

## **CHAPTER V**

### **HERITAGE TOURISM AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION**

In this chapter, I will deal with the issue of the politics of heritage. How are heritage construction and identity construction related to the contestations within heritage tourism management? I will discuss image construction for tourism promotion in Tuanshan and villager's identity constructions towards these tourism resources. How do different villagers construct their identities and make claims in benefit sharing? Special attention will be given to the contests between Zhang and Mao towards their values in heritage tourism.

#### **5.1 Changes and Inconsistence in Tourism Image Constructions**

As we have seen in chapter one, heritage is culturally constructed and heritage identification is political. The representations of heritage are related to the politics within the community in tourism management (Hall 2003). Image construction reflects corresponding heritage representation and is very important in tourism promotion. Appropriate images can attract tourists and at the same time encourage the destination community to conserve their heritage, and vice versa. So in this section, I will discuss the image constructions in Tuanshan, to see how image construction has changed and how it is contested.

##### **5.1.1 Image and Name Changes**

Outsiders have contributed a lot to the image construction of Tuanshan village. They named it and promoted it. Actually the image construction of Tuanshan was much related to how the outsiders perceive this village and heritage it has. The image construction can be seen in four phases, from unintentional image to intentional image, from local image to international image.

### **5.1.1.1 Unintentional Image Construction as “Zhang’s Family Garden”**

Long before tourism development in 2000, local people in the vicinity had known the beautiful architectures in “Zhang’s Family Garden”, and “Zhang’s Family Garden” had been considered as a place of interest that is worth a visit. When I was in junior high school in 1993, which is located not far from Tuanshan village, I had been there once. At that time, the village was known by the name of “Zhang’s Family Garden” but not “Tuanshan”.

It was also listed in government papers as “Zhang’s Family Garden” before 1997. According to the former director of the construction bureau, in 1987 when they tried to promote Jianshui County as a historic city (town) at provincial level, Zhang’s Family Garden was list as a historic site in Jianshui. Some books introducing Jianshui also mentioned “Zhang’s Family Garden”.

### **5.1.1.2 Intentional Image Construction as “Tuanshan” in Government Paper**

Since “Zhang’s Family Garden” was influential, in 1997 when the construction bureau tried to promote Jianshui county further as a historic city (town) at national level, it sent some literates and officials to the village to carry out an investigation of these architectures. At that time, besides “Zhang’s Family Garden”, 21 other sites with high architecture and cultural value were discovered and documented. Consequently, “Tuanshan”, for the first time, as the name of the whole village, was listed in their application documents. It was said some leader in the construction bureau at the provincial level specifically supervised the document preparation in Tuanshan. Government officers and local literates went to the village and stayed for a month to take photos and collect stories and information. The current director, since he is a retired teacher, was a key informant for them. However, the Mao family was absent at that time. Only an old woman who is a Zhang family member was employed to look after the house. When the research group went to collect information in Mao’s house, the old woman enthusiastically welcomed them

and let them take photos. It is said even the original plaque with the golden inscription “*Sima Mansion*” was taken out for photographing.

In the application documents, Tuanshan village was described as a village combining the characters of Han and Yi civil residences together, which reflected the significant history of events when the Han population was moved to southwest China, or say, Yunnan, in large scales since the Ming dynasty. The immigration of the Han population brought Han culture and civilized aboriginal ethnic groups, such as the Yi. And it also showed that the Han people had got along with ethnic people very well. So, not only are some four-side-closed big yards of Han style valuable for protection, such as these big private houses opened for tourists now, but also other *tuzhang fang* of Yi style and tile brim *tuzhang fang* of mixture of Han and Yi style are also included in protection lists. According to a local literate, the whole village should be protected to conserve the overall picture of local residences in rural Yunnan history.

### 5.1.1.3 Image as “Tuanshan” at International Level

With the increasing number of foreign tourists, especially French tourists, at the end of the 20th century, people at international levels gradually knew Tuanshan. In 2005, Tuanshan was granted a certificate from the World Monuments Fund (WMF), and was enlisted as one of the 100 Most Endangered Places for the year of 2006. It is said, “*Tuanshan is the most beautiful village where the architectural style of the 19th century and beyond remains intact and the distinctive way of people's life is preserved, fully showcasing China's indigenous cultural characteristics,*” and “*We put Tuanshan on our Watch List because we believe it is of world value and is the common heritage of the whole humankind*” (Anonymous 2005). So, at international level, not only the 22 beautiful architectures and sites, but also the whole village as intact and preserving distinctive way of people’s life is emphasized.

