. This section articulates that representational practices of the ecomuseum as an AHD can be reshaped and capitalised by residents in the Longji village.

6.3.1 Dissonance

When we were constructing the LLZE in 2009, traditional architectures were still

preserved very well. The entire village was old and primitive, but after the development

of the tourism industry in 2011, this place is no longer the ancient Zhuang village.

(Interview 16, 09/08/2018: Zhuang)

I think protection is essential, but people have different thoughts. Now people are

money-oriented. Nobody concerns about histories, but only experts do that…. (Interview

18, 19/06/2018: Hou family village)

These are two perceptions of the director of the LLZE and a villager. They demonstrated that

ecomuseological practitioners and community members from the Longji village have divergent

understandings of heritage meanings. Ecomuseum practitioners claimed that the ecomuseums

project did not plan to protect 'primitivity' of the local culture, but rather achieve a win-win

situation by simultaneously preserving ethnic cultures and developing tourism (Nong, 2009,

p.26). Yet, what they disseminated was that the cultural value of this Zhuang community

predominantly depends on its original context represented by tangible cultural heritage, which

should be preserved without considering villagers' needs. Interests brought by the tourism

industry drove the villagers.

Eliminating economic and social backwardness and poverty is the ultimate aim of community

members, which stimulates their 'community heritage initiatives' (Crooke, 2008, p.415).

Community heritage in the Longji village is rooted in local history and traditions, and is the

embodiment and reflection of the local people's identities and a 'means to express a reaction

to external processes or threats' (Crooke, 2008, p.423; Chan, 2018). Tourism is perceived as the

most conspicuous way that ethnic minority communities make use of their cultural practices

(Light, 2015, p.145). In 1998, responding to the economic strategy adopted by the local

government of Longsheng, the local people began contacting the tourism company to include them in the tourism development project which takes advantage of the terraced fields in the Longji area. In the same year, the Regional Department of Culture in Guangxi visited the first ecomuseum in Guizhou and intended to apply this theory to protecting the cultural heritage of ethnic minority cultures in Guangxi, as mentioned in Chapter Five. The Longji village officially became a Terraced Scenic Spot in 2010, at the same time the exhibition centre opened to the public.

Developing the tourism industry in the Longji village, as proposed by the villagers, was earlier than the ecomuseum project imposed by ecomuseum practitioners. In the villagers' imagination, this ecomuseum would be an advertisement to attract more visitors who were interested in museums. The proposal of this ecomuseum project also declared that it would strive for facilitating sustainable tourism development in Longji (The LLZE, 2008). Nevertheless, ecomuseum practitioners were not ready to respond to the demands of the community and transform the ecomuseum to be more compatible with local circumstances, which seemed to be disempowered by the local community.

6.3.2 Repurposing ecomuseological practices

The LLZE has been redefined as a village museum to attract tourists, following community members' understanding and use of it. Simultaneously, various ecomuseological practices, repurposed by community members in their heritage constructions to suit their representational demands, exemplify the impact of ecomuseological intervention on local cultural heritage, as well as community members' appropriation of this official heritage discourse for self-representation.

'Second lives' of abandoned panels

238

When the AMGX remade the Zhuang culture exhibition from 2015 to 2017, its old display panels were abandoned and replaced with new ones. Fortuitously, I found that the old panels are well-preserved and displayed in a villager's family inn (see the left side of Figure 6.5). These panels' contents include the introduction of the Longji village's history and cultural traditions. The villager took them back home and reused them as decorations and a brief introduction of the village for customers, endowing them a second life which is of value. However, not all of the panels were preserved this way and some panels were discarded as the right side of the Figure 6.5 indicates.
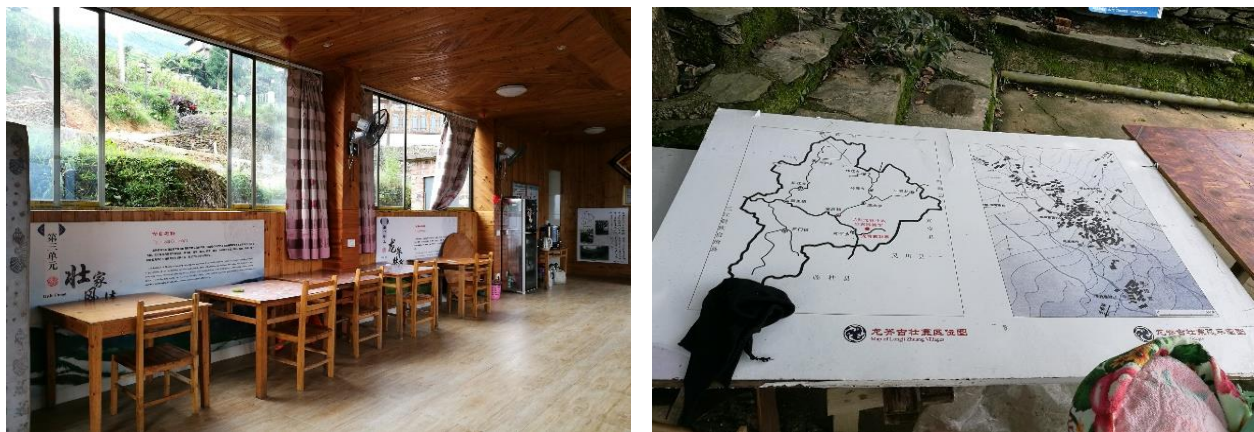
Figure 6. 5 The exhibition centre's abandoned display panels. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Reviving Wan song

Since the Pan Family village and the Liao Family do not have a fixed performing venue, and rarely use the Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission Centre (ICHTC), they have given up their performances in recent years. Because of this, this centre transitions to a song-and-dance performing venue and the private social place of the Hou Family village. When the Hou Family village has their meetings, family gathering or festivals, they prefer to use the ICHTC to treat their guests and store their supplies. While breaking with its original function of presenting the local intangible cultural heritage for preservation, it gradually acts as a platform to reproduce intangible heritage, and a stage to engage with tourists. There are two or three performances in

the Centre every week. Specifically, this community had no tradition of dance before. Through drawing inspiration from the community's cultural practices, such as folk songs, agricultural practices, and traditional building construction, the local performers created songs and dances to enrich performances.

Figure 6. 6 Performance in the ICHTC. Photograph © Yahao

Wang, 2018.

Singing folk songs that contain enlightened philosophies of life during big events is a significant cultural tradition for the Zhuang people. Community members always gather at pavilions and sang, played, or shared folk song videos on their phones. Songs that they performed encompass Wan song (弯歌), a type of traditional Zhuang folk song, which plays a vital part in the Hou family villages' performances in the ICHTC and an even more significant stage to the outside world. Nevertheless, only few members in the Longji village could sing and transmit Wan songs. As Wan songs were written in the Zhuang language and difficult to translate, performers set out to learn it from a community member, Hou Qingheng. He is an officially inscribed city-level intangible cultural heritage transmitter who possesses the talent of singing Longji Wan song and Wine song. He learned the endangered Wan song from another Zhuang community when

he used to do ethnic cultural research for the local government.[42] Owing to the stage provided by the ICHTC and some folk song competitions organised by governments or cultural institutions, this cultural practice has been revived from just two designated ICH transmitters to a small group of villagers, after Mr Hou offered training to them. Even though they can only sing a few songs without knowing the contents and cultural meanings, Wan song in the Longji is revitalised and reinterpreted to embrace its new life as cultural commodities.

The century-old house

There are seven traditional houses in the Longji village assigned as century-old houses by ecomuseum practitioners. Ecomuseum practitioners labelled two representative century-old houses in the Hou Family village and Liao Family village as 'Local Cultural Family Models', in order to display local family stories and traditional lifestyles by hanging signs of 'Cultural Family Model' on exterior walls of the houses. The criteria of choosing 'Ethnic Minority Cultural Family Models' should be based on their 'distinct ethnic minority cultural characteristics (民族特征鲜明)', which focuses on the architectural style, histories and historical objects of Zhuang people preserved at home (Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team, 2005). The purpose of it was to motivate ethnic minority community members to protect their cultural heritage and manifest their culture. Yet, one Local Cultural Family Model's host from the Liao family village, asserts that he preserves his house on his own and displays many historical cultural properties for people to visit, without any connection with the ecomuseum and the tourism company.[43]

Moreover, the house host in the Hou Family village branded by the Local Cultural Family Model chose to be contracted with the tourism company and the Longji Terraced Scenic Area Administration Bureau. This century-old house at the Hou Family village is notable because of

---

[42] Interview 19, 21/06/2018: Hou Family village.
[43] Interview 22, 24/06/2018: Liao Family village.

its unique wooden architectural structure and intriguing family story (an ancestor had several wives). Staying at home and keeping the house clean become the host's daily work. She picked some old living products, i.e. agricultural instruments, wooden and carved furniture, and bamboo living utensils, to redecorate the house and sold souvenirs such as handmade silk balls (see Figure 6.7). Printed on the introductory panel of the house, the tourism company and the house host reinterpreted this house as its own "ecomuseum" (a traditional building displaying old objects in the original culture context). Both house hosts started to value their own heritage after accepting the labels of 'the century-old house' and 'the Local Cultural Family Model' created by ecomuseum practitioners. Yet, they state that they have no knowledge about the ecomuseum and their preservation of cultural property is for self-interest. The shift of an outcome of the ecomuseum heritage making to a tourism commodity embodies that the sustainability of the ecomuseum and its representational practices is associated with the community's attitudes and demands (Labadi and Gould, 2015).

Figure 6. 7 'The century-old house' and 'the Local Cultural Family Model' at the Hou Family village. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

The disappearing ecomuseum administration committee

The director of the LLZE established an administration committee during a meeting with villagers (officials and representatives) on the 23rd of June 2012 (Lai, 2013). He intended to clarify that the project for ameliorating the LLZE to an application for the national ecomuseum model and restating that the ecomuseum needed villagers to operate, maintain and practice autonomously, thereby persuading villagers to allow the land expropriation of the school for the intangible cultural heritage transmission centre (ibid.). This committee was made up of thirteen residents (officials and elders or other villagers with a high reputation from three villages), performing its function such as restoring ancient architecture and pavilions and interceding in disputes about building reconstruction (preserving tangible cultural heritage). However, it gradually evolved into the tourism administration committee with more villagers.

While the LLZE director and the AMGX staff expected that the same members and their overlapping responsibilities for protecting cultural heritage could bring the voice of the LLZE into tourism development, committee members tacitly admitted the disbandment of the ecomuseum administration committee without outsiders' intervention.[44] The reinvented tourism administration committee embodied the power of villagers and managed all tourism-related activities, including the construction and reconstruction of architecture, the preservation of the terraced fields, agricultural planting, taking guests to their family inns and carrying their luggage from the scenic spot gate. This community-led committee attempted to avoid excessive and malignant competition and maintain relative fairness, representing the Longji village while interacting with the tourism sector. Meanwhile, it works for the tourism sector to regulate tourism activities based on rules drawn up by the tourism sector. The voice of ecomuseum practitioners had been muted within local tourism development.

---

[44] Interviews with two ecomuseum practitioners and four committee members in the Longji village, June-August 2018.

6.3.3 Resistance and reinvention

As discussed, villagers have passively accepted the term of ecomuseum by reconceptualising it as a village museum that epitomises the local Zhuang culture. I argue that residents in the Longji village reassert their status in heritage construction and cultural representation by reinventing ecomuseological practices within their heritage discourse. Developing an alternative framework of heritage making, as Zhu and Maags (2020) contend, means that the community has been deprived of their heritage. Villagers cannot resist the ecomuseum as an AHD by rejecting its implementation and opposing its heritage making. However, their alternative ways to use the ecomuseum can lead to a rethinking of power relations between the local community and the ecomuseum, their authority over heritage exploitation and its implications for the ecomuseum's transformation.

<u>Resistance</u>

Within the ecomuseum context, community members tended to be spectators without voices and interests in ecomuseum work, which generated contestations or frictions between different levels of heritage making processes. The LLZE was devised as a holistic approach to heritage preservation and intangible heritage, in particular within the territory of the Longji village. It purported to underscore the sustainable development of the heritage industry and the cultural continuity, beyond fossilising cultural heritage as frozen cultural objects for the building of local narratives (Silva, 2013, p.618). Nevertheless, its heritage making is at the periphery of the Longji village. It appears to break away from its proposed ideal as a community-led living museum and holistic approach to manage heritage and represent Zhuang culture.

Ecomuseum practitioners from the AMGX attribute the stagnation of heritage management in the LLZE to countless difficulties that they were confronted with: budget, low levels of

community participation, problematic administration and unequal power relations between them and other stakeholders in the community, especially the tourism company and the local government (Gong, 2016; Xie and Mai, 2015). One informant, who provided the LLZE with professional guidance on museological practices and cultural heritage preservation, reflects on their work:

> The preservation of tangible cultural heritage has become better as we restored inscriptions and old architectures. We also promoted the protection of intangible cultural heritage. The tendency of ethnic minority cultural transmission is positive, but villagers' cultural practices did not conform to requirements of the ecomuseum approach. Their participation in ecomuseum practices and cultural awareness were still not enough. (Interview 11, 02/08/2018: Han)

Notwithstanding, ecomuseum practitioners express their anxieties about the heritage preservation and diminished community participation within the LLZE, and they respond to challenges brought by villagers' heritage making on their paternalist governance of the LLZE. The insistence of their authority and expertise in heritage production and the exclusive ways of working perpetuate a situation that causes villagers to resist framing their heritage within this official heritage discourse. Furthermore, ecomuseum practitioners and elites are incapable of convincing the value of ecomuseoloical approaches to heritage management or making them more compatible with the local circumstances and demands. This enhances the difficulty for villagers to accept experts' awkward language and employ it (Oakes, 2013, p.385). The top-down heritage making diverges from one of the basic principles of ecomuseum curatorship, which is that community members are empowered to determine 'how heritage outputs, and the way they are used and perceived' (Corsane, 2005, p.8).

Despite this, community members do not need to be empowered by ecomuseum practitioners. They exercise their rights to decide whether they apply the official heritage discourse to serve their aspirations and facilitate their tourism industry. Community members are not the passive receivers of what is cultural heritage and how heritage should be used, but rather active producers and users. Kryder-Reid, Foutz, Wood and Zimmerman (2018) recommend 'user-defined paradigms of value' to identify heritage value in communities with different stakeholders. In Oakes's research on the heritagisation of Tunpu village (Han village in Guizhou province, China), he unveils that villagers hardly repudiated top-down impartation of knowledge, but employed the knowledge 'in the service of their own interests, which may or may not be aligned with those of the experts themselves' (2013, p.394). It generated that 'the village has been viewed as a project of continuous cultivation' (ibid. p.394).

