Dressing Up, Dressing Down:

Ethnic Identity among the Tongren Tu of Northwest China

by

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The *pinyin* system of romanization is used throughout the text for all Chinese words. In most cases I have chosen to spell Tibetan words as they are transliterated into Chinese; I made an exception for just a few commonly used Tibetan words. If a Tibetan word is spelled differently within a quoted passage, however, I do not alter its original spelling. Tu words are spelled phonemically using IPA symbols.
Abstract

This dissertation explores ways in which ethnic identity is constructed and takes on cultural content and is in turn enacted and manipulated by the Tu living in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. Because of its polyvalence, clothing serves as a potent symbol of ethnic identity for China’s minorities. The present-day situation of Tu dress exemplifies some of the complicated and flexible options available; responses to a stimulus kit illustrate prototypical notions of dress and Tu identity. But people’s conceptions of self are not formed in a vacuum; they make and transform the world in which they live. Political and economic events since 1949 have converged in such a way as to provide the Tongren Tu with social and cultural space to express an alternative identity. The temporary disappearance of the monastic system as well as the attrition of arable land has particularly influenced Tu production of religious art. A recent resurgence of Tibetan Buddhism in China has created great demand for Regong yishu, the brand name of this art movement. Tourists making the pilgrimage to Huangnan desire to consume “authentic” Tibetan life and art, and the Tongren Tu are learning that tourists come to buy Tibetan (not Tu) art. Performance provides an arena in which these identity choices are enacted. The Tu become signs of themselves, or more accurately, they become signs of what the tourist audience believes them to be. The kind of sign, though, varies with how these beliefs influence the nature of the performance. This study of Tu identity is intended to show how prototypes are related to action. By wedding together prototype theory to Bourdieu’s conception of habitus which mediates between structure and agency, I propose a mechanism that allows for the interference of external forces on mental processes. This dissertation also points to the need to expand current understanding of Han-minority nationality relations. Focusing solely on the Han-minority opposition overlooks how power is distributed.
throughout the entire system; this study of the Tongren Tu shows how certain labels are invested with more symbolic capital than others.
Chapter One. Becoming Renzeng Zhuoma: An Introduction to the Tongren Tu

1. Introduction

In the summer of 2001, I began my journey of learning Mandarin Chinese by attending a ten-week intensive course where I learned, ate, slept, and lived Chinese. After the assembly laying out the ground rules on the first day, the first year students were asked to stay behind to pick up our names. We each came forward to pick up a placard with our new Chinese name, given to us by our teachers. While our teachers selected our names based on sound resemblance to our English names, they also strived for “good-sounding” Chinese names. So I became Fang Yanhua over the next ten weeks. Since there are so many homophones in the language, when introducing oneself in Chinese it is customary to give each syllable one at a time, accompanied by a common word or phrase containing that syllable. The hearer is then able to figure out which characters compose one’s name. I quickly memorized my name over the course of the following days. Fang is the fang in fangzheng (upright). Yan is the yan in yanzi (swallow). Hua is the hua in zhonghua (China). Yanhua, Chinese sparrow. Over the following years, Yanhua became something much more than a Chinese version of my English name. I became Yanhua. When Chinese friends on the street would call out my name to get my attention, or when I waited in an office, I started to respond when Yanhua was called. I no longer had the gut reaction of waiting a bit too long before remembering, “Oh yeah, that’s me.” Becoming Yanhua symbolized for me my acculturation and comfort-level in China. Yanhua could do things that stretched Heather: bargain for a few mao off of the price of vegetables, litter the shells of sunflower seeds on the floor of the bus during a trip, crowd around the entrance to a store and somehow make it in without lining up.
On March 24, 2006, a van from the Qinghai Nationalities University drove my husband and me along with our backpacks south from Xining, where we had lived and studied Chinese for a year and a half, to Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. We had been granted approval from the provincial education department to start our dissertation fieldwork in Nianduhu village in Tongren County, one of five Tu villages in Huangnan. A professor with whom we had studied and collaborated on a translation project had graciously set up a place for us to live initially. I introduced myself to the family, “Wo shi Fang Yanhua. Fangzheng....” As members of the family started to introduce themselves in turn, my brain sputtered. Cairang naori? Lozang dawa? Wendai suoji? Lamasuo? These all were Tibetan names. My tongue, which had become facile at handling Chinese names, stuttered and stumbled over these unfamiliar syllables. And my mind, which had finally learned to grasp and remember Chinese names, could not master these new sequences.

Over the course of the next few days, I simply avoided situations where I had to address someone by name. This kind of culture shock is common, as any tourist, businessman, or researcher can testify. But what especially bothered me about my situation was that my preparation seemed to be for naught. Before coming to China, I had read what was available about the Tu minority nationality in Western literature. During my time of Mandarin study in Xining, I traveled several times to Huzhu Tu Autonomous County in order to begin to familiarize myself with Tu culture. I became friends with Tu from Huzhu and Minhe Counties. I became acquainted with the Sanchuan Student’s Association, a group of Minhe Tu students who sponsored lectures and other activities about Tu culture on Qinghai Nationalities University’s campus. I arranged for a class about Tu culture with Li Meiling, a Huzhu Tu professor at Qinghai Nationalities University in the Ethnic Studies Research group. It was in this class that I
had learned about Tu names. Given names for the Tu are Han Chinese names which are adopted when children begin school. This name is considered their adult name (*daming*). But before school, the Tu have a separate system for naming. The first part of a child’s name (*xiaoming*) might be the age of the paternal grandparent or the month of the child’s birth. Boys may be named after a Daoist god, girls may be given the Chinese name for a flower. At the end of any of these is added a character: *hua, jie, or suo* for female names; *bao or jiaxi* for male names. Or, following Han Chinese custom, they may be named in such a way that expresses hope for another birth in the family (for example, *ling meizi* (lead little sister)) (Li Meiling, conversation with author, May 24, 2005). The resulting names sound quite Han, evidence of their Hanification. All of the Tu I had known thus far had Han-sounding names, like mine. These Tibetan names were completely foreign to me.

And it seemed that my Chinese name was foreign to the members of the family with whom we were staying. After about a week, *ayi* (auntie), the mother of the family decided that we needed new names since we seemed to be sticking around. She just could not remember or get a handle on our Chinese names. After lunch she asked her youngest son, a lama in the local monastery, to give us new names. After thinking for a while, he asked for my husband’s language learning notebook and carefully wrote down two names. He silently handed back the notebook to my husband, waiting for our response. We looked down at the page and saw the unfamiliar Tibetan script. We sheepishly asked for translations, admitting that we could not read Tibetan. And so I became Renzeng Zhuoma. This new name was uncomfortable and foreign. I balked at having to use it. I kept wondering, “Why can’t I just be Yanhua? Where did all of these Tibetan names come from?” But by the end of my fieldwork, I had become Renzeng

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1 *Ai*, like most middle-aged and older women in Nianduhu, had not attended any school, and so spoke very little Mandarin.
Zhuoma, too. I knew how to properly mix a bowl of *tsampa* (roasted barley flour mixed with yak butter, milk tea, and sugar), I became accustomed to the smell of burning cedar branches and grain in the morning, I no longer considered monks a novel sight.

As I listened to people in Nianduhu talk over the course of several months, I came to realize that what seemed like an insignificant episode in my life (becoming Renzeng Zhuoma) captured their experience of ethnic identity. From my very first days in the village, it stood out to me how people ordinarily talked about themselves. On March 25, 2006, the father of the family with whom we lived, who spoke a fair amount of Mandarin, sat down to tell us a little about life in the village. He knew about my interest in clothing, and so he described the clothes worn by the women in the village. He conceded that the robes might be a little bit different in color with a split up each side when compared to the robes worn by Tibetans. Otherwise, he said, they were exactly the same, (*wanquan yiyang*). On that same day, the Tu daughter-in-law (the other two daughters-in-law were Tibetan), was talking and used the phrase, *Women zangzu ren* (We Tibetans). When I heard this phrase, I thought to myself, “But didn’t you just tell me you were Tu?” I came to realize that asking the question, “Are you Tu?” did not garner a meaningful response in the five Tu villages of the Longwu River valley. Describing these villages as Tu was not meaningful either. In June of 2007, I was walking down the main street of Nianduhu towards the county town of Tongren (“harmonious benevolence”). I noticed a Han Chinese woman (identifiable both by her short permed hair and her clothes) with an expensive SLR camera framing a shot of the wood carving over the doorway of a house. I stopped and greeted her. She was a journalist from Xining (“Western peace”), the provincial capital, who had accepted a temporary assignment to teach at the county high school in order to pursue her hobby of photography. She most enjoyed documenting village life, and so used her free time on the
weekends to travel around Tongren County to take pictures. She kept gushing at our opportunity
to live in an “authentic” Tibetan village. When she asked what I was doing, I explained my
interest in Tu culture. She accompanied me as we walked into town, and we shared a funny
conversation, as I referred to the village as “Tu” and she referred to it as “Tibetan.” I had this
kind of conversation with outsiders repeatedly.

However, the phrase, *women zangzu ren*, does not fully capture the self-identity of the
Tongren Tu. On September 9, 2006, the foreign affairs office of the Qinghai Nationalities
University organized a day trip for all of the foreign students to Tongren. Even though I had
been living in Tongren since the end of March, I thought that going with an official tour group
would probably give me some new perspective on my research. We left Xining, and Teacher Liu
read aloud an extensive section about Tibetan life, art, and customs in the Tongren area. When
we pulled onto the main street of Tongren County, we picked up our local tour guide. He
introduced himself as a Tibetan artist who was friends with Teacher Liu. Throughout the rest of
the morning, he led us through the museum of Tibetan religious art and an art gallery,
knowledgably expounding on the history and importance of the art produced in the Longwu
River valley. After a leisurely lunch, we once again boarded the bus to visit our guide’s village.
As we headed north of the county seat, he detailed some background information about his home.
It was most well-known for its *stupa* (a funerary monument in the shape of a dome, containing
relics of Buddha or some other holy person), its role in the production of Tibetan Buddhist
religious art, and its old city walls. Everything he said led one to believe we were going to a
model Tibetan village, so I grinned to myself when we stopped at Guomare, one of the five Tu
villages. As we waited for everyone to finish their perilous climb down from the top of the stupa,
several of the other foreign students who had been studying Amdo Tibetan eagerly tried out their
language skills with the group of children who were hanging around, watching the spectacle. (The children appeared to be quite young, either not yet in school or having just started.) The children just stared, completely unresponsive to the foreigners’ friendly advances. I wasn’t sure if the children were just shy or if this really was a case of a lack of comprehension, so I decided to give my elementary Tu a try. As I asked the children a few questions in Tu, their silence was broken and a torrent of conversation soon surpassing my Tu language skills started. But on the rest of our tour of Guomare, our guide repeatedly used the adjective Tibetan to describe the architecture, way of life, and people. This juxtaposition (the term “Tibetan” with the children’s lack of responsiveness to the other students’ Tibetan greetings) evokes the issues of identity that this paper seeks to understand.

Much later, after I had returned to the United States and started analyzing my data, I reviewed my notes from Li Meiling’s class. I came to the section about naming, and read something which I had previously overlooked. She had, in fact, noted that unlike the Tu in Huzhu and Minhe, the Tu in Tongren adopt completely Tibetan names. I realized in retrospect how much this exposition on the naming practices of the Tu imitates current ethnographic scholarship, both Western and Chinese, about the Tu. Explanations about the cultural life of the Tongren Tu are generally either tacked on to (rather than integrated into) larger works about the Tu living in Huzhu and Minhe Counties, or are somehow linked to scholarship about Tibetans. The Tongren Tu are interstitial in nature, defined one way or the other depending on the agenda of the author. This paper aims to understand how the Tongren Tu perceive and represent themselves, to their own selves and to the outside world. But first, I will present the theoretical orientation that has shaped my view and understanding of these issues and describe the setting for the research I conducted.
1.2 Theoretical Orientation

Humans are faced with a world of experience made up of a seemingly infinite array of discriminably different objects, events, impressions, and people. If we were to fully distinguish each object or respond uniquely to each event we confronted, the complexity of the environment would overwhelm us. It is problematic for finite minds to confront infinite worlds. This paradox is resolved by our capacity to categorize. “To categorize is to render discriminably different things equivalent, to group the objects and events and people around us into classes, and to respond to them in terms of their class membership rather than their uniqueness” (Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin 1972:169). The act of categorization is basic to human thought, perception, action, and speech. We are unaware of most of the categorizing we do, because as we move around the world, “...we automatically categorize people, animals, and physical objects, both natural and manmade” (Lakoff 1987:6). Simply put, categorization reduces the amount of information we need to attend to or process. Once we sort things into categories based on perceived or imagined similarities, we then use our classifications to predict behavioral, temperamental, and cognitive attributes of other things in the same category. Categorization makes for efficient cognition.

Because categorization practices are reflexive, people can and do participate in their own classification. A property of language (and more generally of human cognition) allows an individual to place himself in the role of the subject and to think about and categorize himself, as well as those around him. In all societies, people distinguish groups of people from other groups of people. The reality is that humans categorize other humans and then act accordingly; such classification is not in analysts’ heads. Frake writes, “A universal human preoccupation, by no
means restricted to social scientists, is the game of sorting each other out into kinds of people, the game of ascribing and assuming social identities” (Frake 1980:311).

But kinds of people are not out there in the physical world, clearly demarcated by features. When people classify themselves and one another, they rely on arbitrary criteria. What is marked as a salient difference or commonality is influenced by cultural, historical, political, and ideological systems; certain kinds of display count in different places and at different times. Gender, age, occupation, place of origin, language, religion, and ethnicity² have all historically provided the resources needed to construct difference. To call these criteria arbitrary is not to diminish their power. People work hard to infuse these arbitrary categories with meaning. In this meaning-making process, we appeal to cultural knowledge to interpret the “raw material substance” of the world around us (Frake 1994:247). Culture gives meaning to actions by situating the underlying intentional states in an interpretive system (Bruner 1990:11). While the resulting cultural identity may be imagined, it still affects the real world. Another result of this meaning-making work is that these artificial categories of human kinds, whether clan, tribe, ethnic group, race, or nation, seem natural or primordial. “One is bound to one’s kinsmen, one’s neighbor, one’s fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself” (Geertz 1973:259)

This dissertation takes as its topic how the Tongren Tu make arbitrary ethnic categories meaningful. China provides especially rich data for such a project. Most books and articles dealing with ethnicity in China recite the following litany: China is the home to fifty-five minority nationalities who make up eight percent of the population and are classified according to Stalin’s four criteria for nationalities (common territory, common language, common

² By ethnicity I simply mean perceptual differences in appearance.
economic life, and common culture). They occupy fifty to sixty percent of China’s territory along strategic national borders (Blum 2002:1288). After the People’s Republic of China was established in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party adopted an ideologically poly-ethnic approach to governance modeled on polices of the Soviet Union. They invited applications from groups who wanted to be officially recognized as minority nationalities (shaoshu minzu). Over four hundred groups applied, and teams of researchers determined that fifty-four (plus the Han Chinese) would be granted this favored status by 1962. Only one more group (the Jinuo) has since been granted this status (Harrell 2001:40). Several authors have addressed the problematic relationship between the official designation by the state and a group’s own sense of identity; they have also documented how this constructed identity has changed, flourished, and been perpetuated by the groups themselves (Brown 2001; Diamond 1995; Gladney 1991, 1994, 1998, 2004; Harrell 1995, 2000, 2001; Kaup 2000; Lipman 1998; Litzinger 2000; McKhann 1995; Mueggler 2001; Schein 2000; Smith 2000; Wellens 1998).