From then on, the name, Tuanshan, was suddenly well known all over the country. It has been introduced and talked in many tourist websites where it is usually described as a “rare surviving example of an intact—albeit neglected—traditional walled Yunnan village compound in southwestern China”<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> See in the website: [http://wmf.org/resources/sitepages/china\\_tuanshan\\_historical\\_village.html](http://wmf.org/resources/sitepages/china_tuanshan_historical_village.html).

### 5.1.2 Construction of Zhang's Family Culture in Tourism Promotion

In the process of promotion of either “Zhang's Family Garden” or “Tuanshan”, the Zhang's family culture of “tolerance” and their prosperous history are constructed as the stories underpinning the intricate and delicate carvings and houses. In tourist brochures or maps, the Zhang family is always used to represent all villagers and the village culture is replaced with Zhang's family culture. The history of the Zhang family is also introduced as the history of the village. Tourists may find the Zhang family is constructed to be all of the Tuanshan villagers. And other family histories, family cultures or other stories are overshadowed. They may ask every villager they met whether they are Zhang family members and if the answer is yes, they will further ask about their history and stories. Tour guides also introduce Zhang family history over and over again to tourists as if there is only the Zhang family history in the village. Other stories underlying that beautiful architecture and local people's life are masked, such as the communication between Han and Yi people and among various families. The real life stories are flattened, filtered into one single story about the Zhang family, such as how the Zhang family worked hard in the tin mining industry in Gejiu and got prosperous, how they remitted money back and built such amazing houses, how the carvings and paintings express the Zhang families good wishes, how much these houses cost, how Zhang family members followed the ancestor's word to be tolerant, how many rich people and governors came from Zhang's family, and so on.

Consequently, those old grand houses with four-side-closed big yards of Han style are considered as the most valuable tourist attractions. And tourists are just shown from one yard to another yard, but the structures have little differences. Stories for each house are similar too. Usually, if the tourists are not keen on architecture or carvings, they may get tired of these somewhat simple repetitions.

However, these simplified histories and narratives legitimate the power of the

residents who own the old grand houses, just like the current director. Tuanshan heritage then appears to only refer to several grand houses opened for tourists, in local people's perception. Just as many villagers considered, tourists just come to see those old big houses, the carvings and pictures.

### 5.1.3 Mao's Image Construction in Tuanshan Tourism

In the flattened story of Tuanshan, the Mao family is a dissonant voice. For most local literates, they consider that the Mao family moved to Tuanshan later than the Zhang family due to marriage with a Zhang family member. During the tin mining era, the Mao family also went to Gejiu and was lucky to get a rich tin mine. As most Zhang family members did, the Mao family also sent remittance back and built the house. Since one of Mao's ancestors used to be the senior governor called "*Da Sima*"<sup>29</sup>, in order to stimulate offspring, they made a plaque with a golden inscription "*Sima Mansion*" to name their house. Consequently, in most introductions of Tuanshan, the Mao family history and culture is over shadowed by the brilliant Zhang family history and culture. In the maps some pictures that were taken in Mao's house were also put under the title of "Zhang's Family Garden" in the tourist brochure, which may refer to either the village or the single site of "Zhang's Family Garden". For the Mao family, they consider the title just to refer to the latter. As a result, they accuse the tourism committee for piracy of their antiques.

The host of the Mao family argued that "*Da Sima*" was an important senior official position before the Qing dynasty, and it was not just anyone who wanted to make the plaque "*Sima Mansion*" that had the right to do so. Many decorations and carvings in his house implied the unusual identity of the host, such as pictures of weapons can be found everywhere in the house, and the head of a dragon was also carved on the top of poles, which, he argued, was illegal to be used as decoration in

<sup>29</sup> *Da Sima* is a title of governor in ancient China since the Han dynasty, which refers to the senior governors who take charge of the army all over the country.



ordinary families. He argued that the house in Tuanshan was just used as a place to spend holidays in the past. His family all lived in Gejiu and just came to this house occasionally.