Reinvention

It is noticeable that the nature of heritage making occurring at different levels depends on the identification of heritage (Smith, 2015a). Diverse stakeholders granted it multiple meanings during processes of their active cultural engagement. At the level of the ecomuseum led by the government, heritage making's affinity with governmentality exerts influence on the ecomuseum site selection and heritage recognition and management (Wang, 2017). In light of the ecomuseum philosophy, heritage contributes to the creation of spirit of place and local distinctiveness (Corsane, Davis, Hawke and Stefano, 2009). Heritage identified during the ecomuseum's heritage making process was consistent with community members' criteria of heritage recognition. Although heritage has been interpreted in differing meanings (knowledge and economic assets) by different stakeholders, the reconciliation has already been ingrained in the community's heritage creation and display.

Stefano (2017, p.163) views intangible cultural heritage as an organic, 'naturally-occurring ecomuseum'. In other words, natural ways of using and understanding ICH in situ by

communities can modify the concept of the ecomuseum and be represented to show living cultures and their cultural perspectives (Stefano, 2017). Her theory assumes that the ecomuseum is in a state of flux and evolving from communities' bottom-up cultural practices. It informs a more accurate angle to view villagers' appropriation of the AHD for representation as an inventiveness of a new 'ecomuseum'. The relations of power forged within the expert or government cultural discourse have been challenged and shifted in the course of the community-led museumification.

6.4 Reclaiming the local Zhuang identity beyond representation

Residents in the Longji village, ecomuseum practitioners and the tourism sector established the stereotypes of the local Zhuang culture and essentialised it by defining festivals, ethnic handicrafts production and products. However, it is acknowledged that 'different things being valued or being valued differently' (Holtorf and Fairclough, 2013, p.500). Heritage transformation or production and reproduction in the Longji has not always been the outcome of 'the convergence of heritage with tourism' (Smith, 2006). The continuity and transformation of the local cultural heritage can be independent of the representational meanings attached to them, highlighting villagers' innermost thoughts and personal emotional responses to them (Svensson and Maags, 2018, p.22). Identities are unstable, in flux and variable. Villagers' heritage making beyond representation indicates that their identities perform as cultural heritage can be shaped and reformed to respond to changing social and cultural circumstances, which questions the authoritative representation of their culture.

6.4.1 'The doubling of the world'

An elder of the Hou Family village passed away during my fieldwork. The three-day funeral ceremony held in front of the visitor centre was under the gaze of tourists at all times. The ICHTC had also temporarily become the extended reception area for people who attended the

rite. The local *Daoshi* (Daoist priests) had been invited to perform the religious rite every day (see Figure 6.8), which inevitably became a tourist experience and felt like part of the folklore in Longji village. Villagers' daily life blended with what villagers presented to tourists. For residents in Longji, they not only treated their village as a tourist destination to appeal to the tourists by mobilising their heritage and ethnicity, but also it is space where they spend their daily lives. 'This condition of drifting back and forth between the two worlds', proposed by Matsuda and Mengoni (2016, p.25), is 'the doubling of the world' (sekai no niju-ka). Experiencing 'the doubling of the world', they could not clearly differentiate what they staged for tourists from what they perceived as their real life, as they were inseparable. Under the impact of tourism, their performances gave them new forms of identity, intertwined with their original ones, instead of generating the loss of local identity (Oakes, 2006; Tapp, 2008).

Figure 6. 8 The funeral rite in front of the visitor centre (Hou family village). Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

6.4.2 The worship of Moyi Dawang

If the *Kaigeng* festival in the Longji village is the outcome of interference by local authorities and markets, *She* festivals (社节) and the *Wugumiao* (五谷庙节) festival are the locals' dynamic and independent expressions of belief and their contemporary demands. Every February and August of the Lunar calendar, there are celebrations of the She festivals held at two family temples in the Longji village, *Moyi Dawang* Temple (King Moyi 莫一) and the temple of Hou Family village (侯家寨庙), by Liao and Hou Family villages. *Moyi Dawang* temple is always locked to avoid tourists' visit. Both villages enshrine *Moyi Dawang*, but for them, these festivals are family rituals rather than a ceremony of the entire village. The *Wugumiao* Festival in June is known to commemorate the birthday of *Moyi Dawang*, because Villagers from the Liao Family believe that *Moyi Dawang* saved their ancestors. It has now been transformed to be similar to the She Festivals.

Figure 6. 9 Moyi Dawang Temples in the Liao Family village. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

Historically, *Moyi Dawang* was the hero of the Zhuang people in the North Guangxi area and gradually became the Land God of some Zhuang communities. During the She Festivals and the *Wugumiao* Festival, villagers should invite the *Shigong* (divine) to perform the ritual and slaughter chickens, ducks, goats and pigs at temples. Pig jaws would hang at temples to prove that they had already finished the ritual. By doing these things, villagers believed that *Moyi Dawang* would bless the safety of the whole village and relieve people of suffering, and they

could anticipate a bumper harvest. The meaning of the She Festival has been expanded from the *Moyi Dawang* worship to a voluntary day of roads, bridge or pavilion reconstruction and the family gathering day. Notwithstanding that the villagers' faith in *Moyi Dawang* tends to be diluted, these festivals are more compatible with their current living status and new conditions of time and place. Labourers in cities would come back to homes and help construct or reconstruct roads in their family villages. None of the tourists can be found in these festivals. The door of the Liao Family village is always closed, and outsiders are not allowed to enter. Villagers' donations provided funding for festivals. Even though their "original" culture changed, Moyi Dawang worship maintains their strong family ties and provoked their nostalgia for the past (Chhabra, Healy and Sills, 2003).

6.4.3 Making quilted embroidery

Quilted embroideries are deeply rooted in the Zhuang traditions, so that when daughters get married their mothers express their love and best wishes by sending these as gifts. They have intricate patterns invented by the makers such as dragon, phoenix, flowers or sun, which are sewed on baby carriers or infant hats to bless new-born infants (see Figure 6.10). The creation of embroidery hats with tails sprang from the cultural tradition of the Yao community in the Longji area. Yao people acquire embroidery hats from the Longji village for many years, and they provide the Zhuang community with braces for baby carriers. Until now, quilted embroidery makers have also made their own braces. Liao Yunjin and Liao Yulan, from the Liao family village, are two renowned quilted embroidery makers. These two female elders develop an excellent collaborative relationship with the director of the LLZE after his endeavour. They unofficially gained opportunities from the director and government work units to perform at the AMGX and the Guilin Museum and sell their products.

Currently, fewer women villagers learn quilted embroidery compared to prior generations. Quilted embroidery makers (all female) in Longji mostly come from the Liao family and learn

this skill from these two makers. Their average age is forty years old. Making quilted embroidery is time-consuming and challenging to learn, so the majority of them only regard it as their hobby or part-time work instead of devoting all of their time to it. When they have spare time after the agricultural production or other business, they usually choose to make these items at the front of their houses, pavilions, or the Elder Activity Centre. They make baby carriers or infants' hats as souvenirs for friends or relatives or sell their handicrafts in the Heping village or the wider county. Tourism does not make the quilted embroidery economically viable, and at the same time, villagers make no effort to combine their production of embroidery handicrafts with the official sanctioned ICH projects. It has survived by virtue of these villagers' interests and its cultural and economic value as place-based experience and tradition.

Figure 6. 10 Quilted Embroidery Making and the product. Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

6.5 Conclusion

The LLZE is regarded as the outcome of the regional and institutional level of heritage making, one of the diverse stakeholders in the Longji village, extending from the logic of Chapter Five

recognising the LLZE as a particular ethnic minority community that the AMGX engages with because of '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project'. Discussing the LLZE mainly from the community's perspective, this chapter was divided into four sections: making the LLZE as an AHD, making heritage for tourism, the reconceptualisation of the ecomuseum, and reclaiming the Zhuang identity beyond representation. This chapter specified the ecomuseum's emergence in the Longji village, as well as the formation of villagers' understandings, and then moved to consider the divergent heritage making processes in the local area and their dissonance.

Community members constructed and represented their cultural heritage during negotiations and contestations with heritage construction, led by the tourism company and the local government. The focal point of this part is to address the complexity of heritage making in the Longji village and the influence of tourism on heritage. Community members' assertion of their authority on heritage and representational practices is scrutinised. Linking to this, the reconceptualisation of the ecomuseum is able to illustrate how power plays between community members and the ecomuseum in the local heritage management. It makes a further argument that the local community can harness the LLZE as the AHD to challenge and recreate the concept of the ecomuseum and its practices. The local Zhuang cultural heritage experienced transformation and reproduction, responding to conflict and reconciliation among disparate heritage making processes. Nevertheless, it is noted that heritage is also a part of the local Zhuang people's life and a sense of place or culture they naturally obtain, things which do not need to be represented but rather felt and experienced.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This thesis places emphasis on the interrogation of how museums' authoritative practices of cultural representation are questioned and shaped by ethnic minority groups' heritage construction and capitalisation. Putting two types of *minzu* museums, the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi and the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum in Guangxi of China, centre stage, the research aim was to analyse the change and rebuilding of power relations between the museums and ethnic minority groups by addressing two heritage concerns. The first of these is ethnic minority cultural heritage as top-down representational cultural processes, during which the regional or local authorities impose political control on the heritage making and representational practices of *minzu* museums and ethnic minority individuals or communities. As my research discloses, the authoritarian power structure that is balanced in museums has been altered when the museums and ethnic minority groups take equal positions as stakeholders in the realm of heritage. Their divergent incentives and actions of constructing and mobilising heritage are negotiated and debated, which have been intertwined in the representation of ethnic minority cultures. The other concern is the heritage practices of ethnic minority groups on the ground, as the means of self-empowerment that they can instrumentalise and manage heritage to make their voices heard.

This research, lending insight into the connections among museums, cultural heritage, and ethnic minority groups, attempts to untangle how ethnic minority groups can exercise active agency over their heritage management and representation in order to shake up the authoritative representation made by museums and form new connections with them. Concluding the thesis, this chapter comprises four sections. These sections recapitulate research findings in the analysis chapters and unpack several points in this research that remain to be further discussed and explored in the future.

7.1 Bringing representational practices to a site of contact and contestations

Analysing two different types of *minzu* museums in this thesis through ethnographic research and case studies uncovered multifaceted issues which flow from representations of ethnic minority cultures within the complex museological and heritage context. I suggest that heritage is a site of contact and contestations in this research. The scrutiny of cultural representation extends from the central focus on exhibition-making in museums towards broader representational practices emerging inside and outside museums. The two sets of questions developed from the key research questions proposed in Chapter One have been answered, in order to unveil the discordance of heritage making when heritage acts as a tool of governance for *minzu* museums, while simultaneously being a vehicle of empowerment for ethnic minority groups.

By situating *minzu* museums within official political and heritage discourses, I answered the first set of questions. It queried how *minzu* museums work as heritage agencies and conduct professional practices to make heritage, in the course of translating or producing ethnic minority cultures, and how they interact with ethnic minority groups during their representational processes. Chapter Four fully achieves this research objective by stating that *minzu* museums' conceptualisation of ethnic minority cultures is a process of making and exploiting heritage to affirm their status of expertise and ensure the legitimacy of their essentialist notion of these cultures.

The other set asked how ethnic minority groups identify and construct their heritage and what for, how they represent themselves and claim their identities within the state-led heritage discourse, and how they look upon their connection with museums. To answer this set of questions, Chapters Four and Five take account of ethnic minorities' viewpoints to rationalise the reconsideration of inequalities reinforced in the realm of museum studies. These two

chapters contribute to justify the main argument of this thesis, that the authoritarian representational practices of *minzu* museums can be shaped by ethnic minority groups' heritage practices and discourses.

After being involved in the international heritage system, the party-state builds up its national heritage regime to foster domestic economic and developmental strategies and a more compelling understanding of Chinese traditional cultures. Placing weight on heritage as 'an instrument of power' (Zhu and Maags, 2020, p.5), the governments have politicised ethnic minority cultural heritage as Chinese cultural legacy to engage the official ideologies and the legal framework of ethnicity and culture pluralism (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013). The implementation of cultural heritage policies toward ethnic minorities is distinctive in different areas, which indicates the fragmented heritage management system (ibid.). The state-supported *minzu* museums, as the government apparatus, are rendered to contribute to the socio-political objectives. The institutional heritage work of these *minzu* museums at different levels are shaped by the changing national, provincial, and local political interests. While both the AMGX and the LLZE are *minzu* museums at the regional and local level in Guangxi, they are confronted with different social realities and missions and form diverging relationships with ethnic minority groups.

Chapter Four illustrates that *minzu* museums inscribe the hegemonic ideology of "culture under threat" in ethnic minority cultural heritage, dedicated to reproducing it as a manifestation to deliver the 'discourse of nationalist multiculturalism' (Denton, 2014, p.205). In order to clarify the formulation of *minzu* museums' authoritative representational strategies and practices, this chapter firstly provides a historical context of collecting ethnic minority objects in China and *minzu* museums' development tied to the idea of salvaging endangered cultures. *Minzu* museums in China, from the 1980s onward, changed from institutions collecting and displaying *minzu wenwu* (ethnic minority objects) for patriotism education into heritage agencies

presenting dominant ideas of ethnic minorities' political and cultural identities. This chapter then indicates that the AMGX, with the support granted by the dominant discourse of multiculturalism, recasts heritage as reified heritage through collection and classification to express simplified cultural differences. Inherent in the AMGX's display techniques is the problematic construction of heritage value influenced by the essentialised cultural diversity. As I point out, converting heritage into art created by diverse ethnic groups entails the static and exotic cultural representations, while asserting the AMGX's authoritative voice.

The agency of museum professionals and practitioners in the course of exhibition-making cannot be eschewed. They are not muted in the museum, but rather take a critical and decisive role in the decision-making, ethnic cultural translation, and exhibition construction processes, as those who are capable of altering representational results. When asked why the absence of ethnic minority voices from the outside, a curator said that what they disseminate is objective knowledge. Museum staff widely accepted that they have the right to control heritage and the obligation to conceptualise ethnic cultures. The partnership with ethnic minority individuals or communities might be unnecessary for their professional practices. Museum practitioners internalised the political values and refused to share the authority. Exhibitions they constructed manifested the otherwise remote possibility that the AMGX would take the initiative to embrace the collaborative model of work with ethnic minority groups and welcome controversies engendered from their problematic representation and the disruption of ethnic cultural stories they produced.