At this point, I digress to expound the nature of categorization. When early cognitive anthropologists and linguists began to study the nature of categorization, they assumed categories were based on properties shared by all of their members. It was thought that the analyst simply needed to collect all the words denoting various categories within a given semantic domain. These words were then contrasted to one another in an attempt to discover the minimal number of features that distinguished the meanings of all the words within that domain. In this view, things are grouped into the same category if (and only if) they share the same properties. These properties then become the necessary and sufficient conditions for defining that category (Lakoff 1987:5-11). But as more research was done, analysts realized that while

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3 I use Han Chinese to refer to the remaining 92 percent of China’s population. This does not imply that the Han Chinese are homogenous but is rather academic convention.
this view of categories was not wrong, it was only a small part of the picture. With the pioneering work of Berlin and Kay (1969), Lounsbury (1965, 1969), and Rosch (1973, 1975), and subsequently expounded by many others, prototype theory emerged as another way to understand the human capacity to categorize. A prototype is simply a model of how we make sense of the world’s diversity. For phenomena of all varieties, we unconsciously posit typical, prototypical, or central members. As new things are encountered, we compare them to existing prototypes to aid in the task of information processing. We judge according to the degree they are like the prototype. Prototypes provide a way for cognitive categories to be held apart by contrasts without defining certain features as necessary and sufficient for category membership. Thus, prototypes often seem exaggerated; they share a maximum of attributes with other central members and a minimum with members of contrasting categories (MacLaury 1991). Social stereotypes exemplify this characteristic of prototypes. Prototypes also result in a range of effects, such as gradience, which arise from the degree to which they fit our knowledge or assumptions about the world. Most research on prototypes has been conducted in four domains: color (Berlin and Kay 1969; Levinson 2000; Rosch 1973, 1975), language (Croft 1990; Dray 1987; Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1987; MacLaury 1989; Winters 1990), physical objects (Kempton 1981; Rips 1975), and terms (“anger” Kövecses 1990; “lie” Coleman and Kay 1981, Sweetser 1987; “commitment” Quinn 1982). The categorization of human kinds, however, has not been tackled; Hirschfeld 1997 and Blum 2001 are notable exceptions4. Although the Chinese government’s classification project used a more traditional approach to categorization (i.e. group peoples together if they had a certain list of attributes in common), this dissertation argues that

4 Kinship, of course, was studied extensively under the traditional approach to categorization. Indeed, it was a pair of papers published in 1956 by Lounsbury and Goodenough which advocated this rigorous approach to the analysis of kinship systems and started something of a revolution in the field of anthropology (D’Andrade 1995:14). Kinship, however, was analyzed according to the traditional model of categorization.
the conceptual model of prototypes best characterizes the ways in which people actually perceive and understand the category of minority nationalities in China. I posit that there does exist a central, idealized model for the Tu (as well as other groups), and that actual cases differ from this model in varying degrees. Further, this prototype exaggerates distance, providing maximal distance between it and other prototypes (in this case, contrasting the Tu with other geographically close minority nationalities), since all categories require contrasts that are easy to process. Finally, this idealized model of the Tu exhibits prototype effects: potential members are compared to the prototype and judged according to how similar or not they are to the prototype.

While these ideas from cognitive anthropology and linguistics are extremely helpful, an exclusive focus on prototypes precludes an understanding of how change is possible. It captures the particle-like characteristics of identity well by presenting a snapshot of people’s current perceptions of identity. But as Blum points out, “Many aspects of the Chinese situation—the politically saturated public sphere, the long and complex history of ethnic interactions, tourism, and other economic phenomena—require nonpsychological perspectives” (2001:53). I agree, and for this reason relate Bourdieu’s notion of habitus to prototype theory in order to account for change. John and Jean Comaroff (1992), Dirks (1992), and Daniel (1996) all posit that identity is a social and ideological product of historical processes. It is crystallized in disjuncture. Thus, change becomes possible when alternatives become visible and actors have the power to bring them into being (Ortner 1989). Identities are built, shaped, and reshaped out of a variety of historical materials to meet the needs, political exigencies, and opportunities of the time. This approach sheds light on how Tu identity is not just a political construct of the state, but is legitimized by the aura of culture, history, and genealogy. It also underscores the importance of
institutional status and structures in the construction of meaning for Tu identity. By incorporating these theories of change, I hope to capture the wave-like characteristics of identity by presenting a longer overview of the context which has shaped people’s perceptions of identity.

One change in recent years that deserves particular highlighting for its part in shaping Tu identity is the advent of tourism. Ethnic tourism serves as an authenticating ground of ethnic identity, for the tourist gaze identifies difference. This aspect of tourism has been well described by other scholars who study ethnic tourism in China, such as Notar (2006), Oakes (1998), and Schein (2000). Ethnic tourism is a semiotic event; as Culler notes, the “tourist is interested in everything as a sign for itself” (1981:127). All tourist spectacles are not created equal, however. Some are events which tourists are permitted to observe, while others are “reconstructed ethnicity,” in which ethnic forms are repackaged solely for the entertainment of others (MacCannell 1992:168). Consequently, the ways in which these events interact with identity also differ. I adopt Perirce’s semiotic perspective in order to understand how these different kinds of tourist events function among the Tu, and how they in turn become resources for the reshaping of identity.

To summarize, my theoretical approach is eclectic. Just as Tongren Tu identity is somewhere in between the spaces of categories, so my approach cannot be easily pigeon-holed. My ultimate aim is not to solely focus on prototypes, habitus, or semiotics, but to integrate together insightful elements from all three in order to account for the observations I made on the field.

1.3 Who are the Tongren Tu?

Because of the interstitial nature of the Tongren Tu, as scholars and the state engage in their own classificatory projects, they group the Tongren Tu differently according to their own
agendas. In this section I introduce the Tongren Tu according to how they are variously categorized in order to contextualize their own perceptions (and resulting actions) that relate to their self-identity. The Tu are one of the fifty-five officially recognized minority nationalities in the People’s Republic of China. They live primarily in Qinghai Province and number around 241,000 (2000), a relatively small population for China’s minority nationalities (see maps one and two to see the location of Qinghai Province and the distribution of the Tu population in Qinghai). Their language belongs to the Mongolian branch of the Altaic language family; linguists recognize at least three mutually unintelligible Tu dialects: Minhe, Huzhu, and Bao’an. Huzhu Tu Autonomous County is the acknowledged cultural homeland of the Tu. The Tongren Tu living in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture are geographically separated by the Yellow River and part of the Kunlun mountain range, as well as culturally removed from both the Minhe and Huzhu Tu. Huangnan (called Malho in Tibetan) was traditionally considered part of the Amdo region of Tibet. The Tongren Tu are just a small enclave in Tongren County; almost seventy percent of the county’s population is classified as Tibetan. They number around 7200, and live in five villages: Guomare, Gasare, Nianduhu, Bao’an Xia (or Tuojia), and Wutun (Tongren xianzhi 2001:906). These five villages are situated along the banks of the Longwu River in a broad valley on the Tibetan plateau (the elevation is around 2,300 meters). Although the landscape is arid, the fields surrounding the five Tu villages are irrigated. Wheat and broad beans are primarily grown in the fields, while people grow pears, Sichuan pepper, and vegetables in their courtyards. The five villages still have old walled portions, indicating a relatively long presence in this area.

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5 The Tongren Tu speak the Bao’an dialect.
6 The villages are just less than 200 kilometers away from Xining, the provincial capital.
Map One. Location of Qinghai Province in China.

Indeed, this area has over time belonged to various dynasties and states originating from the east (China), north (Mongolia), and south (Tibet). The Longwu River valley was encompassed in the northern expansion of the Tibetan empire (618-842). The Mongol empire (and then Yuan dynasty 1270-1368) was the next power to control this area. During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the upper Yellow River region (of which the Longwu River valley was part) served as a border region of China against non-Chinese territory. Local Mongolian and Chinese
were organized into hereditary guard units to protect this border. The Qing (1644-1911) inherited and continued this system. Starting in the Ming, the borderguards were referred to as *Turen* (local people), in contrast to the Muslims and Tibetans inhabiting this region (Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha 1985:175). In the Tongren area, four villages (*Ji*, today Nianduhu; *Li*,

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7 The green diamonds represent communities of Tuzu.
today Guomare and Gasare; Wu, today Wutun; and Tuo, today Bao; an Xia) were part of the borderguard system. The annals variously referred to these villages as tun (army post) or zhai (stockade village).

While we know these broad outlines of who historically controlled the Longwu River valley, the stories about the specific origins of the Tongren Tu are incredibly varied. Qinghai tuzu shihui lishi diaocha presents theories from three different sources. The Xunhua annals suggest that the inhabitants of the four outposts were soldiers originally from the interior (neidi). The annals also mention specific places: Jiangnan (which literally means “south of the river”; it refers to the lower Changjiang (Yangtze) region of southern Jiangsu, Anhui, and northern Zhejiang) and Hezhou (an area in Gansu). The annals go on to say that these soldiers had lived a long time in this Tibetan area and had completely assimilated. A 1947 publication (Qinghai Volume 1) specifies that those living in Wutun village originally came from the Jiangnan region, while the ancestors of those living in the other villages were from Hezhou. This publication approximates the date of settlement at 1406 (during the Ming dynasty). Information garnered from a stele in Nianduhu village basically agrees with the Xunhua annals and the 1947 publication. The stele reports that during Wanli’s rule (1572-1620), the fifteenth emperor of the Ming, a soldier by the name of Wang Tingyi led troops from the Hezhou region of Gansu to defend the border by putting down a rebellion led by the Tibetans. In order to maintain peace, he and his troops settled in the area, building the fortress of Bao’an. The stele to commemorate Wang Tingyi’s accomplishments is dated around 1590, and so his expedition would have been earlier than this (1985:171, 174-175). Other scholars propose settlements from an earlier time period than the Xunhua annals. They suggest that during the Yuan dynasty (1270-1368), one thousand Mongolian and five hundred Uighur troops were dispatched from Gansu to the Longwu
valley to put down a Tibetan rebellion. These soldiers founded all but Wutun village (Li Meiling, class with author, April 20, 2005).

Oral tradition speculating about the origins of the five Tu villages presents yet more possibilities. A handful of people speculate that their ancestors came from other Tu areas. Some report that seven hundred or eight hundred years ago a person from Huzhu came to the Longwu River valley, bore four sons, and built Longwu monastery. Still others tell of three brothers from the Minhe Sanchuan area who settled and founded three different villages which were later settled by eight different clans. Another oral tradition reports that the original settlers of these villages originally come from someplace in the interior in order to defend the border, from someplace east of Beijing. Several older folks in Nianduhu told researchers that they were from Jianbuluo or Kalong. Another tradition claims Mongolian ancestry, either originating in Alashan in Inner Mongolia, Husijing in northeastern China, or Ganzhou in Gansu. One last oral tradition circulated in Guomare is that their ancestors were part of the Hor kingdom. For this reason, villagers in Guomare refuse to place pictures of King Gesar in their homes or their temples, in sharp contrast to Tibetans, for whom King Gesar is a hero (Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha 1985: 176-179).

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8 A river in eastern Mongolia (Li Meiling, class with author, April 20, 2005).
9 This reference comes from the Tibetan epic, King Gesar, which details the heroic exploits of King Gesar. The Hor kingdom, a kingdom of northern Mongolian peoples, was defeated in an epic battle by King Gesar of the Ling kingdom in the eleventh century.
10 The section recording these various oral traditions from Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha concludes that the Hor question seems to be the most promising for shedding light on the origins of the Tu. Much research has since been conducted with regard to the Hor question, which relates to understanding the origins of all of the Tu (not just those in Tongren). In the 1960s, the Tuzu jianshi jianzhi hebian was the first work to discuss this Tibetan designation of Hor. This word had previously been translated simply as “Mongolian,” but the authors pointed out that the Tibetans had other words for the Mongolians. They hypothesized that the Tu were a mixture of the Mongolians and Hor; this did not resolve, however, who the Hor were. However, more recent research has refined the meaning. Hor is a Tibetan word meaning “the Han who live at the border.” Kuoduan, a Yuan dynasty prince, sent several troops in 1244 to settle along the border between Tibet and Gansu in order to keep the Tibetans in check. In 1247, Sajiabanzheda, a Tibetan leader, pledged allegiance to the Yuan, agreeing to pay tribute to avoid invasion. In his letter to the Tibetans explaining his decision, he refers to the Yuan (the Mongolians) as Hor. This appears to be the first usage of the term. What is of interest is that Tibetan has a separate word for Mongolians, Sog. Li Keyou and Li
Some of these stories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The language spoken by the Tongren Tu living in Nianduhu, Guomare, Gasare, and Bao’an is Mongolic; analysis of dialectal differences suggests that the village of Nianduhu is the ultimate source for all speakers of this dialect (Wu 2003:327). Certain phonological innovations suggest that Guomare and Gasare were founded next. Bao’an was then later settled by a group from Guomare and Gasare. From Wang Tingyi’s stele, we know that Bao’an was founded sometime before 1590, and therefore Gasare, Guomare, and Nianduhu would have been settled before this. Nianduhu’s founders were probably troops sent from Gansu to defend this border region. There are records as early as the 1220s of the Mongolian army crushing the resistance of Tibetan clans in the Kokonor area (Mongolian designation for Qinghai) (Buell 1993:473). All Yuan emperors, “sent massive troops and important officials to occupy Hezhou and Xining, in order to put down disturbances among the unruly Tibetan peoples. In the sixth year of the emperor Zhiyuan (1269) Aoluchi was given the title Western Pacifying King and occupied the Lanzhou-Xining region” (Slater 2003:18). Where these troops were from before they settled in Nianduhu via Hezhou is not known. However, these troops would have been primarily Mongolian.

Wutun, the fifth Tu village in the Longwu River valley, likely has a different origin story. The character 吳 that is consistently used today in the name of the village is one that refers to one of the Warring States into which China was divided during the Eastern Zhou period (770-256 BC), comprising parts of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, one of the Three Kingdoms (220-280) occupying the middle and lower Changjiang (Yangtze) valley, or the name for the area comprising southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang (Wei 1997:1311). This character suggests

Meiling posit, then, that Hor actually referred to what are today called the Tu (see Heyuan mengguer ren 2005). Today, the Tongren Tu are issued two identity cards: one in Mandarin and one in Tibetan. Interestingly, on their Tibetan identity cards they are classified as Hor. This word continues to be used, at least by the Amdo Tibetans in Huangnan. (I do not know, however, if this term could be extended and applied to the Tu living elsewhere.)
that perhaps Wutun was an army post of soldiers from the region referred to as Wu. Unfortunately, the very same character can be a surname, suggesting that Wutun was an army post whose founder’s surname was Wu. Either of these meanings is plausible according to the information we have from the annals. The former meaning is supported by the passages which refer to settlers coming from Jiangnan; the latter by the fact that the four village outposts were all called by =surnames (Ji, Li, Tuo, and Wu). What is clear linguistically is that although villagers from Wutun are classified along with the other four villages as Tuzu, the language spoken in Wutun is genetically unrelated. There are three Wutun-speaking villages who speak this separate Chinese-Tibetan creole. It can be classified as a Sinitic language that has undergone, “a period of exceptionally rapid change under conditions of intensive contact with non-Sinitic languages, and in relative isolation from other forms of Chinese” (Janhunen et al 2008:11). The basic vocabulary and grammar are cognates with Mandarin Chinese, while the cultural and structural properties are influenced by neighboring non-Sinitic languages (Amdo Tibetan and Tongren Tu). This linguistic evidence suggests that the original settlers of Wutun were likely Han Chinese (although whether the founder was a Han with the surname Wu or a Han from the Wu area remains a mystery).

When linguists classify the four Tongren Tu villages, they group them together with the Bao’anzu, a minority nationality of only 12, 200 (1990), rather than with the village of Wutun. After Bao’an was built in the reign of Wanli in the Ming dynasty, it served as the administrative center for the Longwu River valley. Han Chinese and Muslim traders came and settled here. The Tu living in Bao’an were increasingly connected to the Muslim community, with some converting to Islam. Sometime during the early years of Tongzhi’s reign in the Qing (1856-1875) armed conflict broke out between those who remained Tibetan Buddhist and those who had
become Muslim. The Muslims fled for refuge among the Salar in Xunhua (north of Bao’an) before finally settling in the three villages of Ganhetan, Dadun, and Lijiacun in Dahejia Township of Dongxiang Salar Jishishan Autonomous County in Gansu’s Linxia Hui Autonomous District (Wu 2003:325-327). These two dialects continue to be mutually intelligible, although the language spoken in Tongren County has been influenced by Amdo Tibetan and the language spoken in Dahejia Township has been influenced by Hezhou, the local Chinese-based creole. There is apparently still some contact between these two communities; during the New Year’s celebration of 2005 the Dahejia community sent representatives to Bao’an as a gesture of gratitude for not completely annihilating them one hundred and fifty years before.