It was said Mao's house was built in 1907 in the introduction in front of his house, which was made by the tourist bureau at the county level. However, the host claimed that his house was built in 1709 during the Ming dynasty. He argued his house was older than other old grand houses in the village, and the antiques were also more delicate than others. As described in chapter two, by keeping tourists comments in notebooks and showing them to new comers, the host tried to persuade more tourists that his house was special and valuable. He even argued that some tourists commented that his house was like a living museum.

In a short summary, the host of Mao's house intends to construct a different but significant image in Tuanshan heritage tourism. He tried to claim the authenticity of his house and his family history. As shown in chapter one, authenticity is not something that essentially exists, but something constructed and reinforced by both tourists and local people, and authenticity is used to legitimate their power over the resource. So, we can say, in the conflict with Zhang family, the Mao family claims their power and rights in tourism through this image construction.

## **5.2 Dynamic and Intentioned Identity Constructions of Other Stakeholders within Village**

Apart from the image construction and changes of name in Tuanshan tourism, which draws out the origin of the conflict between the Zhang family and the Mao family, and lays out the base for different understandings towards these heritage sites, different identity constructions of different stakeholders within village discussed in the following further show how these understandings display themselves and impact tourism management.

### 5.2.1 The Family of Current Director

In the process of promoting Tuanshan as a heritage and tourism site, the family of the current director has played the key informant role to provide information and documents. Benefiting from their education background and work experience, three members in this family can introduce their family history and architectures to tourists and literates who collected information in the village. In past, tourists who came for “Zhang’s Family Garden” rarely knew his house. However, after they had been coming to the village and entering into his house, they were usually impressed by this family and the “Emperor Kindness House”. As many tourists wrote in the comment book, “after I coming to Tuanshan, I got to know a beautiful house called the Emperor Kindness House”<sup>30</sup>. With his cultural capital, he established the image of his house in Tuanshan tourism as his house was the one that was protected most well and was an important site for tourists in Tuanshan. He also constructed his identity as the inheritor of the Zhang family, as well as a knowledgeable retired teacher, and the protector of the Zhang family’s heritage. For instance, in the program of cultural geography shot by a Yunnan TV channel, his family was chosen as the one to represent Tuanshan to introduce the customs there.

One argument of the current director in tourism management is that tourists just come to see the several old grand houses, so in order to encourage these households to actively welcome and support tourism, tourism-derived benefits should first go to these households. In the company scheme he proposed, every villager is supposed to share certain stock and benefit from the profit sharing mechanism. The one who owns old grand houses open for tourists will get the stock in accordance with the acreage that the house occupies and others will get a certain equal stock since they share the name of the village. However, with this argument, firstly he constructed the image of his house as an important stop where tourists love to go. Secondly, he argued

<sup>30</sup> The sentence is cited from one of the comment notebooks in the Emperor Kindness House.

that his house occupies one thousand square meters while some households may only occupy less than one twentieth of that. Using one villager's words, it means he will always be the main actor while others just perform their roles like a subplot.

### **5.2.2 The Descendants of the Original Owner of Zhang's Family Garden who Still Live in Zhang's Family Garden and the Peers**

As introduced somewhere earlier, the descendants of the original owner of Zhang's Family Garden who still live in Zhang's Family Garden are reluctant to compete in the tourism management committee, but just want to claim their rights for benefit-sharing. Because, from the very beginning, the image of "Zhang's Family Garden" was considered as the core of Tuanshan heritage and tourism attractions, they are endowed a powerful identity and put in a position that makes it easy to claim their rights. They are proud of being the offspring of the original host of Zhang's Family Garden and always emphasize this point when facing tourists.

However, according to the other descendants of the original owner of Zhang's Family Garden who is not living in the house now, the house was in fact built by their grandfather and the two families now living in the house are the offspring of their grandfather's elder brother. Since the elder brother died early after getting a rich tin mine in Gejiu, the smart young one took responsibility in raising the whole family including two offspring branches of the elder brother. However, during the land reform period, his family was excluded from the house since they were considered the owners of the house and having lots of land outside, while the two branches of the elder brothers were permitted to stay since they were considered as the poorer.

Most of other villagers who were also living in the old houses and heirs of original owners are Zhang family members too. However, since their houses are devalued by villagers and considered as insignificant for tourism currently, they can not argue their rights as the previous ones by constructing their identity as the heirs of the original owners of the houses. For instance, one villager in such a situation tried to



argue “We also have an old big house which was also taken in photos and valued by the experts and literates.” But another family member responded, “We have the big house, but do they [the tourism management committee] think so?”