I dissected selected exhibitions and their exhibition processes through archival research and interviews at the AMGX and the LLZE. Chapter Four frames a critical understanding of exhibitions as the *minzu* museum's platform to stage their creation of ethnic minorities' cultural knowledge and the capitalisation of cultural heritage. Two types of exhibitions in the AMGX told the regional stories about the multiplicity of ethnic cultures and emphasized the cultural

uniqueness of a specific culture. One of its permanent exhibitions, designed for the representations of twelve indigenous ethnic cultures in Guangxi, knits fragmented ethnic cultures together to stage the unitary identity and cultural differences through classifying their heritage, such as living environment and craftmanship. This 'cultural mosaic model' (Dicks, 2003, p.150) purposely averts the question of the imbalanced presentation of ethnic cultures, reinforcing the homogenous and exoticizing portrayal of ethnic minority cultures. Instead of fitting all ethnic cultures into the narrative of glorifying rich Chinese traditions and depoliticising ethnic minorities, a thematic approach has been applied to exhibit an individual ethnic culture by placing cultural heritage under subthemes such as costumes and folklore but without further interpretation.

Based on discoveries from participant observation and interviews with museum professionals and practitioners in the AMGX, this museum insisted on its superficial representation of cultural diversity and expertise in heritage definition, narrative creation and exhibition-making, without involving ethnic minorities outside the museum. The AMGX did not let its curatorial power out and offered limited opportunities for ethnic minority groups to participate in and respond to their heritage making. I argue that the exhibition-making as a heritage production process naturalises the museum's inequitable power relations with ethnic minority groups instead of problematising them.

Chapters Five and Six do not further the exploration of the governments' exercise of dominant censorship and control over museums and their ideological position regarding nationalism and multiculturalism. Examining the production and reproduction of heritage occurring at museums beyond exhibitions, these chapters chart how *minzu* museums as heritage agencies have been converted into sites of dialogue and friction. As ethnic cultural heritage turns into the core of officially supported policies and projects of social and economic development, it assumes the guise of museums, tourism, and ethnic identities (Silverman and Blumenfield, 2013). Two social

actors involved in the dominant heritage discourses, ethnic minority groups and museums, inevitably interweave together. Looking at how their power relations at play in the hegemonic heritage discourses is to explore how the uneven power structure in the museum domain has been challenged by ethnic minorities' mobilisations of heritage, and how the *minzu* museums' authority of managing heritage and representing ethnic minority identities and cultures is deconstructed within the cross-disciplinary field.

It is imperative to unravel that the national heritage regime produces power hierarchies and entails the bureaucratisation of cultural heritage management. The state's authoritarian power of heritage making can be transferred to the regional or local heritage bodies, facilitating patriarchal and hierarchical governance of heritage (Lähdesmäki, Thomas, and Zhu, 2019). The intangible cultural heritage items and transmitters listings are the typical instances. The national ICH governance system does not include the AMGX. Nevertheless, in Chapter Five, the AMGX relied on the official designated ICH lists to invite ethnic minority performers and became a platform for the government and ethnic minority cultural practitioners to perform ethnic cultural practices and represent the living ethnic cultures. The AMGX's cooperative relations with ethnic minority cultural practitioners resided in their consensus of promoting and driving the commodification of ICH as a practical approach of the regional heritage protection and tourism development.

Given a mandate by the Regional Department of Culture to supervise ethnic ecomuseums, the AMGX had launched outreach programmes in accordance with the needs of '1+10 ethnic ecomuseums project' to museumise ethnic communities and protect their heritage in situ. Although the AMGX became voiceless and could not control local heritage practices after the construction of the ethnic ecomuseums, its museological practices carried out for this heritage project sustained its endeavour of community engagement and collaborative heritage protection. Chapters Four, Five and Six predominately elucidate how representational practices

of museums and ethnic minority groups have emerged from their heritage construction processes, and how heritage discourses and practices bring about dialogues and contestations between them to shape cultural representations. Adversely, heritage construction of museums and ethnic minority groups can, in turn, have an impact upon the official heritage making, which entrenches and reframes these discourses.

Referring to Tunbridge and Ashworth's (1996) work, the dissonance of multiple heritage constructions on different political and geographical scales, relations between museums and ethnic minority groups, and their interests in the heritage making process means these are not always coordinated and compatible (Graham, Ashworth and Turnbridge, 2000; Lähdesmäki, Thomas, and Zhu, 2019). The research findings illustrated in Chapter Six advocate that most ethnic minority community members' heritage making for tourism and the appropriation of ecomuseological practices are their "resistance" to and exploitation of the ecomuseum as a reification of the regional heritage discourse sanctioned by the Regional Department of Culture and the AMGX. However, instead of developing new meanings of heritage, community members selected an alternative framework of heritage discourse and practice, which is also officially sanctioned.

In the case of the LLZE, the alignment of the local government and the tourism company capitalising on tourism in the local Zhuang community is another powerful actor, which fetters community members' heritage management and representation. The difficulty of their heritage resistance lies in the fact that their heritage mobilisation barely departed from 'the upper scale of heritage' (Lähdesmäki, Thomas, and Zhu, 2019, p.11; Svensson and Maags, 2018). As these official heritage discourses are 'in theory, positive processes in which cultural sites and practices are recognised as being of value' (Zhu and Maags, 2020, p.146). While community members passionately participate in the tourism industry, they also become embroiled in a dispute with the local authorities on account of their conflicting motivations and interests.

Actions where the local Zhuang people contest the local scale of heritage making appear to be negotiations for better living conditions and more economic benefits.

Heritage recognition and practices of ethnic minority individuals and communities are co-opted into the official heritage discourses, which are manipulated and governed by political authorities or influential stakeholders. Ethnic minority groups can be actively or passively involved in the official heritage discourses. They not only embrace the political celebrations of heritage to gain the official recognition of their cultural practices for the enhancement of social and cultural capital, as Chapter Five elucidates, but also shape the AHD to serve their self-representation and self-expression. While cultural practices of ethnic minorities empower themselves, the local Zhuang community reinterpret and appropriate various scales of heritage discourses to legitimise their heritage definition and management for their developmental and economic purposes. In Chapter Six, power struggles and the discrepancy between the regional and the local authorities' understanding of heritage meanings and consumption of heritage affected the Longji Zhuang community's heritage discourse and practices, which inevitably elicited community members' disputes and tensions with the ecomuseum.

7.2 Revisiting the representation of ethnic minority cultures – beyond representation

Chapter three has discussed the limitations of this research by focusing on the selection of case studies and interviewees. This section uncovers one of the primary research limitations that I examined museums' and ethnic minorities groups' heritage making as their representational practices to argue their changing power relations. Another limitation is that this research excluded heritage perspectives of ethnic minority visitors in the AMGX. Both limitations can lead to the reconsideration of museums' omission of polyvocality and dissident practices beyond centring on the discussion of representation. The interrogation and critiques of the

display of culture and various representational practices conducted by *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups have already helped me think through the complexities of representation, rather than merely problematising it by entering into the conventional anthropological debate on the dichotomy between self and other, or 'Han' and 'non-Han' in China. Therefore, this section revisits museums' representation of ethnic minority cultures to emancipate the study of museums' practices from representational issues.

Through the in-depth analysis of how *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups participate in, respond to, are affected by and in turn, affect various heritage making processes, heritage creates a space for this thesis to expose struggles and disputes in the representational process. Multiple functions have been attached to heritage: from cultural resources to the representation of ethnicity, and economic assets to the tourism industry. The AMGX is the facilitator of the cultural and heritage politics to reproduce the past of ethnic minority cultures to foster national identity. In the LLZE, tourism development is one of the driving forces that motivate ethnic minorities to draw on heritage and the ecomuseum for representation. Significantly, heritage is the memory, past and emotion emanated from the course of this heritage making. Chapter Six exemplifies that cultural practitioners in the local Zhuang community always reproduce and transform their heritage outside the gaze of tourists, which rely on their everyday feelings and value systems, more than representation.

Drawing upon McCarthy's (2007) argument that constructing heritage as the display of an 'other', from the Western perception, detaches it from an authentic world and the comprehensive and multiple understandings of Māori culture, Tolia-Kelly, Waterton and Watson (2016, p.2) focus their research on the value of everyday practices at heritage sites and museums beyond representational issues, underscoring terms of affect, memory, emotion and feeling. They advance theories of affect and emotion and uphold affective memory as a more inclusive way of doing heritage. "Encounters'" engagement with heritage can evoke their

feelings and experiences, which are robust and of importance to destabilising the singular narrative and identity (ibid.). As they said,

> In other words, 'representation' has not yet run its course but has been re-energized by the very countenance of its limitations. One of the ways in which it has achieved this reanimation is through recent attempts to define and understand the more-than-representational realm. (Tolia-Kelly, Waterton and Watson, 2016, p.4)

This thesis also concisely mentions the dimension of heritage as performance in Chapter Two, and touches on non-representational practices of museum practitioners and ethnic minority groups in the analysis chapters. This cements arguments regarding diversified uses of heritage and ethnic minority groups' voices residing in that heritage. Ethnic minority groups and museum staff are all "encounters" through experiencing heritage, whose divergent responses to heritage can create affective atmospheres or spaces containing fixed expressions of heritage. Significantly, heritagisation is not always a cultural process or practice for representation, but also unpredictable and dynamic practices that destabilise narratives and identities predetermined and anchored in museums or heritage sites. Instead of speaking for the governments, *minzu* museums can be the platforms for museum staff, ethnic minority cultural practitioners and (ethnic minority) visitors to make their heritage meaning based on their experiences, memories, and knowledge.

Even though visitor studies is another research domain that is not unpacked within the scope of this research, it can be one of the future research directions. Linking to Smith's (2006) heritage as performance and advancing Nigel Thrift's (2008) non-representational theory, Haldrup and Boerenholdt (2015, p.52) put forward that 'heritage meanings are practiced in processes involving people experiencing heritage'. They advocate looking into visitor's being, embodiment

and feeling when they interact with other people, materials, tools and technologies within heritage sites or museums as relational spaces (ibid., p.55). Performances of, at and with heritage are three aspects where they explicitly make heritage as performances.

Museum staff and volunteers act as enactors to perform experiences and meanings of heritage during the process of communicating with visitors front and centre. Performances at heritage sites rest on how visitors cite their stories, knowledge, and social relations to reflect on perceived narratives and heritage (ibid.). These embodied practices can manifest visitors' creativity and diverse ways of heritage usage and consumption, which might challenge the AHD. On the other side, the appeal of AHD to visitors encourages them to generate performances with heritage through social media and popular discourses (ibid.). Three approaches of performing heritage identify individuals' heritage experiences as multiple forms of heritagisation, which direct the attention to neglected actors that influence the representation of ethnic minority cultures.

Forces such as flourishing domestic tourism and social media generate diverse ways of experiencing and engaging with heritage, allowing individuals to sense and feel the flowing meaning of heritage and cultures and be involved in the present construction of heritage. Current heritage is not the unchanging past and will not be immutable in the future. The evolving nature of heritage repudiates *minzu* museums' allegation that they are capable of producing universal truth regarding ethnic minority cultures and might lead to the rupture of their heritage narratives. During my observation of museum guides' interpretation of exhibits, few ethnic minority visitors questioned that their everyday lives are not what the museum presents or only briefly described their different lifestyles and traditions from the museum's presentation. Moreover, a museum guide in the AMGX construed the permanent exhibition, *Wucaibagui* (Diverse cultures in Guangxi), as a 'small Guangxi' for visitors who have limited time to visit other areas to experience diverse cultures.

Compared to the temporal and passive acquisition of information in *minzu* museums, visitors can randomly access the frontstage and backstage of the touristic ethnic minority sites. The terraced scenery has attracted visitors in the LLZE. The exhibition centre or the performances delivered by villagers are not the only channels where visitors form an impression of the local Zhuang culture. They can recognise what villagers and the LLZE present and what they notice in the village as 'authenticity', while immersing themselves in the real cultural environment to reframe their experiences through living in family inns with community members and communicating with them.

Museum practitioners tend to realise that heritage that is continually reconceptualised and remade by them is no longer signposting their authority over the enlightenment of ethnic minority culture, but instead invoking the doubts from the outside about their romanticisation and essentialisation of ethnic minorities. When viewing heritage as performances, the dilemmas *minzu* museums face can be a catalyst for them to formulate new forms of cultural representation beyond a political framework.

7.3 The future of *minzu* museums in China

Two lingering questions posed by two museum staff from the AMGX and a community member from the LLZE remained unanswered until I had reached the end of the writing-up phase of this project. The first is 'what more can we do?' This question was raised twice when I interviewed a curator and an ecomuseum practitioner. The curator recounted her visit to Indigenous museums in the US and expounded her view that there is no driving force for ethnic minority groups to voice in *minzu* museums. The ecomuseum practitioner asked this question since she was eager to know how ethnic ecomuseums can really benefit the local communities. The second question inquired by a villager in the LLZE is 'so, you will not do anything for our village,

264

right?' As this villager thought that I might initiate another heritage project like the ecomuseum, which can facilitate their tourism business. These questions, emanating from the research findings, disclose museum practitioners' bewilderment toward practical issues and community members' developmental aspirations and their devaluation of the ecomuseum.

Given less impetus for change, the AMGX persists with their fixed ways of working without engaging in reflexivity. At the same time, community members in the LLZE continue to search for more tourist opportunities to attract more capital. Concerns they expressed cannot find solutions separately from each other. This occurs because, for ethnic minority groups, officially designated *minzu* museums are the spaces where they are authoritatively represented, where they are working (ethnic minority staff), where they perform and attract visitors, but not places working for them. New problems that arise here are how *minzu* museums bridge the boundaries between them and ethnic minority groups. For the AMGX, the ethnic ecomuseums project is still one of their solutions.

> Constructing the ethnic ecomuseums is because we expect that twelve ethnic groups in Guangxi can have one representative ecomuseum. We did not achieve this plan, as several ethnic groups only live in Longlin. When we visited there, their communities even do not have visible cultural features. This is difficult to construct ecomuseums for them…some of our potential sites have already commenced making their own ecomuseums…I mean, they claim their museums as 'ecomuseums' without understanding this concept. (Interview 11, 08/2018: Han)

From the perception of the director of the ethnic ecomuseums project, the value and efficacy of ecomuseums hinges on the AMGX's professional guidance and assistance. The AMGX insists on its expertise in preventing ecomuseums from transforming into traditional museums. At the

same time, it maintains weak connections with established ecomuseums. It does not, however, necessarily doubt the capacity of the AMGX or attribute the limitations of the AMGX' heritage preservation practices to ethnic minority groups' lack of cultural awareness. Unpicking the complexities and dilemmas of their relationship, this research demonstrates their temporarily incompatible pursuits and relatively equitable roles they play in the state heritage discourse.

Minzu museums and ethnic minority groups have become significant players on the world stage of heritage. The heritage boom in China has energized some *minzu* museums. They have turned attention to the protection of heritage, while approaching heritage as cultural symbols of ethnic minorities and a tool for nation-building. They have conducted various practices to "rescue" heritage, while virtually ignoring the attitudes and perspectives of ethnic minority groups. Likewise, the economic value of heritage for ethnic minority individuals and communities has become their impulse to ardently respond to official heritage discourses and be empowered by them to approach heritage representation in their own particular way. Many scholars' findings expose that some ethnic minority individuals or communities are running their 'independent museums' by imitating the traditional museum model. A part of the officially designated ICH transmitters or ethnic minority cultural practitioners who perform at the AMGX have their family showrooms or studios to exhibit their artworks or related objects they have collected in order to brand themselves. Their alternative discourses enrich the official narratives. Non-official museums, showrooms or work studios of ICH practitioners as their self-representations have already opened up a new space to explore the formation of ethnic minorities' museum approaches and practices.