However, all five villages (Nianduhu, Guomare, Gasare, Bao’an, and Wutun) that made up the four military outposts are today politically classified as Tuzu. Chen Naixiong, the lead researcher for the team sent out after liberation to research these communities, decided that they should be included in the newly invented Tu nationality based on similarities in language and clothing, and because they called themselves Turen (Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha 1985:178). Chinese linguists divide the Tu language into three mutually unintelligible dialect communities: the Tongren Tu, the Huzhu Tu, and the Minhe Tu. The Huzhu Tu identify

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11 It is interesting that similarity in culture (i.e. religion) is not mentioned as a motivating factor. Even though the language spoken by the Bao’an Tu is actually more closely related to the Tongren Tu, they practice Islam, whereas the other Tu communities are also Tibetan Buddhist.

12 Given that this was one of the primary factors for classifying this community as Tuzu, the following chapters will prove this point ironic.

13 I have never heard nor read about this from any other source. Ironically, neither the Tongren Tu nor the other communities of Tu called themselves Turen; it was surrounding Han Chinese who called them this. The first record of this appellation appears during the Ming dynasty in the Ming shilu. Many Han were sent to this border area, and they first called the Tu Tu (native, aboriginal) da (Mongolian). This was to distinguish them from other Mongolians who lived west of Qinghai Lake and who came sometime in the 1400s. The Tuda predated them. Some Chinese scholars take this to mean that there were already discernible differences between Tu and Mongolians (Li Meiling, class with author, April 20, 2005).

14 Western linguists define these as three separate languages.
themselves as Qighaan Mongghul (White Mongolians). They live today in communities in Qinghai Province in Huzhu Tu Autonomous County and Datong Hui and Tu Autonomous County and in Gansu Province’s Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County. They number around 150,000, surrounded by a majority population of Han and Hui who influence the Tu culture and language. Although their origins are murky (like the Tongren Tu), it is clear that they submitted to the Ming rather than returning north to Mongolia. They became sedentary agriculturalists and formed part of the borderguard between Chinese and Tibetan regions (Georg 2003:286-287).

The Minhe Tu refer to themselves as Mangghuer. They live in the Sanchuan area of Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County in Qinghai Province, and number about 25,000. The predominantly Mongolic structures of the Minhe Tu language also suggest that Mongolian speakers played a key role in the historical development of the group (Slater 2003:17). However, like the other two dialects, the details of the early history remain shrouded. As I pointed out in footnote eleven, Turen is a term used historically by surrounding populations of Han Chinese and Han Chinese administrators to distinguish the people living in these dialect areas from others such as the Hui and the Tibetans. In the 1950s, the Chinese researchers rejected the various autonyms used by the Tu communities (Mongghul and Mangghuer) because of their similarity in Mandarin to the

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15 This was originally a Han classification applied to those Mongolians who were the closest to the Han and were thus influenced by Han agriculture and culture. However, it was eventually adopted by the Tu themselves (Li Meiling, class with author, March 15, 2005).

16 Chinese scholars who research the origins of the Tu basically fall into one of two camps. Chen Qisheng was the first to propose in 1937 that the Tu descended from the Tuhuyun. The Tuyuhun originally came from the Hulusunbuir region in what is now Liaoning Province in the third century. They established an empire that stretched across present-day Qinghai, part of Gansu, and southern Xinjiang, until they were defeated by the Tibetan empire in 663. Many moved back to their former territories, while others remained and became part of the Tibetan empire. References to the Tuyuhun disappear in Chinese sources by the tenth century (Cooke 2008:43). This idea continues to be very influential; Lü Jianfu’s 2002 book, *Tuzu shi*, represents a complete treatment of this topic. The other camp posits a Mongolian ethnogenesis; Taoketahu (Tuzu yuanliu xinyi (1982)) and Li Keyou and Li Meiling (Heyuan mengguer ren (2005)) represent this side. This question of the origins of the Tu remains one of the most heated in Chinese scholarship about the Tu minority nationality. The very earliest Western scholars generally pointed to primarily Mongolian origins for the Tu. G. N. Potanin was the first to discuss the origin of the Tu in his two volume work published in 1893. Schram, the Belgian priest who researched the Tu living in the Huzhu area in the early 1900s, points to Turkish roots for one of the Huzhu Tu clans (see Schram’s monograph *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Frontier, Part I* (1954) for more information).
name already selected for the Mongolians (menggu). However, because of differences in
geography, economy, and culture, they deemed it best to create a separate category for the Tu.
Thus, the term Tuzu, derived from Ming historical records, was adopted. Cooke identifies this
point in time as the beginning of a sense of exile for the Tu people; she sees the assignment of
this name as a chance “linguistic intersection” that has suspended the Tu in a Chinese cultural
framework (2008:36).17

In the realm of cultural research, the Tongren Tu are not classified with either the
Bao’anzu or the Tuzu, but rather with the Amdo Tibetans. (Indeed, the surrounding Amdo
population, as well as the Han and the Hui living in Regong, are much more culturally salient to
the Tongren Tu than are the Bao’anzu or the Tuzu, as the rest of the paper will show.) As I have
already mentioned, the Amdo are the majority population in the Longwu River valley. Tongren
is the relatively recent Mandarin name for the town (since 1928); Tibetans refer to this town and
area as Regong after the largest monastery in the area (founded in 1301).18 The Tibetans living
in the Longwu River valley (as well as in the valleys of the Longwu’s tributaries) practice
subsistence agriculture, growing wheat, rapeweed, broad beans, and potatoes. Those farther up
the mountains, up on the grasslands, are nomadic pastoralists, herding yak. This division of
livelihood is not absolute; many communities engage in both agricultural and pastoral production.
Some of the Tibetans of this area are thought to have been sent from Central Tibet sometime
between 1235-1280 to settle. A local tradition tells of groups of Tibetans fleeing to this area
from their homelands around Qinghai Lake about five hundred years ago. Over time, these

17 I agree with Cooke that the label Tu is artificial. However, her argument perhaps oversimplifies the picture. She
overlooks the point that the Tu autonyms when transliterated into Chinese sound very much like menggu, the term
already used for Mongolians. Also, she argues those scholars who defend the Tuyuhun origin story are Han, while
those scholars who support a Mongolian ethnogenesis are Tu. Thus, she continues, the Tu scholarship provides an
agentive opportunity for the Tu to reclaim their own sense of identity embodied in the term mongghul. While this
thesis is attractive, the picture is more complicated. The first scholar to propose a Mongolian ethnogenesis is
actually Mongolian, and many Tu scholars support the idea that the Tu descend from the Tuyuhun.
18 Alternatively Reb gong, Reb kong.
groups came to be known as the twelve tribes of Regong (see Stevenson 2000 for a more complete history of the Amdo Tibetans living in Regong). Since Huangnan is a Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the language of wider communication is Tibetan. Government documents, signs, identity cards are all translated into Mandarin Chinese and Tibetan. Any official event always has two masters of ceremonies: one who presents in Mandarin, and the other who translates to Tibetan. Tibetan is the medium of instruction of schools (except for a few in the county seat of Tongren where classes are taught in Mandarin). Children attending school in the five Tu villages learn Tibetan well before they learn Mandarin.

Completing the ethnic make-up of the Tongren Tu’s immediate context are the Han Chinese and the Hui, who are more recent arrivals to the area. I have already outlined the arrival of the Han who were the original settlers of Wutun and the influence of Muslims in Baoan. Regong formally became a market town at the end of the nineteenth century when the reincarnated Buddha permitted business people from Gansu and Xunhua to engage in trade. This brought in an influx of Han and Hui traders (Lin 2005:46). Even more have moved to Tongren since 1949 as part of the incorporation of the county and prefecture into the PRC administrative structure.

For the purposes of this paper, I refer to those classified as Tu living in Tongren County as the Tongren Tu. This move is meant to emphasize their geographic location rather than their linguistic classification, which I feel more accurately aligns with their own self-identity. In addition, it follows the paradigm established for referring to the other Tu communities (geographic locator + Tu). My retention of the official label Tu is deliberate; I feel it highlights the awkwardness of this label for those living in Tongren, as will become clear throughout the rest of the paper. However, I must be explicit that this is not how the Tongren Tu think of or call
themselves; I certainly never heard this term used self-referentially. Nor do I, by the use of this term, want to suggest that this classification is necessarily more accurate than others. Since this community of people lacks an ethnonym, it is merely a matter of expedience to use the term Tongren Tu.

1.4 Method

The previous section summarizes how others label the Tongren Tu. Before turning to how the Tongren Tu perceive and classify themselves, I need to contextualize my own research methods and present how those I lived with (perhaps) perceived my presence. I moved to Qinghai Province in August 2004. I spent a year and a half studying Mandarin and Tu history and culture at Qinghai Nationalities University, collecting representations of the Tu minority nationality as background research, and building a network of research relationships. One of the most important relationships I formed was with Li Meiling, a professor in the Ethnic Studies Research Group who specializes in primarily linguistic research of the Huzhu Tu dialect. Li Meiling exposed me to the Chinese scholarship of the Tu, freely sharing books, journal articles, and information. She also introduced me to the family with whom I initially lived when I first moved to the village of Nianduhu in the spring of 2006.

This dissertation is primarily based on research conducted over a sixteen-month period during 2006 and 2007. I lived in Nianduhu nine months of this period. I was fortunate to do this fieldwork; in the fall of 2005 the provincial level education department changed residency requirements for foreign students. With the support of Qinghai Nationalities University’s

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19 I had begun my Mandarin studies in the United States in the summer of 2001.
20 As is the case for much ethnographic fieldwork, my “choice” to live in the village Nianduhu was largely a matter of serendipity: this is simply where I had contacts. But fortunately it proved to be an excellent location due to its prominence among the Tu villages in the Longwu River valley. It is the only village to celebrate wutu, a winter festival described in detail in chapter four. Out of all of the Tu villages the celebration of ężiça (a harvest festival discussed in chapter four) in Nianduhu is the largest. It is the only village involved in the production of duixiu (I will talk about this craft in chapter three). And as I have indicated, Nianduhu is likely the oldest Tu village in this area. The other villages are not far from Nianduhu;
foreign affairs department, I applied for (and was granted) special permission to live in a different location from my visa-granting institution. During my time in Nianduhu, I engaged in daily activities with local villagers and also conducted interviews. In my participant-observation, I attended village events, as well as participated in the more regular activities of daily life. I visited the Regong Yishu museum in Tongren, as well as various institutes and shops that are part of this new art movement. I also started to learn the Tongren Tu dialect. I administered a stimulus kit (which will be described in more detail in the next chapter) to thirty-three people in order to generate safe discussion about ethnic identity. I conducted informal interviews with elderly individuals about their memories of their childhood. I asked a fairly similar battery of questions of all of the individuals, although the format was more that of a conversation. These oral histories contributed to my understanding of how structural pressures may have influenced the community, as well as seeing the ways people’s actions have made and transformed the world in which they live. I also informally interviewed those involved in the production of Tibetan Buddhist art about their training and subsequent involvement in this craft. I watched thangka being painted, duixiu being assembled, and sculptures being formed in order to understand the process of how these works of art and objects of worship are made.

I continued my research during the time I lived in Xining (for the fall semester, 2006-2007). I made frequent trips back to Nianduhu, as well as conducted interviews with Tongren Tu who lived in Xining. I traveled to Beijing in October of 2006 where I visited sites which promulgate official representations of the Tu minority nationality. I continued my classes in the Tongren Tu dialect through Qinghai Nationalities University.

In the spring of 2007, I made a number of day trips to Huzhu Tu Autonomous County in order to administer the stimulus kit to thirty more individuals. I had made a number of trips to
this area since the summer of 2004 to attend festivals and to participate in “typical” tourist activities, such as visiting some of the many model minority villages outside of the county seat.

During my period of fieldwork, I worked with several different individuals who were simultaneously research assistants, translators, and language teachers. They were crucial in coaching me in local etiquette and language, as well as gaining entrée for me to many homes. They were an invaluable assistance. Since all of them had lived outside of their home villages for various lengths of time, they could often catch when my understanding as an outsider was skewed. They of course provided immeasurable linguistic assistance to my research. In Nianduhu, youth and most men speak Mandarin with various levels of proficiency (as well as their dialect of Tu and Tibetan). Women who are middle-aged and older know very little Mandarin. However, when given a preference, even those who attended college preferred to speak in their mother tongue. In Huzhu County everyone I interviewed knew the local dialect of Mandarin (Qinghai-hua) as well as their own dialect of Tu. Again, youth and some men could speak Mandarin with varying degrees of clarity. Most of the work I conducted was in Mandarin. Over the course of my research, as I learned more and more of the Tongren Tu dialect, I could understand the responses to my questions; however, I still asked my questions in Mandarin. In Huzhu, I relied on my companions to translate all questions and answers into Mandarin.

When I initially arrived in Nianduhu, while villagers did not seem necessarily suspicious of me, they certainly could not make sense of my desire to live there. Because of their previous contact with tourists, they were accustomed to foreigners who wanted to visit, see some religious art or unusual aspects of their festivals, and then leave. Villagers were initially uncomfortable

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21 In Nianduhu, I worked one summer with a young man who had just graduated from high school before he left for college; I then found a young woman who had just graduated from college. Both were from Nianduhu. In Huzhu, I traveled either with a young woman originally from Duoshidai Village in Huzhu County who was pursuing her master’s degree in Ethnic Studies at Qinghai Nationalities University, or with a young woman originally from Xiaersi Village in Huzhu County who taught middle school.
with my long-term presence and attempts to incorporate myself into daily life. On the street, people at first basically ignored me. However, after about six weeks I rented some rooms in an empty house owned by a prominent family in the community. I found a research assistant and started to administer the stimulus task to individuals. People’s attitudes of me shifted at this point. I was greeted on the street, and people patiently slowed down their speech to allow me to practice my few, newly acquired phrases. I was invited over to people’s homes for meals. People brought over bread for me to eat. I became close to the families of my two research assistants. By the time I left in August 2007, while still definitely an outsider, I felt like I had a place in the community. Because of my relational bonds with villagers in Nianduhu, as well as my relationships at Qinghai Nationalities University, I tried not to do or say things that would make those living in Nianduhu uncomfortable or embarrass those who had worked so hard to secure permission for me to live there. I tried to “step lightly,” especially in regard to questions about Tibetan independence or the Dalai Lama. I did not want to leave open the possibility that those who had helped me or had conversations with me could be open to future censure. Once rapport had been established, individuals sometimes shared their views about these issues. For this reason, all names of informants are pseudonyms. During my time of fieldwork, individuals in Huangnan Prefecture were occasionally jailed for their openness about these issues; the political climate here (as in all Tibetan areas of China) has become even more sensitive since.22

1.5 Overview of Dissertation

In this introductory chapter, I have introduced the interstitial nature of Tongren Tu identity. I have also outlined the theoretical framework motivating my understanding of these

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22 See for example, The New York Times, Tuesday, March 18, 2008, which features a picture of monks in Tongren protesting as part of its coverage of the most recent Tibetan protests in the spring of 2008 (Anna 2008). Later in April, crowds formed to protest the detention of some monks. Security forces clamped down, beating and detaining more than one hundred monks and laypeople and imposing curfews. One contact described this past spring in Tongren County as luan (chaotic).
issues. I have discussed the various ways in which the Tongren Tu have been labeled in different
classificatory projects. Finally, I have concluded with a discussion of myself as a researcher,
including the context framing my research and my approach to conducting fieldwork.