However, they also share the same perception that tourism development mainly relies on “Zhang’s Family Garden” but do not consider that it is the whole village that is valuable and should be the tourism resource.

### **5.2.3 Family Members of Former Director who are also Descendants of the Original Owner of Zhang’s Family Garden but not Living in Zhang’s Family Garden**

The family members of the former director were claimed as innocents in 1980 when China redressed and corrected some mistakes in classifying people during the political movement in the 1950s. They had been evicted from their house and could not get it back. Consequently, in tourism development, their rights towards their house and tourism are contested. However, they still tried to maintain their identity as the descendants of the original owner and claimed the rights to the garden part of the house.

### **5.2.4 Defensive Villagers: Other Villagers who Live in the Old House and Got the Residence through Land Reform**

Most of these defensive villagers are not Zhang family members, and do not share the same identity as the Zhang family. As the literate said, before tourism development, they even told outsiders that the houses were not theirs. The cultural value of their houses seems to have nothing to do with them. And they are not aggressive in developing tourism. However, after tourism is developed and economic benefits emerge, they tend to construct the identity that they are residents in these houses and claim their rights in benefit-sharing. They pay much attention to the economic value of their property.

### 5.2.5 Neutral Villagers: Villagers not Living in the Valuable Old House

The identity construction of villagers not living in the valuable old house varies greatly. Some of them are also Zhang family members, while some are not. However, some of those belonging to the Zhang family seem not worth considering much about the identity as Zhang family members as they may not even remember which branch they belong to. Some do not pay much attention to tourism development since they haven't seen a significant relationship between that and their livelihood. Some construct their identity as Tuanshan villagers, and claim that it is the whole village that is granted as heritage and they collectively own the village land. Consequently, they argue that they also have certain rights in tourism development.

### 5.3 Conclusion: Image Construction in Tourism Management Institution

To sum up, image construction in Tuanshan has passed through three phrases: the first was Tuanshan as “Zhang’s Family Garden”; the second was Tuanshan as “22 beautiful dwelling houses and sites”; the third was Tuanshan as an “intact village with beautiful architecture and a distinct way of life”. These different images are utilized by different stakeholders in pursuing their interests.

As we can see from those arguments, the heritage of Tuanshan is somewhat considered as equal to several old grand houses in most villagers’ perception. Zhang’s Family Garden is especially the mainstay. It is intimately related to the image constructed in past, which only paid attention to “Zhang’s Family Garden”. Later, with the efforts of the current director and the Mao family, other grand houses, such as the “Emperor Kindness House” and “Sima Mansion” are increasingly known by outsiders and also considered by villagers as worthy to have a look. However, the real value of this village is still underplayed in tourism development. Outsiders and experts considered the values of the whole village, such as “remaining intact”, or the “distinctive way of people’s life”, and the “traditional walled Yunnan village”, but the

insider's just value several grand houses. Historically significant houses are highlighted and heritage is presented in the form of the houses of the aristocracy or elite. Tuanshan history is flattened, and thereby a simplified generalized image is created that is the life of the elites in the Zhang family.

As we know, representation of the heritage and tourism resources will impact the power structure in the village (Hall 2003). In the case of Tuanshan, the insiders' view justifies the current power relations in the village; those who own the old grand houses open for tourists have the power and rights in tourism development. This perception in fact prevents their own power and rights in tourism management. On the one hand these villagers also want to benefit from tourism; on the other hand, there is no solid base for them to argue their rights. And previous experiences told them that no matter who is in power in the village (for instance, the former director and the current director), they will not get much benefit. Consequently, they expect that the government will take over the tourism management and in that case, everyone may benefit from governmental behavior. In another words, because of the representation of the heritage and tourism resource, several households are privileged and get the power in tourism while most villagers are deprived of their rights. Without perceptions of their rights in tourism, they cannot see their position in tourism development and are not likely to take collective action to develop the tourism.

So, heritage image construction is much important in the formation of tourism management institution. First, image impacts on people's perception of tourism: whether the tourism is related to them or not; what positions they are in. The perception further influences their benefit-cost calculation and choices for the action. And finally it will influence decision-making on whether to take collective action to certain tourism management institutions. Second, since it legitimates certain powers and deprives other stakeholders' powers in tourism development, it may result in competition of power in the community and disturb the formation of management institutions.