Although local authorities or communities have appropriated the notion of ecomuseums to represent their self-operating museums, its nature is closely associated with community-led heritage management. It should be said that there is an optimistic possibility that ecomuseums can be reinvented as the Chinese version of "indigenous museums", or be understood and

enriched by ethnic minority communities' bottom-up celebration of their cultural traditions and ethnic identities. Indeed, community museums cannot represent the entire ethnic communities' perspective and might be treated as the monopolisation of cultural performances for the tourist trade (Denton, 2014, p.205).

The introduction chapter to this thesis has discussed the Chinese National Museum of Ethnology's endeavours of pushing forward the innovation of curatorial practices. Nevertheless, for most *minzu* museums, their future and relationships with ethnic minority groups seem to be unpredictable. By virtue of the historical, political, social and economic contexts where Chinese *minzu* museums root, they cannot directly learn from Western and Asian scholarship and valuable museum practices regarding collaboration between ethnographic museums and indigenous communities, and the decolonisation and indigenisation of museums. It is almost impossible to see these government-funded museums reject the promotion of political ideologies and embody any negative and controversial issues. The strict censorship and self-censorship of *minzu* museums, to some degree, result in their standardised and problematic working approaches and theoretical canon. Their authoritative narratives, advocacy of ethnic policies, and even issues concerning inequality offer sufficient grounds for academic criticisms. Yet, acknowledging these "frustrating" realities and learning to draw on the powerful impact of cultural and heritage politics to address predicaments and recast practices might be a positive initiation of the *minzu* museums' future development.

Can collaboration become a panacea for *minzu* museums to reposition themselves in the national and regional heritage discourses and create new connections with ethnic minority groups? It is disputable to draw a conclusion that collaborative models can successfully apply to *minzu* museums and help them to simultaneously wrestle with socio-political and cultural demands of themselves and ethnic minority groups. There are no established principles for these museums that can lead them to devote attention to ethnic minority groups' viewpoints

on cultural heritage and museums, and accordingly devise and alter practices to engage with ethnic minority groups. After the failure of the first ethnic ecomuseum in China, Liuzhi Suoga Miao ecomuseum, museum scholars and practitioners enacted the "Liuzhi principles" which guided further ecomuseum development in China (Davis, 2011). The first principle is 'the people of the villages are the true owners of their culture. They have the right to interpret and validate it themselves' (ibid., p.238). The following principles have bonded ecomuseums with community participation, and the protection of culture and cultural heritage. Although adopting and operating eomuseums is still a top-down project, allowing cultural owners' voices in has already burgeoned in China.

For example, the ethnic ecomuseums project unintentionally motivated the AMGX to make connections with ethnic minority communities, which can be viewed as a breakthrough for the AMGX to engage with them. It does not ignore what Onciul (2015) suggests, that community engagement can be a 'double-edged sword', which may gloss over the uneven power-sharing and institutional drawbacks and produce opposite efforts. Incorporating museological practices into the discourse of "Village Revitalisation (乡村振兴)" and "Poverty Alleviation (扶贫)" are the ongoing political tasks of most *minzu* museums. Before I ended my fieldwork in the AMGX, the director of the marketing department sent me a pair of figurines dressed up in the costumes of the Nandan White Trousers Yao people, which were coproduced by the AMGX and the local Yao people. In 2020, the AMGX had initiated a new project that encourages and collaborates with promising heritage practitioners from ecomuseums to reproduce their handicrafts to sell in the tourist industry, and design and invent innovative cultural products (文创产品), drawing on elements from their cultures (AMGX, 2020). This collaborative project has been an opportunity for the AMGX to drive the development of ecomuseums and rebuild relations with community members. On the other hand, while new issues and dynamics have arisen from it, both museums and ethnic minority groups seek it for mutual benefit. The commodification of ethnic cultures and heritage, indeed, can be interpreted as selling exotic

and imaginable "authentic" ethnic images. Nevertheless, it can also be read as embodiments of ethnic minority groups' cultural pride and their aspirations to give their traditions' new lives.

Figure 7. 1 The AMGX's creative cultural products: Figurines

dressing up in costumes of the Nandan White Trousers Yao people.

Photograph © Yahao Wang, 2018.

7.4 Contributions and conclusion

The significant contribution of this thesis is embedded in the rearticulation of the power relations between museums and ethnic minorities. The bottom-up point of view does not only refer to highlighting the heritage perspective of ethnic minority individuals or communities within the context of China. It is a critical step forward to examine *minzu* museums' changing functions and the instability of power structures in the heritage context, while reflecting on how they stage superficial multiculturalism. This research sheds new light on the interplay of *minzu* museums, ethnic minority groups and their cultural heritage, as well as on the power of heritage that breaks the fetters of prioritising museums' dominant narratives, bringing ethnic minority groups' voices into an intersection with museums' professional practices.

This research has also contributed to question the static thinking of ethnic minorities' marginalised role in the representation of their cultures and heritage. As I reiterate throughout the thesis, both *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups draw power from and are affected by official ideologies and heritage making that is formulated from the hegemonic discourse of "culture for development". This thesis extends from the academic criticism of museum representational politics towards the repercussions of representational practices carried out by museums and ethnic minority groups, providing a thoughtful discussion about the active role ethnic minority groups play in different levels of state-led heritage making.

This thesis offers a comprehensive understanding of how Chinese *minzu* museums' practices are framed in the historical and political context according to the ethnographic materials and Chinese literature. Chinese studies of *minzu* museums have mainly concentrated on the historical research of their development, the display of *minzu* cultural relics, curatorial strategies, exhibition analysis, and the cultural and political roles museums play in the preservation and transmission of ethnic cultures and cultural heritage. Most work barely scratches the surface without envisaging where the museum's challenges originate or seeking another angle to examine the position of ethnic minority groups inside and outside museums. Even though there is a growing number of publications which echo Western critical museology, fewer scholars have constructed a framework to scrutinise the applicability of its theories and methods within the Chinese socio-political context or suggest how to adapt critical museum studies to China.

Aside from its contributions, this thesis leaves problems that need to be addressed in the future. This research, to a certain extent, does not achieve the aim to provide a broad narrative concerning how representational practices of *minzu* museums and ethnic minority groups emerge within the global, national and regional heritage contexts and the impact of heritage politics on their framing of the concept of heritage. When I decided on museums as the object of

inquiry, doing organisation ethnography attracted my attention, which affected my research focuses and the allocation of fieldwork time. Ethnography in this research emphasises museums as institutions and their representational systems, overlooking 'facts' beyond museums, even though I devoted more time to observing ethnic community members' daily lives and interviewing them in the LLZE. Interrogating the continuity and change of ethnic minority cultural practices, the implementation and formulation of heritage policies and ethnic minority groups' use of heritage are essential to deepening the research on *minzu* museums, heritage and ethnic minorities.

Critical museum studies and heritage studies entwined with each other are integral to this thesis. This interdisciplinary theoretical base has made me consider both the perspectives of museum professionals or practitioners working on the frontline and the ethnic minority groups, which lends itself to further and future study and practice. Informed by Kreps's (2105, p.5) 'new museum ethics' and 'appropriate museology', this thesis accentuates the diverse perspectives and knowledge systems from two different angles: the formation of museological theories and methods in Chinese *minzu* museums, and how ethnic minority groups' heritage management affects their recognition and use of *minzu* museums. It calls for a localised version of critical museology in China combined with critical heritage studies, shifting the focus on ethnic minority groups in museums from perceiving them as disadvantaged groups who are marginalised by the dominant Han, towards the dynamic actor empowered to influence the representation of their cultures. Returning to the critical question which inspired this research - what do museums and heritage mean to ethnic minority groups - my answer is that they can and will help ethnic minorities make and remake their past to support their self-representation and self-expression in the present and future.

Appendix 1: Archives

Museum	Number	Title of Archive	Author (Editor)	Source of the material	Publication Date	Content
Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX)	1	2014-2016 National First-class Museum Application Materials (Volume One)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2017	Museum administration and basic information: organisational structure and department responsibilities; museum regulations; meetings' notes; museum mid-term developing outline; annual work reports
	2	2014-2016 National First-class Museum Application Materials (Volume Two)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2017	Collections management and scientific research: basic information about collections in AMGX and types of collections; collecting methods
	3	2014-2016 National First-class Museum Application Materials (Volume Four: Part 1)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2017	The introduction of the logo of AMG; The propaganda plan of AMG from 2014 to 2016; Visitor Studies; Touring exhibitions and temporary exhibitions
	4	2014-2016 National First-class Museum Application Materials (Volume Four: Part 2)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2017	The selection of themes, the content design, the curatorial logic, the aim of exhibitions, exhibition outlines (the exhibition-making process always starts from the writing of the exhibition outline. The exhibition outline will include texts, selected objects and visual display), lists of collections in every exhibition and museum professionals' advices of exhibition outlines
	5	2014-2016 National First-class Museum Application Materials (Volume Four: Part 3)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2017	Temporary exhibitions from 2014 to 2016; visitor studies of permanent exhibitions
	6	2014-2016 National First-class Museum Application Materials (Volume Four: Part 4)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2017	Work plans of museum activities and programmes; the formal and consolidated cultural message transmitted by interpreters in tour guide services of AMG; Museum membership management; Museum volunteers management
	7	"Youth Civilisation" Honorary Title Appication Materials (Volume One)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2018	Musuem service and tour guide requirements in AMGX; volunteering activities
	8	"Youth Civilisation" Honorary Title Appication Materials (Volume Two)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2018	AMGX official website propoganda
	9	"Youth Civilisation" Honorary Title Appication Materials (Volume Three)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2018	Research publications lists; poverty alleviation activities
	10	"Youth Civilisation" Honorary Title Appication Materials (Volume Five)	AMGX	Unpublished Archive	2018	2017 "March 3rd Festival for Zhuang People" activity details; 2017 Ethnographic Films Festival
	11	2015 Annual Report of AMGX	AMGX	Unpublished Report	2016	
	12	2016 Annual Report of AMGX	AMGX	Unpublished Report	2017	
	13	2017 Annual Report of AMGX	AMGX	Unpublished Report	2018	
	14	The First Half Year of 2018 Report of AMGX	AMGX	Unpublished Report	2018	
	15	2014 Ethnographic Films Festival	AMGX	Nanning: Guangxi People	2016	"Cultural Memory Project" in ethnic ecomuseums in Guangxi; ethnographic films introduction of participants
	16	2016 Ethnographic Films Festival	AMGX	Unpublished Book	2017	Ethnographic films introduction of participants
	17	Documents related to Museum Activities	AMGX	Internal Documents		"Guangxi Folk Songs" competition; "Cultural Memory Project"; Courses delivered by AMGX in Peihong Ethnic Senior High School in Guangxi; "Little Interpreter" activity; Educational activities related to exhibitions
	18	Exhibitions Interpretation Texts	AMGX	Internal Documents		Permanent Exhibitions
	19	Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseums "1+10" Project Proposal	AMGX	Internal Documents		
	20	"Cultural Memory Project" in Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseums Work Regulations	AMGX	Internal Documents	2016	Camera shooting skills; Oral history research requirements; Interview questions
Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE)	21	Regulations and policies of founding LLZE	Local Government in Longsheng	Internal Documents		
	22	LLZE Construction Scheme	the Cultural Department in Longsheng	Internal Documents	2008	The selection and evaluation of the proposed ecomuseum site; the feasibility of founding an ecomuseum; the protection plan of the cultural and natural resources in this ecomuseum areas; the institutional framework and the management committee; Budgets
	23	LLZE Development Plan	LLZE	Internal Documents	2011	Brief report of work in 2010 ; objectives and work plan in next five years
	24	The Reconstruction Plan of LLZE for the "National Ecomuseum Model Site" Application	the Cultural Department in Longsheng	Internal Documents	2011	
	25	2016-2018 Work Report of LLZE	LLZE	Internal Document	2011	
	26	LLZE Administrative Regulations	the Cultural Department in Guangxi	Internal Document		
	27	Longji Scenic Spots Plan	Tourism Sites Administration Department in Longji, Longsheng	Internal Document	2015	The tourism development plan in Longji village (LLZE)

Appendix 2: General interview questions

Interview questions included general questions listed below as well as specific questions for each interviewee.

General interview questions for the museum staff in the AMGX and the LLZE:

1) What role do you play in your department? Could you please describe your work content and your work experience in this museum?

2) Could you please share your understanding of the work of your department in the museum?

3) How do your department cooperate with other departments in museum practices?

4) Are you ethnic minorities?

Yes – Do you think your cultural identity will make your work meaningful for you? Do you think it will affect your thinking and decisions in your work?

No – What is your perspective about the idea of cultural diversity in the museum? Do you think your perspective will affect your work?

5) Could you please talk about your understanding of *minzu* museum? From your perspective, what is the mission of this museum?

6) What do you think about the issue of "otherness" in this museum?

7) What do you think the representation of ethnic minority cultures in this museum? To what extent does the museum represent the change or reinvention of ethnic minority cultures?

8) What is ethnic minority cultural heritage in your definition?

9) How do ethnic minority groups have their positions and voice in this museum from your perspective?

10) Do you think the museum provide enough space for ethnic groups to express their understanding of their own cultures? To what extent does the museum interact with ethnic minority groups?

11) What are your understandings of "excellent traditional" ethnic minority cultures?

12) What do you think about the cultural exhibition in this museum? What challenges do they face or problems do they have?

13) What do you think about the cultural authenticity in the museum's representation of ethnic minority cultures?

14) What do you think about '1+10 ecomuseums project'? What role does the museum play in this project and the preservation of cultural heritage? And do you think this project is still working?

15) What do you think about the change and continuity of ethnic minority cultures and their cultural heritage?