Chapter two presents the results and analysis of a stimulus kit administered to
respondents in Tongren and Huzhu counties. What a minority nationality is supposed to look
like is part of the national consciousness. Clothing can serve as a particularly potent symbol
because of its polyvalence (manipulability), and the present-day situation of Tu dress illustrates
some of the complicated and flexible options. Tongren Tu clothing has become almost
indistinguishable from the surrounding Amdo Tibetans while Tu living in Huzhu, the heartland
of Tu culture, still often wear “traditional” Tu dress. By drawing on current anthropological,
linguistic, and psychological research on categorization, I assembled official representations of
the Tu for a stimulus kit consisting of three tasks. These three tasks were meant to tease out
perceptions of Self and Other, to understand how the Tongren Tu classify themselves (and others)
and how the Huzhu Tu classify themselves (and others).

Chapter three examines structural pressures affecting the Tongren Tu and their self-
identification. In looking at larger scale political and economic events, my emphasis is not on
merely describing when or how these events penetrated the Tu communities in Tongren County.
Rather, I am interested in how these external forces provided a context for social and cultural
transformation, and in how people in these communities selectively reinterpreted these outside
forces (Ortner 1994:402). Human actors are not merely reactors or enactors of some external
system. People make and transform the world in which they live; everyday activities build wider
structures and social movements. People’s actions often produce unintended consequences that
in turn transform their world. Since Liberation in 1949, the five Tongren Tu villages, all of
which are in close proximity to the county seat of Tongren, have lost land historically used for agriculture. Some of the land attrition may be attributed to growth of the county seat, and part can be traced to collectivization. The effect is a major economic shift for most in these communities, from living as subsistence agriculturalists to becoming landless peasants. Land attrition has created a context for the Tongren Tu to start seeking other means of income. The monasteries in the five Tongren Tu villages have been historically lauded as the birthplace of thangka painting, a traditional form of Tibetan Buddhist religious art. In the past, patrons invited famous monks from these communities to travel and paint throughout China. However, the upheaval of the 1950s and 1960s impacted the production of thangka painting as monasteries in the area closed their doors. In the 1980s Deng Xiaoping opened up China’s economy to more private enterprise, and thangka painters began to paint once again in earnest. The primary location for production has shifted from within the monasteries to private homes, signaling another meaningful change for these communities’ context, as well as for the sacred nature of this painting. The men in these five villages have won national and international acclaim for their thangka. Women have even begun to quietly help in lesser skilled aspects of this work.

Chapter four describes the interplay of tourism and identity among the Tongren Tu. In recent years, the broader mass of the Chinese public started, for the first time, to accumulate enough disposable income for travel. The latest recent push to develop the West has directed the tourist gaze and new money to geographically isolated communities in Qinghai Province, such as to the five villages of the Tongren Tu. Tourists making the pilgrimage to Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture desire to consume “authentic” Tibetan life and art. In an effort to meet this demand, the face of the five Tongren Tu villages is physically changing. But more significantly, tourism foregrounds the question of identity. The Tongren Tu are learning that
tourists come to buy Tibetan thangka, not Tu thangka. When queried, members in these communities are reluctant to state they are Tu, but rather self-identify as Tibetan. Some officially change their ethnic status on their identity papers from Tu to Zang when they turn eighteen, and rumors circulate about the five villages becoming Tibetan wholesale. However, in the current political climate, this option is not very plausible. Thus, the Tongren Tu and the local government engage in acts of subtle implication of ethnicity, in an effort to avoid state disapproval while still reproducing the images tourists bring with them.

Chapter five, the conclusion, summarizes chapters two through four and discusses their contribution to the field of anthropology.
Chapter Two. Dressing Up: Signification of Clothing among the Tu

1. Introduction

One of the striking visual images from the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing illustrates the mantra about China’s status as a multi-cultural society. A procession of fifty-six children dressed in the bright costumes of China’s minority nationalities carried the nation’s flag into the auditorium. They handed the flag off to eight adult men dressed in military uniforms, who then raised the country’s flag as the first part of the stirring flag-raising ceremony. However, the international press pounced on the fact that none of the children was actually a member of a minority; they were all members of the Han majority. Yuan Zhifeng, deputy director of Galaxy Children's Art Troupe from which the fifty-six children were selected, defended, “I assume they think the kids were very natural looking and nice” (Chao and Leow 2008:A5). The international response to this mimetic parade was heated. One headline maligned, “New fakery scandal, as China’s ‘ethnic’ children actually come from Han majority.” This pageantry was labeled as “artifice”; the authors complained, “There were no Uighurs, no Zhuangs, no Huis, no Tujias, no Mongols and definitely no Tibetans. Indeed, in the latest in a series of manipulations that have soured memories of the spectacular opening ceremony, all 56 were revealed to be Han Chinese, who make up more than 90 per cent of the country’s 1.3 billion people” (Macartney and Fletcher 2008).

How are we to understand the vehemence of the international press and China’s blasé response to this Olympic episode? The response of the international community must be contextualized in light of the most recent Tibetan protests in the spring of 2008. In the eyes of the international community, this parade of Han Chinese children dressed as China’s minority nationalities.

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23 “Zhongguo shige duo minzu de guojia, you 56 ge minzu” (China is a multi-national country, with fifty-six nationalities).
nationalities symbolized the suppression and masking of the minority voice in China. The international press interpreted this image as an exercise of the hegemony of the state. The Chinese, however, saw this event quite differently. Wang Wei, vice-president of the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee commented, “It is rather normal and usual for actors and actresses to be dressed in costumes from different ethnic groups. There is nothing special about it” (Macartney and Fletcher 2008). At the heart of this controversy are the ways in which ethnic identity in China is expressed and concealed. Identity is displayed and hidden in cultures through conventional means. As people express identity, they draw on certain culturally ordered representations. This chapter looks at how clothing in China, and more particularly the clothing of minority nationalities, works to signify identity. I argue that clothing is one of the primary means for indexing ethnicity in China, and therefore it serves as an appropriate channel for signaling transformed identity. Clothing does not merely picture a certain identity, but serves as a conventional way in which the identity of those wearing the clothes is attributed. In order to explore this notion, I will first establish how clothing works as a sign of identity in China. I particularize this argument by looking at the history of the Tu minority nationality costume and the development of a prototype of Tu clothing. I then present my analysis of the results of some tasks which seek to account for how clothing works to signal identity among the Tu. But before examining the case of the Tu, I will step back to look more generally at the clothing of China’s minority nationalities.

2. Dressing Up: Wearing Ethnicity in China

Images of China’s fifty-five minority nationalities are simply part of the Chinese national consciousness. Most Chinese learn early how to visualize their polity’s fifty-five minority nationalities. Even preschool-aged children know that China is not homogenous, but is rather
home to fifty-six nationalities. Children at this young age are not required to remember all fifty-six; rather, the textbooks I surveyed selected four minorities (Tibetans, Mongolians, Uighur, and Hui) for inclusion. The selection of these four minorities as the first which children must remember is telling. The choice cannot help but bring to mind the Republican era flag. Sun Yatsen emphasized China’s multinational nature, and so the five stripes on the flag were meant to represent the Han coexisting with certain “advanced” ethnic minorities (those being the Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans, and Hui). While Tibetans, Mongolians, Uighurs, and Hui are certainly among China’s largest minority groups, the size of their populations does not necessarily merit selection as the first four minorities to be learned; the Zhuang, Manchu, and Miao are all more populous. Nor do they primarily live in Yunnan, the province most commonly associated with China’s minority nationalities; rather, the population centers for these four groups are all located in China’s north and west.

However, all four of these groups have historically had more problematic relations with the Han nation-state, whereas the minority ethnicities in Yunnan have not posed a serious threat to the government (Rossabi 2004:12). Rossabi refers to these groups as, “…the more politically and strategically significant minority regions in China. Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet have witnessed varying degrees of turbulence over the more than five decades of Communist rule” (Rossabi 2005:11). Beijing continues to keep a tight grip on Xinjiang and Tibet, homelands to the Uighurs and Tibetans respectively. Both of these groups continue to protest periodically for independence. The Uighurs were involved in many violent episodes, including attacks on government officials throughout 2008; the Tibetans’ most recent protests also made international news in March of 2008. The establishment of the five independent countries in Central Asia (four of which are predominantly Turkish like the Uighurs) after the break-up of the
Soviet Union causes China to keep a close watch on Xinjiang. Tibet’s international movement for greater autonomy or independence has been particularly thorny for China. Although China’s northwest abounds with Hui autonomously governed regions, the Hui do not have a historically contested homeland. However, ties to the Middle East have been strengthened in recent years as more Hui make the Haaj and imams from the Middle East are invited to speak in mosques throughout China. During my time of fieldwork in Xining (2004-2007), three mosques were undergoing extensive renovation and expansion with the help of funds from the Middle East. With the fall of the Soviet Union came increased autonomy for Mongolia and the accompanying threat of a pan-Mongol movement that potentially challenges China’s interests in Mongolia, and so China nervously monitors the relationship between Mongolia and Inner Mongolia. These four minority groups live in the parts of China that have been part of the “Develop the West” campaign, which means that these areas have been the recent focus of the government’s investment and economic development policies. For all these reasons, the Tibetans, Mongolians, Uighurs, and Hui figure prominently in the political consciousness of the state.

While the selection of which minorities to feature gives insight into the state’s relationship with the minority nationalities, the manner in which they are portrayed so three-, four- and five-year-olds can easily identify and remember them sheds light on how ethnic minorities are categorized into kinds. In one textbook, on the left-hand side of the page are brightly colored line drawings of the four ethnic minorities. The right-hand side depicts material objects (a white hada, a horse and mandolin, a tambourine, and a white hat) that are associated with each particular minority. The exercise tests the child on his knowledge of which object best represents which minority. A child is supposed to correctly draw a line to connect the Tibetan with the hada, the Mongolian with the horse and mandolin, the Uighur with the tambourine, and

24 A silk scarf given to honor someone in Tibetan culture.
the Hui with the white hat. At the bottom of the page, the text asks the child whether or not he can name the ethnic minorities. So children are taught at an early age to engage their observational powers to divide the social world around them into kinds. Moreover, they practice doing so in a prescribed way; the categories are not open for debate. Rather, there are specific things to notice in the cultural milieu. In China’s case, clothing, or more accurately costume, is selected as the feature that is salient to form difference.25 The carpet hanging in the entrance to the museum at the Central Nationalities University located in Beijing, China’s premier university for research about minority nationalities, emphatically underlines this point.

![Figure One](image.jpg)

Figure One. “Zhongguo shi ge duo minzu de guojia…” (photograph taken by author October 16, 2006).

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25 Eicher defines clothing as simply those articles of clothing that cover the body. Costume is distinguished as those garments worn specifically as an ensemble, which allows for the presentation of a performance identity or the assertion of one’s identity as a member of an ethnic group. Costume, Eicher delineates, also refers to that ensemble of clothing worn by members of an ethnic group for special occasions that serve as an affirmation of the group’s traditions and solidarity. She writes, “A useful distinction between clothing and costume refers to the ensemble that allows individuals to perform in dance, theater, or a masquerade, hiding or temporarily canceling an individual’s everyday identity” (2005:271).
The carpet hangs on the wall of the foyer, stretching at least thirty feet long and ten feet high. It portrays the fifty-six nationalities recognized by the state. In the very center of the portrait stands a young Han man. He stands alone, with the other fifty-five minority nationalities arrayed around him. The Chinese loanword, *ku* (cool) could easily be used to describe him. He stands at ease, gazing off to the side. His t-shirt is tucked into blue jeans, and the sleeves of his jacket are rolled up. His backpack is slung casually off to one side, and one can clearly observe tennis shoes on his feet. In sharp contrast to the Han man, the other fifty-five minority nationalities, who are mostly female, wear “traditional” clothing. They are all oriented so as to be gazing at the young Han male. Some dance, and others carry what appear to be gifts of fruit, flowers, or song. Many are smiling. The more familiar of the minority nationalities (such as Tibetan, Mongolian, Uighur, and Hui) are grouped in closely to the Han man, while the lesser known fade into the crowd. The spectator is left to ponder the symbolism of this scene. The carpet pictorially communicates the social Darwinism that has historically shaped social science theory and much of Beijing’s understanding and interaction with the minority nationalities. The Han man’s clothing is Western and embodies modernity, globalization, and progress. The minority nationalities’ attire crosses the line from clothing to costume, symbolizing the backwardness of these peoples. This carpet underlines Blum’s point that, “the minority nationalities help the Han to see themselves” (2001:176).

The use of clothing in this carpet to signify the minority nationalities as primitive and the Han young man as modern is nothing new. As part of their civilizing project, various dynasties in China have been intimately concerned with governing, understanding, and representing the peoples within their realm and its peripheries. We can learn how those in power understood and categorized people by examining paintings of scenes and that highlighted the distinctions
between Han Chinese and ethnic minorities in appearance, both in physical features and in clothing. As early as the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), the imperial court collected illustrations of its tributaries into a book, *Shan hai jing* (Classic of Mountains and Seas). Many of the depictions are fantastic, including, for example, people who are part animal and part human (Hostetler 2001:87-88). During the 6 Dynasties period (420-589 CE), Han artists developed visual codes for the depiction of non-Han peoples, even though standardized written descriptions of peripheral peoples and category labels had been established for some time (Leung 2003:195). In the Tang dynasty (618-907), four agreed-upon categories (tribute bearers, Buddhist figures, the Yue/Yi, and nomads) provided artists with symbolic types to portray a sense of “Other” in their work (Leung 2003:195). To indicate ethnic differences, Tang artists portrayed people with a range of non-Han physiognomic features, such as round eyes, large noses, or curly facial hair. Clothing in Tang scenes did not signify different ethnicities, but rather different classes or statuses. In fact, *hufu* (barbarian clothing) enjoyed a peak of popularity in the Tang court in the eighth and ninth centuries (Abramson 2003:124-127). Dress in Tang paintings, such as “The Eight Noble Officials,” underscores the Tang sentiment that peripheral peoples, or barbarians, could conform to Tang norms while retaining their non-Tang identity (Abramson 2003:133). However, the fantastic continued to exist alongside the realistic in these collections. In the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the *Xuan he hua pu* (published in 1120) catalogued scenes of nomadic life beyond the frontier with horsemen in foreign costume, as well as “‘strange customs, unknown animals, and other remarkable productions of alien lands’” (Hostetler 2001:89). The Ming dynastic encyclopedia *San cai tu hui* (published in 1610) devoted one section to illustrations of people and costumes based on direct observation as well as non-

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26 Ho Ping-ti emphasizes this period as key in the development of Chinese frontier relations; he underlines the polyethnic nature of this period (1998:130-132).
verifiable descriptions of strange creatures and people. For example, one picture shows a “man with long arms,” another a “man from the country of long legs” (Hostetler 2001:90).

In the mid-1600s, compilers of gazetteers began to include direct observation in their accounts, in addition to relying on previous textual materials, and the quality of the ethnographic depiction of people improved. For instance, the 1629 version of the Guizhou Gazetteer not only revises information contained in earlier additions, but makes major changes in woodblock illustrations that accompany the text to portray more realistic representations of people (Hostetler 2001:130). By 1760, the Qing had doubled the size of the empire’s territory. Not only were geographic boundaries expanded, but so was the multiethnic nature of the realm. Perdue points out that while the frontier zone was a luminal space where cultural identities merged and shifted, “The story of the eighteenth-century Qing empire is an effort to seal off this ambiguous, threatening atmosphere once and for all by incorporating it within the fixed boundaries of a distinctly defined space and by drawing lines that clearly demarcated separate cultures” (2005:41-42). It was in this context that as the Qing dynasty centralized control over peripheral provinces, administrators were given the task of classifying and categorizing the non-Han people living in these areas. Their efforts, “…at once served to define the extent of the empire and to articulate the vision of a geographically diverse and multiethnic imperial realm” (Teng 2004:5). The basis for naming people combined designations of their broader ethnic group with specific observable traits, such as dress, location, and livelihood. So, the Duanqun (short-skirt) Miao were named for their costume, the Jianding (pointed-head) Miao for their hairstyle, the Hua (flowery) Miao for the color of their dress (Hostetler 2001:140-142). The Kangxi Atlases, the Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributaries, and especially the Miao albums, reflect the more
delineated categorizations in their visual representations. The artists base their illustrations on observation, and they attempt to achieve realistic representations. The preface to one Miao album reads, “[Yu Yanshan has]...encountered with his sight the appearance, clothing, and customs of the Miao, and what they like and are good at, and taken them into his mind. Having them in his mind, he echoes [their image] with his hand [in drawing]” (Hostetler 2001:165). These various collections of ethnographic descriptions and illustrations were intended for Han Chinese administrators, and so artists tried to capture those characteristics that were somewhat uniform and observable. Location of residence and appearance (dress and hairstyle) were most frequently referenced.

Some scholars argue that these representations are not as “scientific” and objective as Hostetler thinks. Rather, they emphasize Qing expansion as a Confucian civilizing project to transform the raw and untutored periphery into fully civilized peoples (Harrell 1995:3). Consequently, these scholars interpret the visual representations in these collections as stereotyped caricatures which reduce each group to an emblematic feature (Schein 2000:9). Diamond complains, for instance, that the pictures of the Duanqun (short-skirt) Miao exaggerate the shortness of their skirts to emphasize their shamelessness (Diamond 1995:103). Nonetheless, they do agree that these collections were a step on the way to constructing ethnic diversity as a feature defining the present-day People’s Republic of China. When the PRC engaged in its ethnic identification project in the 1950s to determine which groups would officially be recognized as minority nationalities, clothes, dance, song, and festivals were viewed as markers of a common culture (McKhann 1995:44). Today, ethnic dress remains of primary importance in

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27 The Miao albums refer to illustrated manuscripts that describe the non-Han groups in south China. Each named group receives an entry, which includes an illustration as well as a textual description. They were originally intended for administrative purposes, but copies were also distributed as gifts and were eventually sold (Hostetler 2001:159;192-194).
distinguishing minority nationalities from the Han Chinese. The introduction to a book of postcards affirms this point, declaring, “Dress is the external ‘emblem’ of a Chinese minority nationality” (Zhongguo shaoshu minzu fushi). Illustrated ethnographic representations of minority nationalities that seem hauntingly similar to the Qing collections abound. For example, one can purchase packs of cards (about the size of baseball cards); each card features a representative photograph of an ethnic minority. Fifty-three of these fifty-six cards portray a female in colorful costume (Gladney 1994:97). Magazines and television documentaries picture minorities in their “typical” attire (Schein 2000:117). Groups of ethnic minorities smile down from billboards. One can even find collections of plastic dolls dressed as the different ethnic minorities. One of my favorite examples of the importance of dress as a signifier of ethnicity is a coloring book entitled, “Beautiful Minority Clothing” (Shi 2006). The minority nationality females in this book are anime characters, and are portrayed most often in dance poses with long flowing hair, dewy eyes, and revealing clothing. Given this context, it should be of little surprise that clothing was used to signify ethnicity in the opening ceremonies.  

3. Dressing Down: The Development of Prototypical Tu Dress

As is the case of other minority nationalities in China, images of the Tu proliferate, serving to make the Tu familiar. In this section, I will briefly outline what is known historically about the image of the Tu (and more specifically their clothing) and trace how it has been recognized and reconfigured over time. As discussed in the introduction, the Tu are thought to have lived in this Qinghai-Gansu border region since the Yuan. However, the first record I have

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28 China is certainly not unique in this regard. Clothing is a common semiotic medium for the expression and display of ethnicity and other forms of identity throughout the world. Durham (1999) and Hendrickson (1995) explicate how Maya have successfully used traje in creative acts of resistance to promote Maya identity. Schneider (1987) shows how adinkra, the mourning cloth of the past, has been reinterpreted and worn by Ghanaian elite to signal their status. Batak in urban Indonesia purchase rural Batak designs to express their own Batak ethnicity (Niessen 1999). See also Milgram 1999, Tarlo 1996, and Zorn 1999 to reference how dress and the expression of ethnic identity are linked in the Philippines, India, and Bolivia.
found of their clothing dates only to the Qing.\textsuperscript{29} The Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributaries depicts Tu clothing.\textsuperscript{30} They provide images of six representative couples accompanied by almost a full page of text. The line drawings appear quite realistic in nature, corresponding to what Hostetler has analyzed as a correlation between imperial expansion and the development of the ethnographic record (Hostetler 2001). However, it is not clear in this series of pictures whether the artist has himself seen the people he is depicting, or is relying on the text to sketch the drawings. In terms of textual content, the entries begin with the administrative jurisdiction to which each group belongs. This is followed by a brief history of when the tusi (hereditary native chiefs who were responsible for governing a certain area) pledged allegiance, both previously and in the current regime; the approximate location of the group in relationship to the administrative center of Xining; observational notes about their appearance, including both dress and hairstyle; and the nature or disposition of the people. These descriptions often characterize the Tu as Han-like in appearance, with whom the gazetteer was presumably familiar.\textsuperscript{31} However, one description in particular stands out as different.

\textsuperscript{29} Hostetler details a brief history of earlier Chinese representations of Other (2001). While it is possible that there is mention of the Tu in these earlier collections from the Ming, I simply did not have access to them for this research project.

\textsuperscript{30} These entries are from the Siku quanshu edition published in 1790.

\textsuperscript{31} Such a designation also recognizes the Tu as “good” subject who had not only submitted to the Qing, but were also culturally transformed to be like the Han.
The gazetteer states, “The women wear their hair loose, and their long, collared gown is made of green and red cloth. They also use cloth in five colors with a fringe of golden thread. They also wear hats and fasten a skirt over the gown.” The line drawing accompanying the text is of course black and white, but the gazetteer captures some of the features of the clothing worn in the present-day Datong area that signifies differences from that of the Han people with which the reader would be familiar (Siku quanshu, juan 5, 62-63). Of particular interest for this thesis in the development of Tu clothing as a semiotic medium is the use of color and the hats worn by the Tu. Unique head ornamentation is mentioned in another description. In an area near present-day Huzhu, women’s headgear is described as being made of red cloth with inlaid shells on the back. A coronet made of silver (or possibly copper) topped it off (Siku quanshu, juan 5, 46-47).
The next description of Tu clothing comes from the early Republican era. Louis Schram was a Jesuit priest assigned to the mission station in Xining in 1911; he was also an anthropologist by training. He lived in close proximity to the Tu for about ten years before being transferred to Ningxia. After leaving China at the time of the communist revolution, he wrote a series of ethnographic monographs for the American Philosophical Society. Like other ethnic minorities in China, Tu women made all the clothes for their families. As Schram records, “Whenever a woman has a few minutes to spare she reaches for her sewing box” (Schram 1954:89). Tu women were especially concerned with their trousseaus; they spent months laboring on the different elements of their wedding costumes under their mother’s supervision. Women adorned their boots, sashes, and aprons with embroidery designs such as swastikas, violets, roses, and peonies, as well as Chinese characters. These items were especially prized, for a woman was evaluated according to her skill when she wore these pieces to her wedding and then to rituals for the rest of her life.32 Schram recounts the display of ritual costume as follows: “At such gatherings, boots and sashes are the articles that women compare and admire or envy; often a fine pair of boots is taken off and passed around the admiring circle of women while the proud owner modestly watches from the corner of her eyes, gracefully accepting compliments and congratulations” (Schram 1954:119).

32 Schram in fact compares the value and importance placed on a Tu woman’s embroidery to Miao groups, who are famous throughout China for their mastery of embroidery.
Figure Three. Young Tu Woman Wearing *sge niudaar* (great headdress) (photograph from Schram 1954: 124).

Women wore a long, wide-sleeved gown of dark blue cotton cloth which reached to the heels. The gown buttoned on the left (men’s gowns buttoned on the right). A sash was tied around the waist, with an apron layered over the top of the gown. For festivals, women exchanged their dark blue robes for gowns dyed in dark green, blue, or violet with red embroidered collars, and they sewed long and wide extensions onto the sleeves. In order to give the illusion that they were wearing several robes at once, each sleeve was slightly shorter than the one underneath it.

Different colors of cotton cloth, such as green, red, and violet, were selected; each strip was bordered by a narrow colored band of cloth in yellow, dark blue, or orange. Under their robes women wore wide blue cotton trousers with a white border just below the knee. The lower half
of the pants was attached to this white border, allowing for easy removal. For festivals, women replaced the everyday blue cloth with silk or satin embroidered in red. Over their robes, women wore red embroidered skirts which were split in the front and the back; this pattern was originally designed for horseback riding and was thought to be a remnant of material culture from the time their Mongolian ancestors settled during the Yuan. They buttoned waist-length sleeveless jackets of dark blue or red cotton cloth over the top half of their robes. These jackets were embroidered with gold thread and edged with brown or black velvet. Completing the festival attire were richly embroidered aprons, sashes, and boots. Schram writes that even more important than the women’s clothing was their hairstyle and distinctive headdress (niudaar).

Women normally wore small felt hats, but during festivals younger married women adopted the coiffure and hat of their husband’s family. A woman’s costume and hairstyle uniquely reflected her membership in one of the nine Tu clans (Schram 2006:261-263).

Soon after Schram left Xining for Qinghai, Frederick and Janet Wulsin traveled through the great Alashan desert on an expedition for *National Geographic*. When they arrived in Xining in 1923, they heard of an “aboriginal tribe” living thirty miles northeast of Xining, and so they set off to investigate and document this “vanishing tribe.” In their account of the visit, they describe some of the features of the appearance of the Tu people. The woman they encountered was barefoot, with long hair and a decorative blue headband. They also record,

“The To Run [Turen] men...wore jackets of coarse cream-colored woolen homespun that was durable and resisted the wet. Their shoes were of a style worn in China several generations earlier. The women wore unusual and distinctive headdresses. Both men and women wore black or green rimless hats of cotton decorated with a green star on top, and a large button of green cord on top of their black wavy hair. Unmarried girls dressed their hair in twenty to thirty tight braids that hung down all around their heads, and painted large patches of red on their cheeks. The married women did their hair in a small knot at the back of their heads, covered with a little brass cap that was held in place by a harness of red or black cloth” [Cabot 2005:142].

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33 Schram describes in great detail nine different hairstyles and hats, each particular to a different clan.
Figure Four. Tu Woman near Huzhu (photograph from Cabot 2005:143).

While there is no mention of color being used in women’s clothing, one can see in the accompanying black and white photograph that some contrast of color was used. The woman in this picture appears to be wearing everyday clothing, as opposed to the festival clothing captured by Schram. She wears a vest belted over a long robe, and peeking underneath the robe are wide pants. Her sleeves are not striped, and no perceptible embroidery adorns her clothing or her shoes. (Ironically, the woman in this photograph is wearing shoes, in contrast to the Wulsins’ written observations.) Her hair seems to be simply worn loose, and her hat is the simple rimless
hat described by the Wulsins above. The photograph of the man corresponds with their written observations; he wears a jacket which, although not cream-colored, appears to be made out of homespun, and atop his head sits a dark rimless hat.

In the 1950s, the Chinese Communist Party deployed hundreds of linguists and ethnologists to accomplish the task of determining which groups made up the new republic. The ethnological descriptions gathered by the team who studied the Tu record the clothing worn by the Tu in the early People’s Republic. While the descriptions do not specify when the clothing was worn (for everyday use or for celebratory events), one can guess that what was recorded was indeed festival clothing. The women at this time were described as wearing black, collared long robes which opened off to one side. The sleeves were multi-colored: red, yellow, green, purple, and black were all used. A red sleeveless jacket bordered with green was worn over the robe. A sash was then tied around the waist; the ends of the sash were embroidered with flowers, birds, bees, and butterflies using different embroidery techniques. Women put on red pleated skirts with a white border over their robes. The lower half of their pants was different from the upper half, and on their feet they wore embroidered shoes. Older women no longer wore multi-colored sleeves or embroidered belts, but dressed just in black or dark blue. Unmarried women wore elaborate hairstyles of braids, red yarn, and shells, and the lower half of their pants was red (Tuzu jianshi 1982:100-101). Another source depicts what women wore during the summer months in the 1950s. There are few variations to the summer costume, but of most interest to this paper is the emphasis drawn to the sleeves, embroidery, and hats. Sleeves were striped in thick bands of red, yellow, and blue. The white shirt and shoes were decorated with fine embroidery depicting flowers or other patterns. Brimmed hats made of felt were normally worn (Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha 1985:121).
In Beijing, the clothing displayed at the Central Nationalities University Museum portrays the image most familiar today to the tourist, the scholar, and the Tu themselves.

Figure Five. Tu Clothing in the Central Nationalities University (photograph taken by author, October 16, 2006).

The costume is artistically presented on a stand, rather than on a mannequin, where its features are showcased to their advantage. The wide red, yellow, white and blue striped sleeves hang down from a horizontal rod. The diagonally cut opening of the vest is fastened on the right side, and the wide belt is carefully tied so as to display its intricate embroidery. Ironically, the distinctive Tu hat, made of felt with a broad, upturned rim, is missing. A pair of embroidered shoes lies off to the side of this representation of the ‘modern’ (from the 1980s) Tu outfit. While the caption explicates that such shoes are really only found now in museums, their physical placement to the side of the costume visually leads the viewer to wonder how much longer this
disembodied costume will exist outside of the museum glass. This representation (along with the hat, and occasionally with wide blue pants) is the prototypical one which appears repeatedly in publications throughout China. Mannequins wear it in the Qinghai Provincial Museum in Xining, the museum in Huzhu’s Folk Customs Village, and a small private display maintained by the Minority Studies’ Research Group at Qinghai Nationalities’ University. It is rendered in cartoon form on a poster marketed for children, “Recognizing Minority Nationalities,” and as a line drawing on a map showing the distribution of nationalities in the People’s Republic of China. Photographs of this prototypical image feature prominently in issues of the magazine, China’s Tu Nationality. It is captured photographically and in prose in the postcard series, “Costumes of Chinese Minor [sic] Nationalities.” The explanatory text about Tu costume reads,

“The embroidered waistbands and bordered brocade felt hats with roll-brimmed [sic] are common for both men and women. Women wear higher-collar [sic] embroidered jackets with buttons on the front-right, higher-collar [sic] robes with buttons on the front-right and five-color silks [sic] sleeves, pleated skirts with decorated borders sometimes [sic]” [Tuzu fushi].

Similar descriptions, exact almost to the sentence, appear in Chinese scholarly works, from the more general works introducing all fifty-five minority nationalities to books dedicated specifically to the Tu.34 Attention is often devoted to the multi-colored sleeves, explicating the symbolic code of the colors. Members from the foreign affairs office of Qinghai’s Nationalities University accompanied my husband and me when we first moved to Nianduhu Village in Tongren County. Zhang San, who is officially registered as Mongolian on his identity papers, asked me about my proposed research among the Tu, and I briefly outlined my interest in clothing. He helpfully described the prototypical costume, and then explained that the yellow stripe symbolized earth; green, life; white, clouds; blue, sky; and black…. His voice trailed off

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34 See, for example, Ma and Ning 1981; Yang et al. 1988; Song and Gao 2004
as he tried to remember. The conversation then moved on to other topics, but I was left with the distinct impression that Zhang felt satisfied he had answered my research question for me. A video documenting minority nationality costume in Qinghai expounds Zhang’s explanation. “Black,” the narrator intones, “represents the Tu sentimental attachment to the rich darkness of soil. Green symbolizes vitality and reverence for the green earth; yellow expresses hope for abundant harvests. White signifies purity of heart, and red reminds to venerate the sun for eternally shining on the earth. Blue represents the honest frankness of the Tu, which is as expansive as the clear sky. Purple stands for the soul, for whose benefit people do good works” (Hehuang qing minzu fushi, my translation). The sleeves of this prototypical costume are ubiquitous throughout Qinghai. Recent advertising campaigns for Huzhu Qingkejiu, the liquor distilled in Huzhu County, capitalize on this image. In one television advertisement, the camera lens shoots from below a Tu woman; her colorful sleeves are disproportionately prominent in the screen. The impression one is left with from this fleeting image (the commercial is a series of pictures quickly flashed onto the screen) is of the bands of color on the sleeves. This image of Tu clothing is concisely summarized by one scholar; “The clothing of Tu women is characterized by bright colors and rich multi-colored decorations” (Cao 2004:46, my translation).