General Interview Questions for ethnic minority community members:

1) Personal experience
2) Do you know what is ecomusem? Have you ever participated in the construction of the ecomuseum in your village?
3) Do you know what is heritage? How do you introduce your culture to others?
4) Do you think tourism affect your life?
5) Specific questions

Appendix 3: List of interviewees

Museum	Number	Work Contents	Ethnic Group	Interview Topics
Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX)	1	Social publicity and education	Yao	a. Intangible cultural heritage activities and performances in museum's galleries b. "Guangxi Folk songs (畅享民歌)" Biennial Competition
	2	Ecomuseums management; ethnological research	Han	a. Cultural memory project for ecomuseums b. Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseums "1+10" project c. The Ethnographic Film Festival
	3	exhibition making	Han	a. The process of exhibition making (permanent exhibitions) b. History of the AMGX
	4	Exhibition Interpreter and activity organisation	Han	a. ICH activities b. The relationship with cultural heritage practitioners
	5	Exhibition making	Han	The "Zhuang Culture" exhibition-making process
	6	Collections management	Han	a. The basic information of collections in AMG (numbers, types and collecting criteria) b. The collection management (classification, the management system)
	7	Exhibition making	Han	The *Nishangyuyi* exhibition re-making process
	8	Vice-director of the AMGX	Zhuang	a. Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseums "1+10" project b. one of directors of making permanent exhibitions in the AMGX
	9	Volunteer	Zhuang	Activities
	10	Volunteer	Han	Activities
	11	Ecomuseums management	Han	a. Cultural memory project for ecomuseums b. Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseums "1+10" project c. The Ethnographic Film Festival

	12	Vice-director of the AMGX	Zhuang	The "Zhuang Culture" exhibition-making process
	13	Marketing	Han	a. Marketing b. Exhibition making in the LLZE
	14	Exhibition making	Han	Temporary exhibition
	15	Quilts maker	Zhuang	Performances of quilt making
Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE)	16	Director of Longsheng Longji Ecomuseum	Zhuang	a. History of LLZE construction b. Activities organisation c. Challenges in the ecomuseological practices
	17	a. Unofficial head of Pan Family Village (including Pingduan Village and Ping Village) b. the manager of the Exhibition Centre c. Participant of the "Cultural Memory Project"	Zhuang	a. History and cultural traditions of the Longji village b. History of LLZE construction
	18	Longji Village Secretary of the Communist Party	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production b. The construction of LLZE
	19	Teacher of the Kindergarten in the Village	Zhuang	a. Ethnographic films b. Zhuang folk song and *Wan* song singer c. Local cultural traditions
	20	a. The Village official b. Engraver c. Daoist priest	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production b. Local cultural traditions c. History of LLZE construction
	21	Participant of the "Cultural Memory Project"	Zhuang	Agricultural production
	22	Host of century-old House in Liao Family Village ("Local Cultural Family Model")	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production b. History of LLZE construction
	23	Active participant of LLZE operation	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production b. Family Hotel

			c. Former tour guide of the Longji Village
25	Embroidery maker	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production b. Embroidery making and selling c. Former tour guide of the Longji Village
26	Host of century-old House in Hou Family Village	Zhuang	Agricultural production
27	Embroidery maker	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production (past) b. Embroidery making and selling
28	Embroidery maker	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production (past) b. Embroidery making and selling
29	Host of Ancient House in Pan Family Village ('Local Cultural Family Model')	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production b. embroidery making c. Souvenirs selling
30	Zhuang Rice wine (Water Liquor) maker	Zhuang	a. Agricultural production b. Zhuang Rice wine making and selling
31	a. Staff of a hotel at the Longji Village b. Embroidery maker	Zhuang	Embroidery selling
32	Host of two Family Hotels in Liao Family Village and Pingan Village	Zhuang	a.Tour guide at a tourism company b. Local cultural traditions
33	Longji Village Tourism Site driver	Zhuang	Agricultural production
34	Souvenirs seller	Zhuang	a. Souvenirs selling at the Visitor Centre b. Agricultural production
35	Villager	Zhuang	Agricultural production

Appendix 4: Summary of observations in the AMGX

Number	Date	Project	Organiser	Participant
1	23/03/2018	Tour Guide	Social Propaganda and Education Department	Interpreter: LUN ZHANG Visitors
2	10/04/2018	"Nidiya Dancing"	The Administration Office	Museum staff from differnet department
3	16/04/2018	"Third March of Zhuang groups" – Cultural Exhibition	The Marketing Department and the staff of the Hangyang Huizhan Shopping Mall	The staff of the Curatorial Department and the Marketing Department; Volunteers; Intangible cultural heritage inheritors invited by museum; Visitors
4	18/04/2018	"Third March of Zhuang Ethnic Groups, Carnival of All Ethnic Groups"	AMG; the Centre of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Guangxi	The staff of AMG and the Centre of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage; Visitors; Performers; Intangible cultural heritage inheritors
5	10/05/2018	Lecture of ethnographic film in Peihong Ethnic Senior High School	Social Propaganda and Education Department	Speaker: the staff in the Research Department (2); Students in the Peihong Ethnic Senior High School
6	18/05/2018	"Hyperconnected Museum and the Style of Nationalities" (1)	Social Propaganda and Education Department	Visitors; the staff of Social Propaganda and Education Department; the staff of a university and a company cooperating with AMG; Performers
7	19/05/2018	"Hyperconnected Museum and the Style of Nationalities" (2)	Social Propaganda and Education Department	Visitors; the staff of Social Propaganda and Education Department
8	24/05/2018	Lecture of cultural and creative products in the museum in Peihong Ethnic Senior High School	Social Propaganda and Education Department	Speaker: the staff in the Marketing Department; Students in the Peihong Ethnic Senior High School
9	26/05/2018	The exploration of "Gorgeous Garments"	Social Propaganda and Education Department	Visitors; The staff of Social Propaganda and Education Department
10	15/07/2018	The openning ceremony and tour guide interpretation of the "Quilting Arts and Tradition: People, Handcrafts, and Community Life"	Social Propaganda and Education Department; Curatorial Depatment	Visitors; Professors of the folklore studies; All staff of the AMGX
11	22/07/2018	The Quilt-making Performance at the "Quilting Arts and Tradition: People, Handcrafts, and Community	Social Propaganda and Education Department	The quilt-maker; The staff of Social Propaganda and Education Department
13	26/07/2018	Huangmei Drama Exhibition-making	Curatorial Department	The staff of Curatorial Department
14	27/07/2018	"Saving LiuSanJie: pass through actitivity"	Social Propaganda and Education Department	Visitors; The staff of Social Propaganda and Education Department

References

Alivizatou, M. (2008) 'Contextualising intangible cultural heritage in heritage studies and museology'. *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, 3(6), pp. 43-54.

Alivizatou, M. (2012) *Intangible Heritage and the Museum: New Perspectives on Cultural Preservation*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

Ali, S. (2012) 'Visual analysis', in Seale, C. (ed.) *Researching society and culture.* London: SAGE, pp. 283–301.

Ames, M. M. (2006) 'Counterfeit museology'. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, *21*(3), pp.171-186.

An, Q. (2014) *Museum Ethnography: Object Narrative and Ethnic History on the Southwestern Frontiers of China*. Beijing: Nationality Press.

An, Q. (2011) 'To dress or not to dress: body representations of the ethnic minorities on China's southwestern frontiers', *Inner Asia*, 13(1), pp.183-203.

Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.

Appadurai, A. (2004) 'The capacity to aspire', in Rao, V., and Walton, M. (eds.) *Culture and public action*. The World Bank, pp. 59-84.

Babić, D. (2016) 'Bridging the Boundaries between Museum and Heritage Studies', *Museum International*, 68(1-2), pp. 15-28.

Baird, I. G. (2016) 'Indigeneity in Asia: an emerging but contested concept'. *Asian Ethnicity*, 17(4), pp. 501-505.

Basu, P., and Modest, W. (eds.) (2015) *Museums, Heritage and International Development*. Routledge.

Baxter, P., and Jack, S. (2008) 'Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers', *The qualitative report*, *13*(4), pp. 544-559.

Bendix, R. (2008) 'Heritage between economy and politics', in Smith, L., and Akagawa, N. (eds.) *Intangible heritage*. Routledge, pp. 253-269.

Bennett, T. (1998) *Culture: A reformer's science*. Sage.

Berger, R. (2015) 'Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research', *Qualitative research*, *15*(2), pp. 219-234.

Blum, S. D. (2001) *Portraits of "primitives": Ordering human kinds in the Chinese nation*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Blumenfield, T. (2018) 'Recognition and Misrecognition: The Politics of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southwest China', in Maags C. and Svensson M. (eds.) *Chinese Heritage in the Making: Experiences, Negotiations and Contestations*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 169-194.

Boast, R. (2011) 'Neocolonial collaboration: Museum as contact zone revisited', *Museum anthropology*, 34(1), pp. 56-70.

Borrelli, N., and Davis, P. (2012) 'How culture shapes nature: Reflections on ecomuseum practices', *Nature and Culture*, *7*(1), pp. 31-47.

Bortolotto, C. (2007) 'From Objects to Processes: UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage', *Journal of Museum Ethnographers Group,* 18(19), pp. 21-23*.*

Bouquet, M. (2011) *Museum: A visual anthropology*. Oxford: Berg.

Brewer, J. (2000) *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Brinkmann, S. (2014) 'Unstructured and Semi-Structured Interviewing', in Leavy, P. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, A. K., and Peers, L. (eds.). (2005) *Museums and source communities: A Routledge reader*. Routledge.

Bryant, A. (2014) 'The Grounded Theory Method', in Leavy, P. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 116-136.

Bryant, A., and Charmaz, K. (2011) 'Grounded theory', in Williams, M., and Vogt, W. P. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Innovation in Social Research METHODS*. Los Angeles et al.: Sage, pp. 205-227.

Butler, B. (2006) 'Heritage and the present past', in Tilley, C., Keane, W., Küchler, S., Rowlands, M., and Spyer, P. (eds.) *Handbook of material culture*. Sage, pp. 463-479.

Butler, S. R. (2015) 'Reflexive museology: lost and found', in Macdonald, S., Leahy, H. R., Witcomb, A., McCarthy, C., Henning, M., Coombes, A. E., and Phillips, R. B. (eds.) *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 159-182.

Byrne, B. (2012) 'Qualitative interviewing', in Seale, C. (ed.) *Researching society and culture.* 3rd ed. London: SAGE, pp. 206–226.

Byrne, D. (2009) 'A critique of unfeeling heritage', in Smith, L., and Akagawa, N. (eds.) *Intangible heritage*. Routledge, pp. 229-252.

Cai, Y. (2000) '何谓文化 (What is culture)', in Li, S. and Song, B. (eds.) *博物馆历史文选 (Historical articles of museums)*. Xian: Shanxi People Publisher.

Cai, Y. (2020) *Staging Indigenous Heritage: Instrumentalisation, Brokerage, and Representation in Malaysia*. Routledge.

Chan, S. (2018) 'Heritagizing the Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival in Hong Kong', in Maags C. and Svensson M. (eds.) *Chinese Heritage in the Making: Experiences, Negotiations and Contestations*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 145-168.

Changchun Film Studio (1960) *Liu Sanjie* (Video file). Available from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25pL8liA8A0

Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.

Chavez, C. (2008) 'Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality', *The qualitative report*, *13*(3), pp. 474-494.

Chhabra, D., Healy, R., and Sills, E. (2003) 'Staged authenticity and heritage tourism', *Annals of tourism research*, *30*(3), pp. 702-719.

China Highlights (n.d.) *The Longsheng Rice Terraces (World's Most Incredible)*. Available from: https://www.chinahighlights.com/guilin/attraction/longji-terraced-field.htm (Accessed: 05 December 2020)

Chio, J. (2013) Good fences make good neighbours: Claiming heritage in the Longji Terraced fields scenic area, in Blumenfield, T., and Silverman, H. (eds.) *Cultural heritage politics in China*. Springer: New York, pp. 143-159.

Clifford, J. (1997) *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Harvard University Press.

Clifford, J. (2001) 'Indigenous articulations', *The Contemporary Pacific*, *13*(2), pp. 467-490.

Clifford, J. (2013) *Returns*. Harvard University Press.

Coffey, A. (1999) *The ethnographic self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. London: Sage.

Corbin, J., and Strauss, A. (2008) *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd edition). Sage publications.

Corsane, G. (2005) 'Issues in heritage, museums and galleries: a brief introduction', in Corsane, G. (ed.) *Heritage, Museums, And Galleries: An Introductory Reader*. Oxon: Routledge.

Corsane, G. (2017) 'The characteristics of the ecomuseum ideal – are these useful for small museums wishing to promote community involvement and sustainability in for the future?', in *5th Yeongwol International Museum Forum: Sustainability of Community and Future Museums*.

Corsane, G., Davis, P.S., Hawke, S., and Stefano, M. (2009) 'Ecomuseology: a holistic and integrated model for safeguarding 'spirit of place' in the North East of England', in Turgeon, L. (ed.) *Spirit of Place: between tangible and intangible heritage*. Quebec, Canada: Les Presses de l'Universite Laval, 2009, pp.189-204.

Creswell, J. W., and Poth, C. N. (2012) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th edition). Sage publications.

Crooke, E. (2008) 'An Exploration of the Connections among Museums, Community and Heritage', in Graham, B. and Howard, P. (eds.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 415-424.

Crooke, E. (2011) 'Museums and community', in Macdonald, S. (ed.) *A companion to museum studies*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 170-185.

Davis, P. (2007) 'Ecomuseums and sustainability in Italy, Japan and China: concept adaption through implementation', in Knell, S. J., Macleod, S. and Waston, S. (eds.) *Museum Revolutions*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 224-240.

Davis, P. (2008) 'New Museologies and the Ecomuseum', in Graham, B. (ed.) *The Routledge Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*. Routledge: Oxon.

Davis, P. (2011) *Ecomuseums: a sense of place*. A&C Black.

Davis, W. (2014) *The wayfinders: Why ancient wisdom matters in the modern world* (Weihao, G., Trans.). Beijing United Publishing Co.. (Original work published 2009).

Davy, J. W. (2018) 'Miniature dissonance and the museum space: reconsidering communication through miniaturisation', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 24(9), pp. 969-983.

Denscombe, M. (1998) *The Good Research Guide: For small Scale Social Research Projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Denton, K. (2005) 'Museums, memorial sites and exhibitionary culture in the People's Republic of China', *The China Quarterly,* 183(2005), pp. 565–586.

Denton, K. A. (2014) *Exhibiting the past: historical memory and the politics of museums in postsocialist China*. University of Hawaii Press.

Department of Cultural and Tourism of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (2020) '多元協同 整合推動 廣西打造"壯族三月三"文旅大 IP (The collaborative promotion: The creation of "Zhuang *Sanyuesan* Festival" cultural tourism IP)', *Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China*, 03 June. Available at: https://www.mct.gov.cn/gtb/index.jsp?url=https://www.mct.gov.cn/whzx/qgwhxxlb/gx/202006/t20200603_854065.htm (Accessed: 08 July 2020)

Dicks, B. (2003) *Culture on display: The production of contemporary visitability*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Ding, Y.D. (2012) *Cultural relics from ethnic groups in China: History, practice and discourse analysis (民族文物：历史，实践与话语分析)*. Doctoral thesis. Minzu University of China, Beijing. Available at: http://cdmd.cnki.com.cn/Article/CDMD-10052-1012417041.htm (Accessed 24 July 2019)

Duxbury, N. (2015) 'Positioning cultural mapping in local planning and development contexts: an introduction', *Culture and Local Governance*, 5(1-2), pp.1-7.

Economic Daily (2018) '4 月 8 日，新组建的文化和旅游部正式挂牌——文化旅游紧牵手 精神食粮更富有 (4th August, the official establishment of the Department of Culture and Tourism – the convergence of culture and tourism feeds the spiritual world)', *the People's Republic of China's government*. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-04/11/content_5281510.htm (Accessed 20 March 2019)

Ellenbogen, K. M. (2002) 'Museums in Family Life: An Ethnographic Case Study', in Leinhardt, G., Crowley, K., and Knutson, K. (eds.) *Learning conversations in museums.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associate, pp. 81-101.

Erni, C. (eds.) (2008) *The concept of indigenous peoples in Asia: A resource book* (No. 123). IWGIA.

Ethnic Ecomuseums Implementation Project team (2005) '广西民族生态博物馆建设 1+10 工程项目建议书 (Proposal on the construction of Guangxi ethnic ecomuseums "1+10" project)', *the Anthropology Museum of Guangxi*. Internal document.

Evans, H. and Rowlands, M. (2014) 'Reconceptualizing Heritage in China: Museums, Development and the Shifting Dynamics of Power', in Basu, P. and Modest, P. (eds.) *Museums, Heritage and International Development*. Routledge, pp. 282-304.

Falzon, M. A. (ed.) (2009) *Multi-sited ethnography: Theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 87-102.

Fei, X. (1999) *The Pattern of Diversity in Unity of the Chinese Nation*. The Central University of Nationalities Publisher.

Fiskesjö, M. (2015) 'Wa grotesque: Headhunting theme parks and the Chinese nostalgia for primitive contemporaries', *Ethnos*, 80(4), pp. 497-523.

Gao, Z.Y. (1995) '民族文物概论 (Ethnic cultural relics)', *Today's Ethnicity*, 1995(S1), pp. 29-33.

Gidley, B. (ed.) (2012) 'Doing historical and documentary research', in Seale, C. *Researching society and culture.* London: SAGE, pp. 263–282.

Gil, M. (2016) 'Exhibiting the Nation: Indigenousness in Chile's National Museums', *Museum and Society*, 14(1), pp. 82-97.

Glaser, B. G., and Strauss, A. L. (2017) *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge.

Gnecco, C. (2015) 'Heritage in multicultural times', in in Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary heritage research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 263-280.

Golding, V. (2016) *Learning at the museum frontiers: Identity, race and power*. Routledge.

Golding, V., and Modest, W. (eds.) (2013) *Museums and communities: Curators, collections and collaboration*. A&C Black.

Gong, S.Y. (2009) '民族博物馆事业在广西的发展及相关问题的论述 (The Development of *Minzu* Museums in Guangxi and Discussions on Related Issues)', in Qin, P. (ed.) *广西民族博物馆与广西民族生态博物馆"1+10"工程* (*Guangxi Ethnology Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum "1+10 project"*). Nanning: Guangxi Minzu Press, pp.151-158.

Gong, S.Y. (2016) '探索与实践：对广西民族生态博物馆"1+10 工程"的回顾、评价和思考 (Exploration and Practice: Review, Evaluation and Thinking of the "1+10" project of Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseums)', *Journal of Guangxi Ethnography Research*, (2017)1, pp.143-152.

Gorard, S. (2013) *Research Design: Creating Robust Approaches for the social sciences.* London: Sage.

Graham, B., Ashworth, G., and Tunbridge, J. (2000) *A geography of heritage*. Routledge.

Gray, A. (1995) The indigenous movement in Asia, in Barnes, R. H., Gray, A., and Kingsbury, B. (eds.) *Indigenous peoples of Asia*. Assn for Asian Studies Inc, pp. 35-58.

Grognet, A. (2012) 'Science on Display', in Carbonell, B. M. (ed.) *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts.* Blackwell Publishing Ltd, pp. 163-167.

Guan, K. (2015) '内与外：民族区域自治实践的中国语境 (Interior Versus Exterior: The Practice of Ethnic Regional Autonomy Under Chinese Context)', *Journal of Tsinghua University*, 30 (1), pp.16-25.

Guo, L.X. (2006) 天上人间：广西龙胜龙脊考察札记 *(This World in the Heaven: Examination Notes on Zhuang's Culture in Dragon Ridge, Longsheng, Guangxi)*. Nanning: Guangxi People Press.

Gustafsson, J. (2017) 'Single case studies vs. multiple case studies: A comparative study. Academy of Business.', *Engineering and Science, Halmstad University Sweden,* pp. 1-15*.*

Hafstein, V. (2018) *Making intangible heritage: El Condor Pasa and other stories from UNESCO*. Indiana University Press.

Hafstein, V.T. (2009) 'Intangible Heritage as a List: From Masterpieces to Representation', in Smith, L. and Akagawa, N. (eds.) *Intangible Heritage*. London: Routledge, pp.93-11.

Haldrup, M., and Bœrenholdt, J. O. (2015) 'Heritage as performance', in Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary heritage research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 52-68.

Hall, G. H., and Patrinos, H. A. (eds.) (2012) *Indigenous peoples, poverty, and development*. Cambridge University Press.

Hall, S. (eds.) (2013) *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices* (2nd edition). London Thousand Oaks, California: Sage in association with the Open University.

Handapangoda, W. S., Madduma Bandara, Y. H., and Kumara, U. A. (2019) 'Exploring tradition in heritage tourism: the experience of Sri Lanka's traditional mask art', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *25*(4), pp. 415-436.

Harrell, S. (2012) *Ways of being ethnic in Southwest China*. University of Washington Press.

Harrell, S. (ed.) (1995) 'Introduction: civilizing projects and the reaction to them', in *Cultural encounters on China's ethnic frontiers*. University of Washington Press, pp. 3-36.

Harrison, A. K. (2014) 'Ethnography', in Leavy, P. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harrison, R. (2013b) 'Reassembling ethnographic museum collections', in Harrison, R., Byrne, S. and Clarke, A. (eds.) *Reassembling the Collection: Ethnographic Museums and Indigenous Agency.* Santa Fe: SAR Press, pp. 3-36.

Harrison, R. (2013c) 'Assembling and Governing Cultures 'At Risk': Centers of Collection and Calculation, from the Museum to World Heritage', in Harrison, R., Byrne, S. and Clarke, A. (eds.) *Reassembling the Collection: Ethnographic Museums and Indigenous Agency.* Santa Fe: SAR Press, pp. 89-114.

Harrison, R. (ed.) (2013a) 'Critical heritage studies and the discursive turn', in *Heritage: Critical approaches*. Routledge, pp. 95-114.

Harrison, R. and Rose, D. (2010) 'Intangible Heritage', in Benton, T. (ed.) *Understanding heritage and memory*. New York: Manchester University Press, pp.238-276.

Harvey, David (2001) 'Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: Temporality, Meaning and the Scope of Heritage Studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 7(4), pp. 319-338.

Heberer, T. (2017) *China and Its National Minorities: Autonomy or Assimilation: Autonomy or Assimilation*. Routledge.

Herzfeld, M. (2004) *The body impolitic: artisans and artifice in the global hierarchy of value*. University of Chicago Press.

Holm, G. (2014) Photography as a research method, in Leavy, P. (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 380–402.

Holtorf, C., and Fairclough, G. (2013) 'The New Heritage and re-shapings of the past', in González-Ruibal, A. (ed.) *Reclaiming archaeology: beyond the tropes of modernity*. Routledge, pp. 197-210.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1992) *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. Routledge.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2000) *Museums and the interpretation of visual culture*. Routledge.

Isaac, G. (2005) 'Mediating knowledges: Zuni negotiations for a culturally relevant museum', *Museum Anthropology*, 28(1), pp. 3-18.

Jeffrey, B., & Troman, G. (2004) 'Time for ethnography', *British educational research journal*, *30*(4), pp. 535-548.

Jin, L. (2012) '探寻生态博物馆之根——论生态博物馆的产生、发展和在中国的实践 (The Theoretic Roots of Ecomuseums – the Birth, Development and Practice of Ecomuseums in China)', *Ecological Economy*, 2012 (9), pp. 180-185.

Kaeppler, A. (1992) 'Ali'I and Maka'ainana: The representation of Hawaiians in Museums at Home and Abroad', in Karp, I., Mullen-Kreamer, C., and Lavine, S. (eds) *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp. 458-475.

Kahn, J. S. (1995) *Culture, multiculture, postculture*. London: Sage

Karp, I. (1991) 'Culture and representation', in Lavine, S. D., and Karp, I. (eds.) *Exhibiting cultures: The poetics and politics of museum display*. Smithsonian Institution Press: pp. 11-24.

Kiddey, R. (2018). From the ground up: cultural heritage practices as tools for empowerment in the Homeless Heritage project. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 24(7), 694-708.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1998) *Destination culture: Tourism, museums, and heritage*. University of California Press.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (2014) 'Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production', *Museum International*, 66(1-4), pp. 163-174.

Kishenblatt -Gimblett, B. (2004) 'From ethnology to heritage: the role of the museum', *SIEF Keynote, Marseilles*, 28 April. Available at: http://www.michaelfehr.net/Museum/Texte/SIEF.pdf (Accessed: 07 October 2019)

Klarich, E. A. (2014) 'Crafting, Community, and Collaboration: Reflections on the Ethnographic Sala Project at the Pukara Lithic Museum, Peru', *Museum Anthropology*, 37(2), pp. 118-132.

Kolås, Å. (2004) 'Tourism and the making of place in Shangri-La', *Tourism Geographies*, *6*(3), pp. 262-278.

Kramer, J. (2015) 'Möbius Museology: Curating and Critiquing the Multiversity Galleries at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia', in Macdonald, S., Leahy, H. R., Witcomb, A., McCarthy, C., Henning, M., Coombes, A. E., and Phillips, R. B. (eds.) *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 489-510.

Kratz, C. A., and Karp, I. (2006) 'Introduction: Museum frictions: Public cultures/global transformations', in Karp, I., Kratz, C. A., Szwaja, L., and Ybarra-Frausto, T. (eds.) *Museum frictions: Public cultures/global transformations*. Duke University Press, pp. 1-31.

Kreps, C. (2003) *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural perspectives on museums, curation and heritage preservation*. London: Routledge.

Kreps, C. (2008) 'Appropriate museology in theory and practice', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 23(1), pp. 23-41.

Kreps, C. (2009) 'Indigenous curation, museums, and intangible cultural heritage', in Smith, L. and Akagawa, N. (eds.) *Intangible Heritage*. London: Routledge, pp. 193-208.

Kreps, C. (2011) 'Non-Western Models of Museums and Curations in Cross-cultural Perspective', in Macdonald, S. (ed.) *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 457-472.

Kreps, C. (2015) 'Appropriate museology and the "new museum ethics". Honoring diversity.' *Nordisk Museologi*, 2015(2), pp. 4-16.

Kryder-Reid, E., Foutz, J. W., Wood, E., and Zimmerman, L. J. (2018) ''I just don't ever use that word': investigating stakeholders' understanding of heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *24*(7), pp. 743-763.

Kumar, R. (2005) *Research Methodology: A step-by-step Guide for Beginners* (2nd edition). London: Sage.

Labadi, S. and Gould, G.G. (2015) 'Sustainable Development: Heritage, Community, Economics', in Meskell, L. (ed.) *Global heritage: A reader*. US: John Wiley and Son, pp. 196-216.

Lähdesmäki, T., Zhu, Y., and Thomas, S. E. (eds.) (2019) 'Introduction: Heritage and Scale', in *Politics of Scale: New Approaches to Critical Heritage Studies.* Berghahn Books, pp. 1-18.

Lai, H. (2016) 'Ethnic autonomous regions and the unitary multi-ethnic nation-state', in Zang, X. (ed.) *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 138–164.

Lai, X.F. (2013) 龙脊壮族生态博物馆的民族志研究 *(The ethnographic study of the Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum)*. Master dissertation. Minzu University of China, Beijing. Available at: http://cdmd.cnki.com.cn/Article/CDMD-10052-1013316987.htm (Accessed: 23 May 2018)

Lei, H.J. and Pan, S.Y. (2012) '民族地区博物馆发展的历史与现状评述 (A Study on the History and Current Situation of Museum Development in China's Minority Regions)', *Southeast Culture*, 2012 (4), pp. 10-14.

Leibold, J. (2016) 'Preferential policies for ethnic minorities in China', in Zang, X. (ed.) *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 165-188.

Levi, J. M., and Maybury-Lewis, B. (2012) 'Becoming indigenous: Identity and heterogeneity in a global movement', in Hall, G. H., and Patrinos, H. A. (eds.) *Indigenous peoples, poverty, and development*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 73-116.

Liang, Z.M. (2009) '试谈民族文物的界定，分类与定级 ——以广西民族博物馆馆藏民族文物相关探索情况为例 (The definition, classification and grading of ethnic cultural relics——Taking the exploration of ethnic cultural relics in Guangxi National Museum as an example)', in Qin, P. (ed.) *广西民族博物馆与广西民族生态博物馆"1+10"工程* (*Guangxi Ethnology Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum "1+10 project"*). Nanning: Guangxi Minzu Press, pp.140-150.

Liang, X.Y. (2017) '广西民族志影展的定位与发展 (Function Orientation and Development Policy in Guangxi Ethnographic Film Festival)', *Museum*, 2017(4), p.42-50.

Lidchi, H. (2013) 'The Poetics and The Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures', in Hall, S. (ed.) *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices* (2nd edition). London Thousand Oaks, California: Sage in association with the Open University.

Light, D. (2001) ''Facing the future': Tourism and identity-building in post-socialist Romania', *Political geography*, *20*(8), pp. 1053-1074.

Light, D. (2015) 'Heritage and tourism', in in Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary heritage research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 144-158.

Lonetree, A. (2012) *Decolonizing museums: Representing Native America in national and tribal museums*. University of North Carolina Press.

Lord, B. (2006) 'Foucault's museum: difference, representation, and genealogy', *Museum and society*, 4(1), pp. 1-14.

Louise, P. M. (1992) *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lu, T. L. D. (2014) *Museums in China: Power, politics and identities*. Routledge.

Ludwig, C. and Walton, L. (2020) 'Introduction: (Un) Authorised Heritage Discourse and Practice in China', in Ludwig, C., Wang, Y., and Walton, L. (eds.) *The Heritage Turn in China: The Reinvention, Dissemination and Consumption of Heritage*. Amsterdam University Press, pp. 15-35.

Ma, J. (2016) 'Ethnic minorities in southwest China', in Zang, X. (ed.) *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 20-36.

Maags, C. (2018) 'Creating a Race to the Top: Hierarchies and Competition within the Chinese ICH Transmitters System', in Maags C. and Svensson M. (eds.) *Chinese Heritage in the Making: Experiences, Negotiations and Contestations*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 121-144.