4. Methodology of the Tasks

The previous section outlined the historical development of the modern Tu prototype; I turn now to exploring how clothing works to signify identity among the Tu living in Huzhu and Tongren counties. In order to do this, I designed a pile sort task.35 I collected representations of

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35 The design of this task is inspired by several sources. In response to Conklin’s experiments in ethnobotany, Moerman long ago suggested that presenting people with ethnographic photographs or items of material culture while listening to how people talked as they categorized others would be a fruitful way to learn the criteria people themselves use in self-identification (1965:1225). More recently pile sort tasks have been used extensively by various researchers at the Max Planck Institute of Psycholinguistics to explore category judgment and linguistic encoding in spatial relations (Bohmeyer and Brown 2007, Bowerman and Pederson 1996, Levinson and Meira 2003). In calling this a task, I do not mean to imply that the work involved requires special ability (Frake 1994:247-
the Tu and other minority nationalities from Qinghai Province from magazines, books, journals, and my own collection of pictures from museums and daily life, in order to design a stimulus kit consisting of two tasks. The first task was a free pile sort of fifty-five photographs of minorities living in Qinghai Province wearing a range of “traditional” to Western-style dress. The faces of the individuals in the photographs were blacked out in order to focus attention on the clothing, rather than skin color or facial features. I asked respondents to sort the photographs according to perceived similarities and talk about their piles. I then asked them if the initial piles might be further split; this process was repeated iteratively until respondents insisted the piles had been split exhaustively. I reinstated the first generation piles, and then asked respondents to lump piles while detailing their reasons for doing so. I conducted the second task in a similar manner to the first, but the photographs consisted entirely of Tu people from Tongren and Huzhu counties, and included both historical (from the Qing dynasty and the early Republican era) and present-day variations of dress. Since all of these photographs were of Tu people, the faces were not obscured. Prototype theory is the motivating rationale for these two tasks, which I will discuss more as I talk about the results. Some of the photographs are meant to be more representative, or more focal, of a particular minority nationality than others, and the resulting prototype effects indicated asymmetries in category membership.36 In these two tasks, people responded to the image of a photograph, which fit more or less well with their schema of a

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248). If anything, this task expands our view of the mental richness of mundane human life and the enacted and social aspects of human cognition. This task was meant to provide a nonthreatening entrée for talking about ethnic identity. If people are asked directly about a certain topic, they often respond systematically in a way that they believe satisfies their interlocutor (Blum 1998:211-212). I tried to avoid this problem by inviting people to explain something they considered somewhat trivial and common—clothing. But in doing so, people naturally talked about ethnicity and self-identification.

36 Rosch showed that certain category members have special cognitive status as the “best example.” She then extended these results to demonstrate the existence of prototype effects; in her experiments subjects judged certain members of categories as more representative than others. Robins, for example, are more representative of the category “Bird” than chickens. These representative members are prototypical or central members. In the case of graded category membership, prototype effects result from degree of category membership.
particular minority nationality. The purpose of these two tasks is to understand the schemas or models respondents have about ethnicity, and more particularly, how these schemas fit with their own narratives of self-identification.

Respondents were finally asked to select ten photos from the second (Tu) stack of photographs: five photographs that they found appealing, and five photographs that they did not like. This was only done with the second group of photographs so as to limit responses just to in-group variation.\textsuperscript{37}

I administered these tasks to sixty-one Tu respondents (thirty-one from Tongren and thirty from Huzhu) who varied in gender,\textsuperscript{38} age,\textsuperscript{39} and education level.\textsuperscript{40} While I was primarily interested in the differences between the two geographic locations, I wanted to test how these four variables might affect respondents’ likes and dislikes. The following section details my analyses.

5. Task one results

5.1 Task one initial splits

In the first task, people sorted pictures of Salar, Hui, Kham Tibetan, Amdo Tibetan, Huzhu Tu, and Tongren Tu, Qinghai’s most populous minority nationalities, into piles of like kinds. Most of the photographs pictured prototypical representations of that particular minority nationality’s costume; however, a few problematic pictures were included. There were, of

\textsuperscript{37} Otherwise, dislikes might reflect the tension between ethnic groups rather than insights into the signification of clothing.
\textsuperscript{38} There were thirty-one males and thirty females.
\textsuperscript{39} In order to analyze the data according to age, I needed to group the data. I created three groups. One included sixteen individuals who were fifty-nine and older; this group likely had some memory of life before collectivization. The second included twenty-six individuals between ages twenty-nine and fifty-eight; this group had some memory of life before the reform era. The last group included nineteen individuals who were twenty-eight and younger; this group came of age during the reform era.
\textsuperscript{40} In order to analyze the data according to education level, I needed to group the data. I created four groups. There were fifteen who had no schooling, nine who either attended some or completed elementary school, twenty who attended some or completed middle and high school, and ten who attended some or completed college. I lacked the educational status for seven individuals, so the total n for education level is fifty-four.
course, individual differences between “lumpers” and “splitters”: some respondents initially split the photographs into as many as twelve different piles, while others initially split the photographs into just four different piles. However, there was significant agreement in how to split the pictures. The following table illustrates the initial splits made in task one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of piles</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Task One Initial Splits.

The mode for the number of piles is five. Not only was there great accord in the number of piles created by respondents, but more interesting was the agreement about how the photographs were grouped. Most respondents grouped all of the identifiably Muslim pictures into one pile labeled “Hui.” Photographs of minorities wearing Western or Han clothing (i.e. not displaying any prototypical minority nationality costume) were put together into a pile called “Han.” All respondents created at least one Tibetan pile in their initial split, and the Huzhu Tu pictures were grouped together by most. (However the people in these photographs were not necessarily labeled as Huzhu Tu, as will be discussed momentarily.) Most of the photographs were similarly sorted. For example, picture eleven is of an elderly Tibetan woman walking down a street. She wears a thick maroon woolen robe; the sheepskin lining is peeking out. Her right sleeve hangs down her back, revealing a red silk shirt buttoned diagonally on the right side. A turquoise and coral necklace dangles around her neck, and in her right hand she grasps an ornamented silver prayer wheel. Her long graying hair is parted down the middle and braided into two braids down her back. One can see in the picture that the bottom of her robe is splashed

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41 The median for the number of piles is also five; the mean is 5.84.
42 See appendix one for a copy of this photograph, along with all other photographs mentioned in this chapter.
with mud; her shoes, which are black leather, are caked with dust. All sixty-one respondents labeled this picture as Tibetan and grouped it with other Tibetan pictures.\(^4\)

It should not be surprising that the majority of pictures were grouped and labeled similarly by respondents, regardless of where they lived. Since most of the photographs captured prototypical representations of Qinghai’s minority nationalities, respondents were sorting images with which they had great familiarity. Sorting in task one was quick; respondents needed only to glance at a picture in order to pronounce judgment. As people sorted they often said out loud which minority was pictured; my recordings of this part of the task sound like a rapid-fire list of the minority nationalities living in Qinghai. The agreement about how the majority of pictures are sorted (as well as the respondents’ ease in making judgments) points to the existence of a conceptual model for ethnicity in Qinghai (at least for those Tu living in Huzhu and Tongren counties). The photographs that agree either wholly or in part with the conventionalized image of minority nationality were readily judged as belonging to a particular category. As argued above, citizens of China learn what a typical Hui, Tibetan, and Tu person wears. The repeated instantiations of these images form a conceptual model of a particular minority nationality, which has a representative structure. The closer a photograph or an individual is to the prototype, the more representative it (or he) is judged to be. This metonymic model where a particular image stands for an entire population of a minority nationality allows for quick judgment and reasoning; it is good to think with. In order to provide a point of contrast for the prototype effects of the majority of the pictures, I included a handful of problematic pictures in task one. I define these pictures as problematic because they do not portray clear markers of the officially

\(^4\) Some of the respondents who made more exhaustive splits initially labeled picture eleven as a specific type of Tibetan, such as a Tibetan nomad, a Kham Tibetan, or a Tibetan from Golog.
recognized and promulgated prototype of a particular minority nationality. I will discuss the rationale for including each of these pictures and the results of the initial split in turn.

5.2 Task one problem pictures

Picture sixteen shows the side view of a woman in the process of prostrating in prayer. She wears a thick, worn woolen robe; the sheepskin interior is evident. The robe is split on the side; turquoise fabric edges the robe along the split. Around the woman’s waist is tied a red belt. Her long hair is divided into two long thin braids which are tied together at the bottom of the braid with blue yarn. Underneath her robe she wears a plaid sweater and blue pants. For most, this woman looks like any Tibetan woman. But those living in Tongren County know this as the everyday clothing of any ayi (auntie, a Chinese loanword which is a term of address used for any middle-aged woman) living in one of the five Tu villages along the Longwu River. There are small, perceptible differences between the everyday clothing of an older Tibetan woman and a Tongren Tu woman, the most prominent of which is captured by this picture. The robes of the Tongren Tu women are split on both sides with a discernible opening. The robes of Tibetan women wrap over to the right side only. Tongren Tu women tie their scarlet fabric belts in the front, whereas Tibetan women tie in the back. Finally, Tongren Tu women start their braids by crossing a side section over the middle, while Tibetan women pull a middle portion over one of the sides. None of the aspects of prototypical Tu clothing presented in section three, such as striped multi-colored sleeves or embroidery, feature in the everyday clothes of the Tu in Tongren County. Further, these few discriminating points are thought by the Tongren Tu to be originally derived from Mongolian clothing, not as somehow correlated to Huzhu Tu dress. Aside from these three points, however, there is no distinguishable difference between the clothing of the Tu living in Tongren County and the surrounding Amdo Tibetans, and only local Tibetans and the
Tongren Tu distinguish these details. In fact, without specialized knowledge, the clothing actually appears more prototypically Tibetan than Tu. The results of the initial split featured in table two illuminate this point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents from Tongren County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Respondents from Huzhu County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own village</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Initial Splits for Picture Sixteen.

Respondents grouped this picture differently depending on where they lived. In the first split, the majority of respondents from Tongren County created a separate pile that they called *mango deiwa*, or ‘we (first person plural inclusive collective) village,’ or more simply, *mango*. The seven who lacked this pile in the first split created it and included picture sixteen in subsequent splits. In contrast, the majority of respondents in Huzhu County unhesitatingly judged picture sixteen as Tibetan.

Picture twenty-five is another problematic picture, and also features clothing worn by the Tu in Tongren. This photograph is again a side view of a young woman participating in *χeiɕaŋ*, the summer harvest festival celebrated throughout Tongren County. (See chapter four, section two, for a more extensive description of this festival.) The young woman wears *kila*, silk robes. Although her robes are not flapping open, a thick border of otter’s fur lines the edge of the opening. Under her robes the woman wears wide blue pants, and on her feet are brightly

44 There is a term *chiza*, which specifically refers to these four villages, but it is interesting that I never heard this term used in this task. The term appears in a story in an interview I conducted about the origins of *χeiɕaŋ*. The word might be a historical term that has fallen out of usage, or a more formal term. What is clear is that it is not part of common everyday usage. When Tu from Tongren talk about themselves, they use the pronoun *mango*.

45 It is interesting to note that of these seven respondents, five viewed ‘our village’ as a subset of ‘Tibetan’ and two viewed ‘our village’ as a subset of ‘Tu.’ I return to this point later.
embroidered shoes. Around her neck is a coral necklace, and her hair is pulled back. One can see in the photograph the corner of the young woman’s \( p^b \circ t^b \), an embroidered, rectangular, stiff piece of material overlaid with short strands of coral worn at the nape of the neck. (See chapters three and four for more explanation about the \( p^b \circ t^b \).) Once again, respondents from Tongren County knew immediately that this was ‘maŋə.’ But this picture proved to be more difficult for respondents from Huzhu, as can be seen in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respondents from Tongren County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Respondents from Huzhu County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own village</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Initial Splits for Picture Twenty-Five.

Picture twenty-five was enigmatic for those living in Huzhu, because this festival clothing of the Tongren Tu mixes elements of two different minority nationality’s prototypes. The wide blue pants and the embroidered shoes look Tu, while the jewelry and heavy fur border look Tibetan. The robe is too wide to be considered prototypically Tibetan or Tu. People from Huzhu lingered over this picture before deciding where to place it; some even put this picture aside to deal with after they had sorted the rest of the pictures. They often commented that the shoes the young woman was wearing were Tu, but nothing else she had on was.

Picture twenty-four elicited similar results, but with the geographic location reversed. This is a picture of a woman in Huzhu County returning home from the field, carrying a basket over her shoulder. Over her pink long-sleeved blouse she wears a sleeveless green vest. The green vest opens on the top right with an assymetrical diagonal cut bordered with pink-flowered and red fabric. Around her head and under her chin is tied a bright yellow scarf. The majority of
respondents living in Huzhu County labeled this woman as Tu. While her clothes lack the
prominent features of prototypical Tu clothing (multi-colored striped sleeves, for instance), they
are still recognizable to those more familiar with the everyday clothing worn by Tu in Huzhu
County. Respondents from Huzhu told me repeatedly that only Tu people wear vests cut in this
way. While Tibetans, Hui, or Han also wear vests, they are cut open straight down the middle.
Tu vests, by contrast, are fastened at the top right, similar to the Mongolian del and the
Manchurian qipao. At a quick glance, the pink and red border appears to be embroidered.
Finally, Huzhu Tu respondents told me that the way in which the woman tied her scarf on her
head was distinctively Tu. The response of people in Tongren County to this picture was much
more mixed, as the following table indicates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respondents in Tongren County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Respondents in Huzhu County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Initial Splits for Picture Twenty-Four.

While a slight majority of respondents from Tongren County classified this picture as Tu, they
did so not based on the features selected by Huzhu respondents as significant. Those from
Tongren County who labeled this woman as Tu did so because of the colors; they often described
prototypical Tu clothing as colorful. Tibetans, Han, and Hui do not typically wear such bright
colors, and so, they reasoned, this woman must be Tu. Still, a large number of respondents from
Tongren County (just over forty-five percent) grouped this picture differently, indicating a lack
of familiarity with the everyday clothing worn by the Tu in Huzhu County.
Finally, picture fifty-two also illustrates a division of categories based on place of residence. Picture fifty-two shows the backs of three young Tu girls dancing at a school performance in Huzhu County. They are dressed in robes that are much too big, and so the robes appear quite long and wide in the shoulders. The robes are black and green and are edged with gold metallic fabric at the cuffs of the sleeves and the bottom of the robe. The collars of the robes are bright blues and greens. Wide swaths of green and pink fabric cinch the robes at the girls’ waists. The legs of the girls’ school uniforms can be seen peeking out of the robes. The next table shows how respondents in Tongren County and Huzhu County treated this picture differently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respondents in Tongren County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Respondents in Huzhu County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80.75%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Initial Splits for Picture Fifty-Two.

Although the majority of respondents from Tongren County placed picture fifty-two with other Tibetan pictures in the initial split, it was often segregated as a different kind of Tibetan in following splits. Respondents felt that there was something not quite right with this picture; their complaints were many. The colors of the collars were wrong, and they had never before seen a green Tibetan robe. The belts were too wide and the colors were not correct. The robes were worn too long and wide. They altogether presented a sloppy appearance, it was thought. Consequently, in further splits this picture was placed in categories from specific locations that were still Amdo Tibetan but not in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, such as Xunhua.
Salar Autonomous County or Hualong Hui Autonomous County. The majority of respondents in Huzhu, however, recognized the clothing in this picture as their own. Those who classified this clothing as Tu admitted that it was not prototypical Tu clothing. However, when asked about this picture they said that this was either the clothing worn by Tu in a specific place in Huzhu County (a number of different locations were listed) or for specific occasions, such as when visiting the monastery. For those in Huzhu who labeled this photograph as Tibetan, a number commented that this is what Tibetans living in Huzhu County wear, as opposed to other places in Qinghai Province. So their classification still depends on specialized knowledge.

These four photographs illustrate noncentral extensions of category membership for ethnicity. They represent nonprototypical instances of a particular minority nationality. These extensions depend on experiential knowledge; only those respondents living in the geographic location where these examples of minority nationality clothing are worn could correctly identify these pictures because they had learned these extensions. Pictures twenty-four and fifty-two are considered by the majority of Huzhu respondents to be examples of the Tu minority nationality. The results for pictures sixteen and twenty-five are a bit more enigmatic. A small number of Tongren respondents consider these pictures (themselves) as extensions of the central category of the Tibetan minority nationality. However, most respondents from Tongren County embraced these two pictures as ‘maŋgə,’ (‘This is us’). I will turn now to the results from the lumping part of task one to shed more light on the central category from which ‘maŋgə’ extends.

5.3 Task one lumping

After respondents had exhaustively split the photographs into piles, I reinstated the first-generation piles and asked if any of the piles could be combined on the basis of perceived

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46 Given the animosity of the Tongren respondents towards the Hui and Salar pictures, it is telling that picture fifty-two was often labeled as Tibetans from predominantly Muslim locations. This indicates the level of disdain these respondents had for what they perceived to be such sloppy attire.
similarities. The Tongren County lumping results for pictures sixteen and twenty-five are listed in table six.⁴⁷

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Picture 16</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Picture 25</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents from Tongren County</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own village (not lumped with any others)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own village, Tibetans (any kind)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own village, Tibetans (any kind), Tu, and others</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.33%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own village, Tu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Lumping Results for Pictures Sixteen and Twenty-five.

The majority of Tongren respondents perceived themselves as sharing characteristics in common with Tibetans. From tables two and three, we already saw that five people in Tongren considered these pictures as belonging to the Tibetan minority nationality. In the results for picture sixteen, we see one more person (and for picture twenty-five three more) making this same association. The majority of respondents in Tongren County group pictures sixteen and twenty-five with other minority nationalities who adhere to Tibetan Buddhism. This classification proves to be the most salient central category for pictures sixteen and twenty-five. A large majority (83% for both pictures) consider these pictures as somehow similar to the Tibetan pictures; this contrasts with the minority (13% for picture sixteen and 15% for picture twenty-five) who perceive these pictures as belonging to the Tu minority nationality.

⁴⁷ The total number of respondents for this chart is thirty. Respondent number one suggested three alternative ways to lump pictures, depending on what factor he considered most salient. In one pile, he lumped pictures sixteen and twenty-five with the Tu pile, because, “We are all Tu. We are the same minority nationality.” He alternatively placed these two pictures with the Tibetan pile, since, “We believe in the same religion, Tibetan Buddhism.” Finally, he placed these pictures with the Tu, Tibetan, and Hui piles, because, “We are all minority nationalities. We are not Han.”
These results differ from those of respondents from Huzhu County. I included seven pictures in task one which represented prototypical Tu clothing. Huzhu respondents overwhelmingly classified these pictures as Tu.\textsuperscript{48} We can consider this group of photographs to represent the prototype of Tu minority nationality dress. And as I have already pointed out problematic pictures twenty-four and fifty-two are noncentral extensions of this central category. It is instructive, however, to examine how Huzhu respondents lumped the group of seven photographs that constitute the central category. See table seven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pictures 4, 9, 13</th>
<th>Pictures 15, 33, 44</th>
<th>Picture 47</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondents from Huzhu County</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Respondents from Huzhu County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu, Han</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu, Tibetans and others</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.67%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Lumping Results for Pictures Four, Nine, Thirteen, Fifteen, Thirty-three, Forty-four, and Forty-seven.

A slight majority of respondents lumped the Tu pile with other minority nationalities who follow Tibetan Buddhism. However, a third of the respondents put the Tu pile of pictures with the Han pile, citing similar lifestyles. They emphasized that they eat basically the same things, generally dress the same way, and live life similarly. One respondent summarized that the Tu are basically the same as the Han. A small percentage of respondents considered the Tu unique. This lack of consensus among Huzhu respondents in the lumping part of the task contrasts with the general

\textsuperscript{48} All thirty respondents classified pictures four, nine, and thirteen as Tu. 96.7\% of the respondents (twenty-nine) included pictures fifteen, thirty-three, and forty-four in the Tu pile. 83\% (twenty-five) grouped picture forty-seven with the rest of the Tu pictures.
agreement among Tongren respondents, and is ultimately telling about identity. One more set of
data from task one builds on this argument about the differences between the responses by those
living in Tongren County and those living in Huzhu County.

5.4 Task one further splits

After respondents made their initial splits and talked about them, they were invited to
continue to split their first generation piles into smaller piles until they had been split
exhaustively. Analyzing the differences between which piles were further split by those living in
Tongren County and those living in Huzhu County is illuminating. We see the results for
respondents in Tongren County in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents from Tongren County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan (only) 17 54.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan and others 8 25.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None 6 19.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Piles which were Further Split in Task One by Respondents in Tongren County.

We can see that a slight majority of respondents further categorized the Tibetan pictures. Some
chose to split according to dialect varieties (Kham, Amdo, and Lhasa), while others split on the
basis of livelihood (nomads as opposed to farmers). Still others classified these pictures
according to geographic location. About a quarter of respondents further split the Tibetan piles,
as well as at least one of their other original piles. And six of the respondents felt like their
initial splits were exhaustive. The results of the piles which were further split by respondents in
Huzhu County follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents from Huzhu County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu (only) 12 40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu and others 11 36.67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan (only) 1 3.33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None 6 20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Piles which were Further Split in Task One by Respondents in Huzhu County.
As can be seen by comparing tables eight and nine, the numerical results between the two counties differ slightly. However, which piles are further split depends on geographic location. Seventy-five percent of respondents from Tongren County subcategorize the Tibetan photographs, while seventy-six percent of respondents from Huzhu County subcategorize the Tu pictures. This demonstrates a difference in conceptual models of these two different minority nationalities. Like any other conceptual model, the models of minority nationalities may differ in complexity. Since these models are formed experientially, context is key. Tongren County is part of Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Tibetan is the language of wider communication; it is used in the county town for official and unofficial business, it is the sacred language, and it is the language used in the schools.\footnote{In elementary schools, Mandarin is taught as a subject, but the language of instruction is Tibetan. Children attending middle school and high school in the county seat have the opportunity to attend Mandarin-speaking schools, but in reality they attend the minority nationalities’ schools where Tibetan continues to be the language of instruction. For more information about the education system in Tongren, see Lin 2005.} Tibetans comprise the majority of the population in the prefecture. The Tongren Tu are attuned to the distinctions in clothing worn by different groups of Tibetans because these differences are relevant to their everyday life. (See chapter three for a more extensive discussion about the context of the Tu villages in Tongren County.) The Huzhu Tu, by contrast, live in an area with a more dense population of Tu and more variation in Tu clothing, so these are the most relevant distinctions. Task two explores and confirms these results.

To summarize the results of task one, the concord about how the majority of the photographs in task one were sorted indicates the existence of prototypes for the minority nationalities living in Qinghai Province. But the results for four problematic pictures begin to tease out differences between the two populations of Tu. Task two elaborates this point.
6. Task two results

In this task, respondents sorted sixty-two photographs, all of which were pictures of Tu people. I included several different categories of dress, according to variations in dress noted during my literature review and experience of living and observing in Qinghai Province. I included some records of historical Tu dress, as well as photographs depicting a range of modern dress, differing both in formality and location of origin. As circumstances worked out, my first nineteen respondents were all from the Tongren area, and I found the results quite muddled. Although I pointed out at the outset of administering this second task that all of the photographs pictured instances of Tu minority nationality clothing, the majority of respondents insisted on splitting the pictures according to differences in minority nationality, rather than subtleties of Tu in-group variation. Additionally, respondents seemed to create piles that indicated etic divisions based on obvious observable qualities of the photographs. So, for example, respondents would group all of the black and white photographs together, the mannequins in another pile, the minorities wearing hats in yet a third pile. As respondents from Tongren County looked through these piles, their manner of proceeding through this task reflected their unfamiliarity with the clothing. As they talked through their piles after making the initial split, they often reshuffled pictures to different piles. My perception at the time was that respondents either created many piles with just a few pictures in each pile (respondents made as many as sixteen) or simply made two piles: one of the pictures from their own village and the other of all the remaining photographs. I considered this task a waste of time and thought about abandoning it all together.

However, once I started to work with respondents from Huzhu County, my perspective changed. These were the pictures that people from Huzhu lingered over and discussed; elderly respondents pointed out features of the historical variations of dress to me and to others who
might have been listening. The number of piles did not significantly differ between the two
groups; the mean number of piles during the initial split for Tongren County is 8.06 piles, and
7.13 piles for Huzhu County.\textsuperscript{50} For both populations, the distribution is relatively symmetrical.
The point of contrast, then, was how these pictures were sorted as they were split.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{6.1 Task two initial splits}

I will first illustrate this point by comparing two respondents from the two different
counties. Both could be considered splitters; subject 3 made ten piles in his initial split, and
subject 45 made fourteen. Both are young males (subject 3 was twenty-five, subject 45 was
twenty-nine). Subject 3 is from Tongren County; he made the following piles in his initial split.

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
Pile 1 & Festival clothing worn in own village \\
\hline
Pile 2 & Clothing worn everyday \\
\hline
Pile 3 & Clothing worn by nobles \\
\hline
Pile 4 & Han clothing \\
\hline
Pile 5 & Dolls \\
\hline
Pile 6 & Black and white photographs \\
\hline
Pile 7 & Mannequins \\
\hline
Pile 8 & Line drawings \\
\hline
Pile 9 & Unknown minority \\
\hline
Pile 10 & Tibetan \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textbf{Table 10. Task Two Initial Splits for Subject 3.}

As a point of contrast, compare with the piles made by subject 45 from Huzhu County.

\textsuperscript{50} The mode of the number of piles for Tongren County is 6; for Huzhu County it is 7. The median for Tongren
County is 8; for Huzhu County it is 7.
\textsuperscript{51} In task two, both groups of respondents created piles of minority nationalities other than Tu, such as Han,
Mongolian, and Tibetan. Consequently, lumping piles of pictures together according to perceived likeness yielded
quite similar results to those already discussed for task one; I will not repeat that discussion here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pile 1</th>
<th>Clothing worn by the Tu in the Qing dynasty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pile 2</td>
<td>Modern clothing worn by Han</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 3</td>
<td>Clothing worn by an unknown minority for religious ceremonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 4</td>
<td>Clothing worn by both Tibetans and Tu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 5</td>
<td>Clothing worn by elderly Tu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 6</td>
<td>Tu clothing found in museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 7</td>
<td>Tu clothing worn by those living in Dongshan Township</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 8</td>
<td>Mongolian clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 9</td>
<td>Clothing worn by Tu for performance purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 10</td>
<td>Han clothing worn during the Republican period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 11</td>
<td>Han clothing worn during the Qing dynasty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 12</td>
<td>Tu clothing worn by those living in Donggou Township</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 13</td>
<td>Tu clothing found in museums (but different from pile 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile 14</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Task Two Initial Splits for Subject 45.

Subject 3’s piles show his unfamiliarity with the subtleties of Tu clothing, or as I have discussed in Task 1, the noncentral extensions of the Tu prototype. He readily identifies those pictures for which he already has developed a prototype: Tibetans, Han, and his own village. However, the rest (and I might note, the bulk) of the pictures are meant to test the fuzzy boundary area of the Tu minority nationality representation, and this level of specialization is simply not salient to subject 3. Subject 45’s piles, in contrast, reflect a much more detailed schema of the Tu minority nationality which encompasses variation in time, place, and occasion. One can think about these noncentral extensions as being similar to peripheral vision, with examples of the prototype representing focal vision. In this analogy, subject 45 has a well-developed peripheral vision of the Tu, while subject 3’s field of vision is limited to the focal point. These two subjects are representative of the results from task two. Respondents in Huzhu generally displayed more
fine-grained knowledge about the noncentral extensions of the Tu prototype. Respondents from Tongren County are at most familiar with prototypical Tu clothing; a number are unfamiliar with even this. (Twelve of the thirty-one respondents from Tongren County, or 38.7%, placed even the more prototypical representations of Tu clothing either in a pile labeled, “Don’t know,” or a pile, “Unknown minority.”) These differences are captured in the following two tables which show the number of respondents who further split photographs into subsequent piles after the initial split.

| Piles which were Further Split in Task Two by Respondents in Tongren County. |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Own village (only)                    | 2                        |
| Other piles                           | 9                        |
| None                                  | 20                       |

Table 12. Piles which were Further Split in Task Two by Respondents in Tongren County.

The majority of respondents from Tongren County had exhaustively split the pictures in their first split; they were unwilling to make more fine distinctions. This contrasts with those from Huzhu County.

| Piles which were Further Split in Task Two by Respondents in Huzhu County. |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tu (only; split by place, time,       | 19                       |
| and/or occasion)                      |                           |
| Tu and others                         | 2                        |
| None (because initial split included  | 7                        |
| piles of Tu categorized by place,     |                           |
| time, and/or occasion)               |                           |
| None                                  | 2                        |

Table 13. Piles which were Further Split in Task Two by Respondents in Huzhu County.

If one looks more generally at the number of respondents from Huzhu County who categorize the photographs in task two according to variation of dress over time, by location, and/or by occasion, the numbers are telling. A large majority (twenty-eight out of thirty, or 93.33%) are able to make these kinds of distinctions. Even if one only considers the number of respondents who were willing to make further splits to their original piles, a majority of respondents from
Huzhu County (70%) further split the photographs of the piles they labeled as mongghul, or Tu.\textsuperscript{52}

I will turn now to a few representative pictures to substantiate these numbers.

### 6.2 Representative pictures

Picture c shows a young woman from Dazhuang Village in Donggou Township sitting on the ground on some straw. One can consider her clothing as prototypical. She is dressed in festival garb: the multi-colored striped sleeves of her jacket are prominent. She wears a wide-brimmed hat atop a pink scarf tied under her chin. One can see a long skinny braid snaking down the back of her red jacket. An embroidered pocket peeks out of the diagonally cut placket of her jacket. Her black robe is spread out on the straw behind her. The results for how this picture was categorized are as follows.

\textsuperscript{52} This is the traditional name and autonym for the Huzhu Tu. It is an etymological derivative of mongbol (Georg 2003:286).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N=30</th>
<th>N=19</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N=31</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huzhu County initial splits</td>
<td>Huzhu County further splits of initial Tu/mongghul pile</td>
<td>% 53</td>
<td>Tongren County splits</td>
<td>% 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu/mongghul</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern clothing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn in Donggou Township</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn in Dongshan Township</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn in Dazhuang Village</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn in Xiaozhuang Village</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn for festivals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn everyday</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another minority dressed like Tu</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miao</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minority from Xinjiang</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huzhu Mongols</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Splits for Picture c.

At first glance, the two groups do not appear to have treated this picture too differently; it looks as if about the same percentage from each county (63.33% for Huzhu (initial splits/30), 58.1% (Tongren county splits/31) for Tongren) label this picture as Tu. However, if one also takes into consideration how picture c was further split by respondents from Huzhu County, the results are

53 Percentage=(Initial split+Further splits)/30, except for in the first row (Tu/mongghul) for Huzhu County. In this case, the percentage is calculated by dividing only the further splits by 30.
54 Percentage=Tongren County splits/31
quite different. A majority of respondents (87%), then, categorize picture c according to time period (modern), place (Dongshan, Donggou, Dazhuang, and Xiaozhuang), or occasion (festival or everyday). This rich array of fine-grained distinction by respondents in Huzhu County beyond the basic level stands in stark contrast to the complete lack of subcategorization made by those in Tongren County. Picture c could be considered a prototypical representation of the Tu; the clothing contains all of the features associated with the Tu. Next I turn to some less clear cut cases.