Maags, C. (2019) 'Struggles of recognition: adverse effects of China's living human treasures program', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *25*(8), pp. 780-795.

Maags, C. (2020) 'Disseminating the policy narrative of 'Heritage under threat' in China', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, *26*(3), pp. 273-290.

Maags, C., and Svensson, M. (eds.) (2018) *Chinese Heritage in the Making: Experiences, Negotiations and Contestations*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

MacDonald, G. F., and Alsford, S. (2007) 'Canadian museums and the representation of culture in a multicultural nation', in Watson (ed.) *Museums and their communities*. Routledge, pp. 276-291.

Macdonald, S. (2002) *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*. Oxford; New York: Berg.

MacDonald, S. (ed.) (2011) *A companion to museum studies*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

MacDonald, S., Gerbich, C., and von Oswald, M. (2018) 'No Museum is an Island: Ethnography beyond Methodological Containerism', *Museum and Society*, 16(2), pp. 138-156.

MacDowell, M. and Zhang, L.J. (2016) 中国西南拼布 (*Quilts of Southwest China)*. Nanning: Guangxi People's Publishing.

Mackerras, C. (2003) *China's ethnic minorities and globalisation*. Routledge.

Madsen, R. (2014) 'From socialist ideology to cultural heritage: the changing basis of legitimacy in the People's Republic of China', *Anthropology & medicine*, *21*(1), pp. 58-70.

Marcus, G. E. (1995) Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual review of anthropology*, *24*(1), pp. 95-117.

Marstine, J. (2005) *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*. USA: Malden.

Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. London: Sage.

Mason, R. (2011) 'Cultural Theory and Museum Studies', in Macdonald, S. (ed.) *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

Matsuda, A. and Mengoni, L.E. (2016) *Reconsidering Cultural Heritage in East Asia*. Ubiquity Press.

Maurer-Fazio, M., and Hasmath, R. (2015) The contemporary ethnic minority in China: An introduction. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *56*(1), pp. 1-7.

McCarthy, C. (2016) Theorising museum practice through practice theory. *The Routledge International Handbook of Intercultural Arts Research*. Oxon; New York: Routledge, pp. 24-34.

McCarthy, C. (2018) 'Indigenisation: Reconceptualising museology', in Knell, S. (ed.) *The Contemporary Museum: Shaping Museums for the Global Now*. Routledge, pp. 37-54.

McCarthy, C. (eds.) (2015) 'Grounding Museum Studies: Introducing Practice', in Macdonald, S., Leahy, H. R., Witcomb, A., McCarthy, C., Henning, M., Coombes, A. E., and Phillips, R. B. (eds.) *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies*. Wiley Blackwell, pp. xxxv-lii.

Men, F.Y. (2006) '民族文物保护现状及其对策 (The protection of ethnic cultural relics and strategies)', *Chinese Museum*, 2006(2), pp.3-8.

Merlan, F. (2009) 'Indigeneity: Global and local', *Current anthropology*, 50(3), pp. 303-333.

Message, K. (2005) 'Representing cultural diversity in a global context: The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and The National Museum of Australia', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8(4), pp. 465-485.

Minore, M. (2011) 'Narrative Museum, Museum of Voices', in Fritsch, J. (ed.) *Museum Gallery Interpretation and Material Culture*. New York; Oxon: Routledge, pp. 136-p.152.

Mo, Z.D. (2009) '理想与现实：生态博物馆实践在中国 (Ideal and Reality: Ecomuseum practices in China)', in Qin, P. (ed.) 广西民族博物馆与广西民族生态博物馆"1+10"工程 (*Guangxi Ethnology Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum "1+10 project"*). Nanning: Guangxi Minzu Press, pp. 14-19.

Mo, Z.D. (2015) '广西民族生态博物馆 1+10 工程探索之路 (The exploration of the Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum '1+10 project')', *China Cultural Heritage*, 2015 (1), pp.32-39.

Morse, N., Rex, B., and Richardson, S. (2018) 'Special Issue Editorial: Methodologies for Researching the Museum as Organization', *Museum and Society*, 16(2), pp. 112-123.

Mullaney, T. (2011) *Coming to terms with the nation: Ethnic classification in modern China* (Vol. 18). University of California Press.

Naguib, S. A. (2013) 'Museums, diasporas and the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage', *Sustainability*, *5*(5), pp. 2178-2190.

Neuman, W. L. (2013) *Social Research Methods: Pearson New International Edition* (7th edition). Rugby: Pearson Education Limited.

Nitzky, W. (2012) 'Ecomuseums with Chinese Characteristics: the politics of safeguarding living heritage', in Lira, S., Amoeda, R., Pinheiro, C., Davis, P., Stefano, M. and Corsane, G. (eds.) *Proceedings of Ecomuseums 2012 - 1st International Conference on Ecomuseums, Community Museums and Living Communities*. Green Lines Institute for Sustainable Development, pp. 259-270.

Nitzky, W. (2014) *Entanglements of "Living Heritage": Ecomuseum Development in Rural China.* Doctoral thesis. Arizona State University. Available at: https://repository.asu.edu/attachments/137355/content/Nitzky_asu_0010E_14235.pdf (Accessed: 21 March 2019)

Nong, X.J. (2009) '对广西民族生态博物馆模式和可持续发展的探讨 (The exploration of Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum Model and Its Sustainable Development)', in Qin, P. (ed.) *广西民族博物馆与广西民族生态博物馆 "1+10" 工程* (*Guangxi Ethnology Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum "1+10 project"*). Nanning: Guangxi Minzu Press, pp.20-28.

O'Brien, D., and Brown, M. S. (2020) ''*Ethnic Heritage' on the New Frontier'*, in Ludwig, C., Wang, Y., and Walton, L. (eds.) *The Heritage Turn in China: The Reinvention, Dissemination and Consumption of Heritage*. Amsterdam University Press, pp. 277-296.

Oakes, T. (1997) 'Ethnic Tourism in Rural Guizhou; sense of place and the commerce of authenticity', in Picard, M. and Wood, R. (eds.) *Tourism, Ethnicity, and the State in Asian and Pacific Societies*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp.35-70.

Oakes, T. (2009) 'Resourcing culture: is a prosaic 'third space' possible in rural China?', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27(6), pp. 1074-1090.

Oakes, T. (2013) 'Heritage as Improvement: Cultural Display and Contested Governance in Rural China', *Modern China*, 39 (4), pp.380-407.

Oakes, T. (2016) 'Villagizing the city: Turning rural ethnic heritage into urban modernity in southwest China', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *22*(10), pp. 751-765.

Oakes, T., and Sutton, D. S. (eds.) (2010) 'Introduction', in *Faiths on display: religion, tourism, and the Chinese state*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp. 1-26.

Ogino, M. (2016) 'Considering undercurrents in Japanese cultural heritage management: the logic of actualisation and the preservation of the present', in Matsuda, A and Mengoni, L.E. (eds.) Reconsidering Cultural Heritage in East Asia. Ubiquity Press, pp. 15-30.

Onciul, B. (2013) 'Community Engagement, Curatorial Practice, and Museum Ethos in Alberta, Canada', in Golding, V. and Modest, W. (eds.) *Museums and Communities: Curators, Collections and Collaboration*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, pp.79-97.

Onciul, B. (2015) *Museums, heritage and Indigenous voice: Decolonizing engagement*. Routledge.

Pagani, C. (2017) 'Exposing the Predator, Recognising the Prey: New institutional strategies for a reflexive museology', *ICOFOM Study Series*, 2017 (45), pp. 71-83.

Pan, S. (2011) '生态博物馆及其在中国的发展：历时性观察与思考 (The development of ecomuseums in China)', *Chinese Museum*, 2011(01), pp. 24-33.

Pendlebury, J. (2013) 'Conservation values, the authorised heritage discourse and the conservation-planning assemblage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *19*(7), pp. 709-727.

Phellas, C.N., Bloch, A., and Seale, C. (2012) 'Structured methods: interviews, questionnaires and observation', in Seale, C. (eds.) *Researching Society and Culture*. London: SAGE, pp. 181-205.

Phillips, R. B. (2011) *Museum pieces: Toward the indigenization of Canadian museums*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Phillips, R.B. (2002) 'Where is "Africa"? Re-Viewing Art and Artifact in the Age of Globalization', *American Anthropologist*, 104(3), pp. 944-952.

Phillips, R.B. (2007) 'Exhibiting Africa after Modernism: Globalization, Pluralism, and the Persistent Paradigms of Art and Artefact', in G. Pollock and J. Zemans (eds.) *Museums After Modernism: Strategies of Engagement*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 80-103.

Pieterse, J. N. (2005) 'Multiculturalism and museums: discourse about others in the age of globalization', in Corsane, G. (eds.) H*eritage, Museums, And Galleries: An introductory Reader*. Oxon: Roultledge, pp. 123-146.

Pomian, K. (1994) 'The collection: between the visible and the invisible', in Pearce, S. (eds.) *Interpreting objects and collections*. London: Routledge, pp.160-174.

Poria, Y., and Ashworth, G. (2009) 'Heritage tourism—Current resource for conflict', *Annals of tourism research*, *36*(3), pp. 522-525.

Qin, P. (eds.) (2009) '保护与传承少数民族文化的时代使命——广西民族生态博物馆"1+10 工程"建设实践 (The task of Protecting and Inheritance of Ethnic Minority Culture: Realizing the Development of the Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum '1+10 project')', in *广西民族 博物馆与广西民族生态博物馆"1+10"工程* (*Guangxi Ethnology Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum "1+10 project"*). Nanning: Guangxi Minzu Press, pp. 3-13.

Quinn, M. (2017) 'Intercultural Museum Practice: An Analysis of the Belonging Project in Northern Ireland', in Antos, Z., Fromm, A. B., and Golding, V. (eds.) *Museums and Innovations*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp.18-29.

Radcliffe, S. A. (2017) 'Geography and indigeneity I: Indigeneity, coloniality and knowledge', *Progress in Human Geography*, *41*(2), pp. 220-229.

Radcliffe, S. A., and Laurie, N. (2006) 'Culture and development: taking culture seriously in development for Andean indigenous people', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *24*(2), pp. 231-248.

Robson, C. (2002) *Real world research* (2nd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.

Rowlands, M. (2002) 'Cultural Heritage and Cultural Property', in Buchli, V. (ed.) *The Material Culture Reader. Oxford: Berg*, pp. 105-133.

Salazar, N. B. (2009) 'Imaged or imagined? Cultural representations and the "tourismification" of peoples and places', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, *49*(193-194), pp. 49-71.

Salazar, N. B. (2012) 'Community-based cultural tourism: issues, threats and opportunities', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *20*(1), pp. 9-22.

Schein, L. (1997) 'Gender and internal orientalism in China', *Modern China*, *23*(1), pp. 69-98.

Schein, L. and Yu, L. (2016) 'Representations of Chinese minorities', in Zang, X. (ed.) *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 263-290.

Schorch, P., and Hakiwai, A. (2014) 'Mana Taonga and the public sphere: A dialogue between Indigenous practice and Western theory', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *17*(2), pp. 191-205.

Schramm, K. (2015) 'Heritage, power and ideology', in Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary heritage research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 442-457.

Scott, M. K. (2012) 'Engaging With Pasts in The Present: Curators, Communities, and Exhibition Practice', *Museum Anthropology*, 35(1), pp. 1-9.

Seale, C. (2012) (eds.) 'Generating grounded theory', in *Researching Society and Culture*. London: SAGE, pp. 393-404.

Shelton, A. A. (2011) 'Museums and anthropologies: practices and narratives', in Watson (ed.) *A companion to museum studies*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 64-80.

Shelton, A. A. (2013) 'Critical Museuology: A Manifesto', *Museum Worlds: Advanced in Research*, 1(2013), pp.7-23

Shepherd, R. (2006) 'UNESCO and the politics of cultural heritage in Tibet', *Journal of contemporary Asia*, *36*(2), pp. 243-257.

Shepherd, R. (2009) 'Cultural Heritage, UNESCO, and the Chinese State: Whose Heritage and for Whom?' *Heritage Management*, *2*(1), pp. 55-79.

Shepherd, R. J., and Yu, L. (2013) *Heritage management, tourism, and governance in China: Managing the past to serve the present*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Shi, J. (2006) 民族博物馆学教程 *(The Handbook of Minzu Museums)*. Beijing: The Central University of Nationalities Publisher.

Shih, C. Y. (2002) *Negotiating ethnicity in China: Citizenship as a response to the state*. Routledge.

Silva, L. (2013) 'The Two Opposing Impacts of Heritage Making on Local Communities: Residents' Perceptions: a Portuguese Case', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20(6), pp. 1–18.

Silverman, D. (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. London: Sage

Silverman, H. (2015) 'Heritage and authenticity', in Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary heritage research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 69-88

Silverman, H., and Blumenfield, T. (eds.) (2013) 'Cultural heritage politics in China: An introduction', in *Cultural heritage politics in China*. New York: Springer, pp. 3-22.

Silverman, L. H. (2009) *The social work of museums*. Routledge.

Silverman, R. (ed.) (2015) *Museum as process: translating local and global knowledges*. Routledge.

Simons, H. (2009) *Case Study Research in Practice*. London: Sage.

Simpson, M. (2001) *Making representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era*. London: Routledge.

Smith, L. (2006) *Uses of Heritage*. Oxon: Routledge.

Smith, L. (2015a) 'Theorizing museum and heritage visiting', in Macdonald, S., Leahy, H. R., Witcomb, A., McCarthy, C., Henning, M., Coombes, A. E., and Phillips, R. B. (eds.) *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 459-484.

Smith, L. (2015b) 'Intangible Heritage: A challenge to the Authorised Heritage Discourse?' *Revista D'etnologia De Catalunya*, 2015 (40), pp. 133-142.

Smith, L. and Waterton, E. (2009) *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology* (Duckworth Debates in Archaeology). London: Duckworth.

Song, C. (2010) '普通博物馆与民族博物馆概念之辨析 (The conceptual distinction between the general museum and the *minzu* museum)', *Heilongjiang minzu Journal*, 2010 (5), pp.131-141.

Song, S.H. (2004) '从民族学视角论中国民族文物及其保护与抢救 (Protection & Salvages: A Study on Ethnic Cultural Relics from Ethnology)', Journal of the Central University for Nationalities, 31(4), pp. 36-41.

Stake, R. E. (1995) *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Stanley, N. (ed.) (2008) *The future of indigenous museums: Perspectives from the Southwest Pacific*. Berghahn Books.

State Council (2005a) 关于加强文化遗产保护工作的通知 *(The Notice on Enhancing Cultural Heritage Protection Work)*. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2006/content_185117.htm (Accessed: 21 December 2017)

State Council (2005b) 国务院办公厅关于加强我国非物质文化遗产保护工作的意见 (*Proposal on Enhancing the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*). Available at: http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2005/content_63227.htm (Accessed: 21 December 2017)

State Council (2014) 国务院关于第四批国家级非物质文化遗产代表性项目名录的通知 *(The Notice on the fourth batch of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China)*. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2014-12/03/content_9286.htm (Accessed: 08 June 2019)

State Council (2015) 博物馆条例 *(Museum Regulations)*. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2015-03/02/content_9508.htm (Accessed: 21 December 2017)

State Council (2016) 国务院关于进一步加强文物工作的指导意见 *(Proposal on Further Enhancing Cultural Heritage Protection Work)*. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-03/08/content_5050721.htm (Accessed: 21 December 2017)

State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (SCIOPRC) (2009) *Ethnic policies in China and the prosperous development of all nationalities*. Available at: http://www.neac.gov.cn/seac/xwzx/200909/1010516.shtml (Accessed: 21 December 2017)

Stefano, M.L. (2017) 'At the community level: Intangible Cultural Heritage as Naturally-occurring Ecomuseums', in Onciul, B.; Stefano, M.L. and Hawke, S. (eds.) *Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.

Stokes-Rees, E. (2013) 'Making sense of A Melange: Representing Cultural Citizenship in Singapore's Asian Civilization Museum', *Museum Anthropology*, 36(1), pp. 33-50.

Strauss, A., and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of qualitative research techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Su, D.H. (1996) '"文化大革命"时期的中国博物馆(1966 年-1976 年) (Chinese museums during the "Cultural Revolution" period (1966-1976))', *Chinese Museum*, 1996 (3), pp. 88-94.

Su, D.H. (2005) '建立与巩固：中国生态博物馆发展的思考 (Establishment and Consolidation—The thinking of the Development of Chinese Ecomuseums)', *Chinese Museum*, 2005(3).

Su, D.H. (2008) '生态博物馆的思想及中国的行动 (The Concept of the Ecomuseum and its Practice in China)', *Museum International*, 60(1-2), p.29.

Su, D.H., Mao, Y. and Gong, Q. (2012) '博物馆理论研究与博物馆发展方向——苏东海先生专访 (Theoretical Studies and the Developing Direction of Museums: An Interview with Mr. Su Dong-hai)', *Southeast Culture*, 2012 (1), pp. 19-26.

Su, J. (2018) 'Conceptualising the subjective authenticity of intangible cultural heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *24*(9), pp. 919-937.

Su, X. (2011) 'Heritage production and urban locational policy in Lijiang, China', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *35*(6), pp. 1118-1132.

Su, X., and Teo, P. (2009) *The politics of heritage tourism in China: A view from Lijiang*. Routledge.

Svensson, M. (2003) 'Museums and Historic Buildings as Sites for Patriotic Education in the People's Republic of China', *Association of Asian Studies,* New York, pp. 27-30.

Svensson, M., and Maags, C. (2018) '*Mapping the Chinese Heritage Regime: Ruptures, Governmentality, and Agency', in Svensson M. and Maags C. (eds.) *Chinese Heritage in the*

Making: Experiences, Negotiations and Contestations. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. *11-38*.

Tan, Chee-Beng (2016) '中国、民族与国民团结 (Ethnicity, National Unity and China)', *Tsinghua University Journal*, 31(1), pp. 64-72.

Tang, L. (2007) '中国民族博物馆历史回顾与现状分析 (Historical Retrospect and Analysis of Status Quo of the Chinese National Museum of Ethnology)', *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 27(6).

Tapp, N. (2008) 'Romanticism in China?–Its Implications for Minority Images and Aspirations', *Asian Studies Review*, 32(4), pp. 457-474.

Taylor, K. (2013) 'Cultural mapping: Intangible values and engaging with communities with some reference to Asia', *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice*, 4(1), pp. 50-61.

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2014) *2014 广西民族志影展影像文库 (2014 Ethnographic Films Festival)*. Guangxi People's Publishing.

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2016) *广西民族生态博物馆 2016"文化记忆工程"工作规范 (Work Regulations of "Cultural Memory Project" in Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseums)*. Internal document.

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2017a) *Report for the evaluation of Level one National Museums: Part one Management and Facilities (1).* Internal document.

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2017b) *Report for the evaluation of Level one National Museums: Part two Collection Management and Scientific Research (1).* Internal document.

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2017c) *Report for the evaluation of Level one National Museums: Part three Exhibitions and Public service (2).* Internal document.

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2017d) *Report for the evaluation of Level one National Museums: Part four Educational activities and Volunteers.* Internal document.

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2020a) *Introduction*. Available at: http://www.amgx.org/news-8335.html (Accessed: 21 October 2020)

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2020b) *2020 广西民族志影展暨非遗影像 (2020 Guangxi Ethnographic Film Festival and Intangible Cultural Heritage Videos)*. Available at: http://www.amgx.org/news-8692.html (Accessed: 10 December 2020)

The Anthropology Museum of Guangxi (AMGX) (2020c) *The donation of silk ball*. Available at: http://www.amgx.org/news-8497.html (Accessed: 16 June 2020)

The Chinese National Museum of Ethnology (2018a) *Tradition @ Present: Timeless Style of Chinese Ethnic Attire: The trip to the South China.* Available at: *https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/XRqqCZpmJ0Sj7bqItBz8eQ* (Accessed: 18 June 2020)

The Chinese National Museum of Ethnology (2018b) *The seminar of 'Tradition @ Present: Timeless Style of Chinese Ethnic Attire'*. Available at: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-WRyhhMhfmg3yJqjagMnEw (Accessed: 18 June 2020)

The Chinese National Museum of Ethnology (2018c) *The Notice on 2020 Young Curators Project*. Available at: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/ERW2KTmQykq_-ajeXr5CJg (Accessed: 18 June 2020)

The Compiling Committee of the Provincial Gazetteer of Guangxi (2020) *Ethnicity*. Available at: http://www.gxzf.gov.cn/mlgxi/gxrw/ftrq/t1003601.shtml (Accessed: 14 May 2020)

The Longji Terraced Scenic Area Administration Bureau (2015) '龙脊风景名胜区三大景区重点村寨详细规划 (The tourism development outline of the Longji Terraced Scenic Area)', *Guiling Academy of Urban Planning and Design*. Internal document.

The Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE) (2008) *(龙胜)龙脊壮族生态博物馆项目建设规划详细方案 (The construction plan of the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum)*. Internal document.

The Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE) (2011) '广西龙胜龙脊壮族生态博物馆建设示范点评估报告 (The assessment report of constructing the Guangxi Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum as the "National Ecomuseum Model Site")', *the Cultural Bureau of the Longsheng County*. Internal document.

The Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum (LLZE) (2018) *龙胜龙脊壮族生态博物馆"十三五"期间（2016—2018 年）各项事业完成情况汇报 (2016-2018 Work Report of the Longsheng Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum)*. Internal document.

The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (NPC) (2017) *Report of Cultural Heritage Work Progress (国务院关于文化遗产工作情况的报告).* Available at: http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/xinwen/2017-12/23/content_2034497.htm (Accessed: 21 December 2017)

Thrift, N. (2008) *Non-representational theory: Space, politics, affect*. Routledge.

Tolia-Kelly, D. P., Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (eds.) (2016) *Heritage, affect and emotion: politics, practices and infrastructures*. Routledge.

Tsing, A. (2005) *Friction: an ethnography of global connection*. Princeton University Press.

Tucker, E. (2014) 'Museum Studies', in Leavy, P. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 341-356.

Tunbridge, J. (2017) 'Interview – Jonh Tunbridge', in Onciul, B.; Stefano, M.L. and Hawke, S. (eds.) *Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, pp. 47-50.

Tunbridge, J. E., and Ashworth, G. J. (1996) *Dissonant heritage: The management of the past as a resource in conflict*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Urry, J., & Larsen, J. (2011) *The tourist gaze 3.0*. Sage.

Varine, D.H. (2006) 'Ecomuseology and Sustainable Development', *Museums & Social Issues*, 1(2), pp. 225-231.

Varutti, M. (2011) 'Miniatures of the nation: ethnic minority figurines, mannequins and dioramas in Chinese museums', *museum and society*, 9(1), pp. 1-16.

Varutti, M. (2012) 'Standardising difference: The materiality of ethnic minorities in the museums of the People's Republic of China', in Dudley, S., Barnes, A. J., Binnie, J., Petrov, J., and Walklate, J. (eds.) *The Thing about Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation*. Oxon, New York: Routledge, pp. 297-309.

Varutti, M. (2014) *Museums in China: The Politics of Representation after Mao*. Boydell & Brewer.

Vergo, P. (ed.) (1997) *New museology*. Reaktion books.

Vickers, E. (2007) 'Museums and nationalism in contemporary China', *Compare*, *37*(3), pp. 365-382.

Wallerstein, I. (1990) 'Culture as the ideological battleground of the modern world-system. *Theory', culture & society*, *7*(2-3), pp. 31-55.

Walsh, D. (2012) 'Doing ethnography', in Seale, C. (eds.) *Researching Society and Culture*. London: SAGE, pp. 245-262.

Wang, C. (2017) 'Heritage as Theatre: Reconceptualizing Heritage-Making in Urban China', *China Information*, 31(2), pp. 195–215.

Wang, S.L. and Rowlands, M. (2017) 'Making and Unmaking Heritage Value in China', in Anderson, J. and Geismar, H. (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Cultural Property*. Oxon: Routledge.

Waterton, E., and Smith, L. (2010) 'The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *16*(1-2), pp. 4-15.

Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (2013) 'Framing theory: Towards a critical imagination in heritage studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 19(6), pp. 546-561.

Watson, S. (2018) 'Introduction to Part II', in Watson, S., Barnes, A. J., and Bunning, K. (eds.) *A Museum Studies Approach to Heritage*. Routledge, pp. 185-188.

Watson, S. (ed.) (2007). *Museums and their Communities*. Routledge.

Watson, S., Barnes, A. J., and Bunning, K. (eds.) (2018) 'Introduction', in *A Museum Studies Approach to Heritage*. Routledge, pp. 1-6.

Wei, Z.Q. (2010) 'Ecomuseum: a symbol of cultural otherness', *Journal of Guangxi Normal University for Nationalities*, 27 (4), pp.17-20.

Winter, T. (2013) 'Clarifying the Critical in Critical Heritage Studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 19(6), pp. 532-545.

Winter, T., and Waterton, E. (2013) 'Critical heritage studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *19*(6), pp. 529-531.

Witcomb, A. (2007) ''A Place for All of Us?'Museums and Communities', in Watson (ed.) *Museums and their communities*. Routledge, pp. 133-156.

Witcomb, A. (2015) 'Think about others through museum and heritage', in Waterton, E. and Waston, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary heritage research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.130-143.

Woodward, K. (2002) 'Concepts of identity and difference', in K. Woodward (ed.) *Identity and Difference*. London: Open University Press, Sage, pp. 7-50.

Wu, W.F. (2007) '从民族生态博物馆看广西民族文化的保护与传承 (The Protecting and Passing of Ethnic Cultural Resources in Guangxi)', *Journal of Guangxi Ethnography Research,* 2007(2), pp.199-205.

Wu, W.B. and Lu, W.D. (2009) '广西民族生态博物馆建设研究报告（2006 年） (Research Report on the Construction of Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum)', in Qin, P. (ed.) *广西民族博物馆与广西民族生态博物馆"1+10"工程 (Guangxi Ethnology Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Ecomuseum "1+10 project")*. Nanning: Guangxi Minzu Press, pp.29-35.

Wu, Z. L. (1985) 'The distinction between minzu museums and museum of ethnology', *Minzu Collection,* 1985(4), pp.26-28.

Wu, Z., and Hou, S. (2015) 'Heritage and discourse', in Waterton, E., and Watson, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary heritage research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 37-51.

Xie, F. and Mai, X. (2015) 'Power Relations in the Ecomuseum Tourism and Community Development: Analysis and Evaluation of Guangxi Longji Zhuang Ecomuseum', *Southwest Ethnology Study*, 2015(2), pp.165-171.

Yang, F (2016) 'Ethnic heritage in Yunnan: contradictions and challenges', in Matsuda, A and Mengoni, L. E. (eds.) *Reconsidering Cultural Heritage in East Asia*. London: Ubiquity Press, pp. 87–102.

Ye, J. (2009) '民族博物馆与非物质文化遗产保护——以广西民族博物馆为例 (Ethnographic museums and the protection of intangible cultural heritage with specific reference to Guangxi ethnographic museum)', *Journal of Guangxi Institute of Socialism*, 20(02), pp.65-68.

Yelvington, K. A., Goslin, N. G., and Arriaga, W. (2002) 'Whose history? Museum-making and struggles over ethnicity and representation in the Sunbelt', *Critique of anthropology*, *22*(3), pp. 343-379.

Yin, K. (2017) 'The Representation of Ethnic Minorities: Early Practice of Chinese Eco-museum Activities', *Museum,* pp. 063-068.

Yin, K. (2019) *Ecomuseum: Thought, Theory and Practice*. Chinese Science Publishing.

Yin. R. K. (2014) *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (5th edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yoshida, K. (2004) 'The Museum and the Intangible Cultural Heritage', *Museum International,* 56 (1-2), pp.108-112.

Zang, X. (ed.) (2016) 'Introduction: who are ethnic minorities and how well do they do in China?', in *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp.1-19.

Zhong, J.W. (2008) '中国民族地区生态博物馆研究 (The research on ecomuseums in the ethnic minority areas of China)'. Doctoral thesis. Fudan University, Shanghai, China. Available at: http://cdmd.cnki.com.cn/Article/CDMD-10246-2009019469.htm (Accessed: 16 August 2017)

Zhou, M. (2016) 'Nation-state building and multiculturalism in China', in Zang, X. (ed.) *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 111-137.

Zhu, J. (2020) *Visualising ethnicity in the Southwest Borderlands: gender and representation in Late Imperial and Republican China*. Brill.

Zhu, Y. (2012) 'Performing heritage: Rethinking authenticity in tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, *39*(3), pp. 1495-1513.

Zhu, Y. (2015) 'Cultural effects of authenticity: Contested heritage practices in China', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *21*(6), pp. 594-608.

Zhu, Y. (2018) *Heritage and romantic consumption in China*. Amsterdam University Press.

Zhu, Y. (2019) 'Politics of scale: Cultural heritage in China', in Lähdesmäki, T., Zhu, Y., and Thomas, S. E. (eds.) *Politics of Scale: New Approaches to Critical Heritage Studies.* Berghahn Books, pp. 21-35.

Zhu, Y. and Maags, C. (2020) *Heritage Politics in China*. London: Routledge.

Zittlau, A. (2011) 'Dreamlands of culture: Ethnographic dioramas and their prospects', in Jobs, S., and Mackenthun, G. (eds.) Embodiments of Cultural Encounters. Waxmann Verlag, pp. 161-180.