Picture bbb is of a young woman performing at a tourist village in Xiaozhuang Village, Chengguan Township. The main color of her jacket and pants is bright pink. The stripes of her sleeves are pastel, and her sleeves end in filmy, light-blue material. Light blue sequins border her fitted, waist-length jacket around the diagonal front placket and bottom. A few embroidered needle holders hang from the front placket. Her hair is covered with a multi-colored kerchief. This kind of clothing is common at the tourist attractions in Xiaozhuang Village, but it is not limited to this location. For example, waitresses at the Xining Binguan (one of the prominent hotels in Xining, the provincial capital) wear this kind of stylized ethnic minority clothing. It appears in photo shops in Xining where one can have her picture taken in “ethnic” garb. It might show up at any kind of performance as a costume. Let’s turn now to the results for how picture bbb was split.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(N=30)</th>
<th>(N=19)</th>
<th>(N=31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=30)</td>
<td>(N=19)</td>
<td>(N=31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huzhu County initial splits</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huzhu County further splits of initial Tu/mongghul pile</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu/mongghul</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn for performance(^{55})</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern clothing</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn by Tu living in Dazhuang Village</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing worn by Tu in Dongshan Township</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu living in Weiyuan Township</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han dressed in Tu clothing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miao</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huzhu Mongols</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15. Splits for Picture bbb.

Numerically, this table shows similar results to the previous table. A slightly smaller percentage of respondents from Tongren categorize this picture as Tu; this should not be surprising considering the prototypical features retained in this performance dress. A small number of respondents from Tongren (five) respond to this picture etically; they observed that the young woman in this photograph was dancing, and so place this picture along with others in which they observe performance of some kind. A large majority of respondents from Huzhu (around 77%) categorize picture bbb according to time (modern), place (Dazhuang Village, Dongshan

\(^{55}\) To clarify, Huzhu Tu consider this a subcategory of Tu clothing. Those from Tongren County consider picture bbb as an example of performance; those respondents who placed this picture in a performance category pointed out that this young woman was dancing. The category label does not capture this distinction very well.

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Township, or Weiyuan Township), or occasion (performance). There are two particular cells that deserve to be highlighted. First, three respondents from Huzhu consider picture bbb to be an example of a Han person wearing Tu clothing. This exemplifies how clothing serves as an easily manipulated signifier of identity in China. In many cases, one can simply signify ethnicity by the act of changing one’s outfit. It is common for a Han tourist in Huzhu County to dress up in Tu clothing to pose for pictures to document her trip, for a Han waitress to put on this clothing in a restaurant that wants to create an ethnic mood, for a Han performer to don this costume to portray an ethnic flare. Second, a third of the respondents simply consider picture bbb to be the clothing that is worn today (“modern clothing”). This is not some kind of special outfit only reserved for the model tourist villages, but is an instance of “normal” dress. Although one respondent admitted that the colors aren’t quite right, the clothing in picture bbb is an example of the clothing most recently and commonly worn in Huzhu County. The normalization of this performance garb is related to the recent and rapid growth of the tourist industry; this topic is covered in more detail in chapter four. I’ll turn now to a picture with even fewer features of prototypical Tu clothing.

Picture e shows an example of a mannequin wearing niudaar, the historical headdress associated with clan membership, from a museum collection of Tu clothing. The mannequin’s clothing still looks quite prototypical: striped sleeves are prominent beneath the maroon vest. A heavily embroidered apron is wrapped around the mannequin’s waist; hanging from its waist over the apron is a strip of embroidered squares. What is most different are the long beaded earrings (sukar) hanging from the mannequin’s ears and the niudaar. Respondents from Huzhu and Tongren categorized this photograph differently, as the following table shows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N=30</th>
<th>N=19</th>
<th>N=31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huzhu County initial splits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huzhu County further splits of initial Tu/mongghul pile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu/mongghul</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu clothing worn in the past</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu clothing worn in Wushi Township</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu clothing worn in Dazhuang Village</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu clothing from museum collection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu clothing worn for festivals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another minority dressed in Tu clothing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huzhu Mongols</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miao</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doll wearing Tu clothing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16. Splits for Picture e.

The results for picture e are actually quite similar to the results for picture bbb. About half of the respondents from Tongren County consider this a representation of the Tu, and about half do not know what to make of the picture.\(^{56}\) Once again, the striped sleeves and embroidery, two primary characteristics of the prototype, aid residents from Tongren in their classification, despite their unfamiliarity with niudaar. In comparison, Huzhu respondents recognize this

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\(^{56}\) I include “Miao,” “Dolls,” and “Don’t Know” together.
clothing as worn by their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents; even more specifically, they talk about this picture as an example of niudaar. When respondents looked at picture e, as well as other examples of niudaar, they told me, “This is an example of niudaar.” One middle-aged woman told me that although she had never seen anyone wear niudaar, elderly people had told her about wearing niudaar, sukar, and suo (a shell necklace, as seen in picture hhh) before 1949. Another older man pointed out that these three particular elements of Tu clothing (niudaar, sukar, and suo) are strictly historical; however, I will discuss in the next section a bit more about the present-day use of niudaar. But before doing so, let’s look at the results for one more representative picture from task two.

Picture t is a photograph of niudaar from the Republican period and represents one of the most noncentral extensions of the Tu prototype. The young girl in this photograph wears what Schram calls sge niudar (great or honorable headdress), which he describes in great detail.

57 Other examples of niudaar include pictures b, h, t, z, hh, jj, ll, pp, xx, and hhh.
58 Not every complex headdress is considered an example of niudaar, and then by extension Tu, by respondents from Huzhu. Picture ww shows a back view of p’ot’o historically worn by Tu women in Tongren County. However, a large number of respondents from Huzhu County (twenty-two, or 73.33%) put picture ww in the Tibetan or “don’t know” piles. The women’s robes are bordered with otter fur, a feature of more prototypically Tibetan clothing. Further, the women’s clothing lacks the striped sleeves normally associated with Tu clothing. Even though scholars agree that p’ot’o is a kind of niudaar, these results show that niudaar is only a noncentral extension of the Huzhu Tu prototype. That the women were wearing niudaar alone was not sufficient to be classified as Tu.
59 I included two more categories of pictures that might be considered noncentral extensions of the Tu prototype whose results I will not go into detail since they do not illuminate any differences between the two groups of respondents. One series of pictures (g, o, v, ff, nn, and zz) show members of the Tu minority nationality wearing what was labeled as “everyday,” “modern,” or “Han” clothing. The clothing in these pictures lacks any ethnic characteristics; people in these pictures are wearing what someone in any part of China, and in some cases the United States, might be wearing. While this category of pictures is considered representative of the clothing worn by each group of respondents, they represent a shared area of boundary overlap for category membership for both groups of respondents. If one thinks of a Venn diagram, these pictures represent the area where the two circles intersect. The two groups of respondents treated this category of pictures similarly. Another series of pictures (d, j, p, r, w, y, bb, ii, vv, aaa, ccc, and fff) are Qing dynasty illustrations of clothing worn in present-day Tu areas from the Siku quanshu. Again, the two groups of respondents categorize these pictures similarly; the pictures are placed in piles labeled, “don’t know,” “drawings,” or “pictures from the past.” The fact that these pictures are categorized similarly suggests that for both populations, these pictures fall outside the boundary of category membership for the Tu minority nationality.
She also wears sukar and suo. Her clothing, although in black and white, still retains those two prototypical features of Tu clothing: striped sleeves and embroidery. She wears an embroidered apron, and if one looks closely one can see that her shoes are also embroidered. She wears wide pants beneath her long robe. The next table shows the splitting results for this picture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(N=30)</th>
<th>(N=19)</th>
<th>(N=31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huzhu County initial splits</td>
<td>Huzhu County further splits of initial Tu/mongghul pile</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu/mongghul</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu clothing worn in the past</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu clothing worn for performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan from Minhe County</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan clothing from the past</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han clothing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shamans</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture from the past</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and white photograph</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolls</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17. Splits for Picture t.

Picture t, as an example of the five Schram photographs included in this task, nicely illustrates the difference in representation between the two groups of respondents. A small handful of

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60 Schram follows de Smedt and Mostaert’s conventions for spelling the dialect spoken in the Huzhu area; I use Li Keyou’s orthography (Li Keyou 1988).
respondents from Tongren County (just 16%) put this picture with other Tu pictures. About a third simply did not know how to categorize this picture. But a large minority (thirteen out of thirty-one respondents, or 41.9%) classified this picture according to its etic characteristics: a picture from the past, a black and white photograph, a drawing. This contrasts with the respondents from Huzhu; exactly half of the respondents still recognize this picture as Tu (combining those piles labeled “Tu/mongghul,” “Tu clothing worn in the past,” and “Tu clothing worn for performance”), and even more specifically, a large number (43.33%) describe this as an example of Tu clothing from the past. In one exceptional example, one respondent identified this as a photograph of Schram’s; she was familiar with his 1932 publication, *Le mariage chez les T’ou-jen du Kan-sou*, which has been translated into Chinese (this respondent was enrolled in a master’s degree in ethnic studies at Qinghai Nationalities University). We can speculate about the differences between pictures e and t which yield such different results. Perhaps respondents from Huzhu County were more literate in looking at black and white photographs. Perhaps respondents from Tongren were distracted by the distinctiveness of the niudaar in picture t (the niudaar in picture e falls behind the mannequin’s head rather than in front and is therefore more diminutive). I would suggest, however, that the difference is related to the varying levels of complexity in prototype conceptualized by the two populations. Subjects can make judgments much more quickly about whether an object belongs to a particular category for prototypic objects (Rosch, Simpson and Miller 1976). When respondents from Tongren described prototypic Tu clothing in task one, they often used the adjective *huali* (colorful). Although this picture still contains striped sleeves and embroidery, color is missing, and so for the majority of those in Tongren, this picture falls outside of the border of what can be included in the Tu category. The characteristic ‘colorful’ is not as definitive for respondents in Huzhu who are
more versed in the subtleties of Tu clothing. Niudaar continues to be an important aspect of Tu clothing to the present prototype possessed by a large number of Huzhu respondents, as the following section and chapter four will explain.\textsuperscript{61}

To summarize the results for task two, the differences in how the pictures were split indicates a difference in the complexity of the prototype for the Tu minority nationality held by the two groups of respondents. The majority of respondents living in Tongren County have developed a prototype of the Tu; this representation, I argue, largely corresponds with the image promulgated by the state, the media, and advertisers that I described previously. The prototype held by the majority of respondents in Huzhu County, on the other hand, is more fleshed out. It incorporates noncentral extensions (less clear cases of membership) of the prototypical image of the Tu minority nationality. Further, the representation held by the majority of respondents in Huzhu County is more detailed; many make distinctions about clothing based on time, occasion, or place. More specialized categorization of the Tu is salient due to the cultural context of living in Huzhu County. Respondents were asked to do one more task with the pictures; this task and its results are considered in the next section.

7. Likes and dislikes

Respondents’ final task with the photographs was to select five pictures that they liked and five they disliked from the pictures from the second task. I limited the respondents to only photographs of the Tu minority nationality in order to eliminate between-group prejudice.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{61}The results for picture hh add a point of contrast; I will briefly summarize those results here. Like picture t, picture hh is of a young woman wearing niudaar, suo, and sukar; however, this picture is in color and is only a headshot. So the prototypical features of embroidery and striped sleeves are absent from this photograph. Nearly a third of the Tongren respondents (29\%) put this picture in the Tu pile; they considered this an example of “huali” clothing. 29\% of the respondents from Tongren put this picture in the “don’t know” pile; 26\% classified it according to etic characteristics. In contrast, a majority of respondents from Huzhu (60\%) readily identified this picture as belonging to the Tu category; 40\% specifically explained this as an example of niudaar.

\textsuperscript{62}Indeed, respondents from Tongren County more often than not joked as they selected pictures they did not like that the task was much harder than it would have been with the first stack of pictures since the second lacked any
Respondents were asked to create two categories, like and dislike. In effect, respondents were selecting instances of these two categories that represented their idea or image of the category term. Rosch, Simpson, and Miller have also showed that people are likely to spontaneously list objects with high prototypicality ratings when asked to give examples of objects in a category (1976). In this task, I expected that as people selected examples to fill the two categories of like and dislike, that they would choose exemplars, or the most prototypical pictures. Consequently, I hypothesized that people were apt to choose pictures that looked like themselves, or were the most culturally salient, for the category “like.” Conversely, I expected people to select pictures that made them feel uncomfortable or that they did not understand (those which were most “foreign”) as the pictures that they did not like. In short, I expected respondents from Tongren County to respond positively to either pictures they perceived as Tibetan or from their own village, while respondents from Huzhu County would respond positively to pictures they assumed to be Tu. To analyze the results for this task, I ran chi-square tests to see if the selection of a particular picture correlated to whether the respondent was from Tongren or Huzhu, or if these two variables were independent. A statistically significant difference between respondents living in Tongren County and those living in Huzhu County exists for thirteen pictures at the 5 percent level of significance ($\alpha = .05$). One can divide these thirteen pictures into two categories based on a general look at the difference between the observed and expected frequencies: those pictures chosen by Huzhu respondents, and those pictures chosen by respondents from Tongren.

7.1 Huzhu likes and dislikes

Not surprisingly, Huzhu respondents liked pictures from their cultural area. Task two included twenty-one pictures from the Huzhu Tu area of present-day clothing; the average
response to five of these photographs by those from Huzhu is significantly different from the response by those from Tongren. These five pictures were among those most consistently favored by Huzhu residents. Eleven respondents selected picture u, which shows a man dressed in festival clothes as a favorite. Although male, he displays two prototypical features of Tu clothing: the wide-brimmed hat and colorful embroidery. Respondents explained, however, that they chose this picture not because of the clothing represented, but because of the model wearing the clothing. Yan Weiwen is a famous singer who performs hua’er, folk music sung throughout Qinghai province. The Huzhu Tu are especially well-known for singing hua’er on the sixth day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar. Tourists come to enjoy the spectacle as people gather together in small groups and trade songs back and forth (see chapter four for more about hua’er). Even when respondents voiced doubt about Yan Weiwen’s ethnicity (one respondent commented that he is just a Han man dressed in Tu clothing), 36% of the respondents selected this picture for the category “like.”

Picture ee was another picture liked by those Tu living in Huzhu. This picture shows schoolgirls from Donggou Township dressed in Tu clothing at a school function. Respondents emphasized that this was the clothing that they like and what girl students wear (even though this clothing is reserved for special occasions; students normally wear uniforms). One respondent’s pronunciation of the girls as, “pure” (chunzheng) conveys the depth of feeling Huzhu Tu respondents had for this picture. In these comments, we see how clothing represents the value of cultural purity. This picture captures the continuity of cultural tradition among the females. As is the case of minority groups throughout the world, it is the Tu females who preserve “traditional” dress; they are guardians of the cultural heritage of the Huzhu Tu. A complementary picture of schoolboys at the same function was included in the set, but the boys
are dressed in western clothing with the requisite red scarf around their necks to signal their participation in the Communist Youth League. A significant number of respondents did not select this picture. The portrayal of the schoolgirls (as opposed to the boys) in ethnic clothing underscores the gendered representation of China’s ethnic minorities, as discussed by Gladney (1994) and Schein (1997).63

For analytic purposes, pictures e, uu, and xx group together. E and xx are pictures of Tu clothing taken from a museum. Both of these pictures show mannequins modeling niudaar. Familiarity with niudaar does not come from memory or museums for most, however.64 The larger model tourist villages that line the road just before one enters the county seat of Huzhu feature fashion shows of Tu costume.65 It should be noted that neither the niudaar in the museum nor the niudaar in the tourist villages are artifacts from the past but rather are renditions of this historical material culture. Picture uu is of a young woman dressed in a reinterpretation of Tu clothing that is commonly seen in dance performances throughout Qinghai, but especially in the model tourist villages. As I have already pointed out, this is the clothing choice worn by young people if they dress in recognizably ethnic clothing. Pictures e, uu, and xx indicate the salience of the tourist industry to the lives of those living in Huzhu.

Both pictures b and eee were disliked by respondents in Huzhu. Picture b is one of Schram’s from the Republican period; it is the back view of a woman (and her two children) to

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63 Again, this is not unique to China. Taussig writes of Cuna women, “It is they who provide the shimmering appearance of Indianness. In so doing they fulfill a role common to many Third and Forth World women as bearers of the appearance of tradition and as the embodiment of the Nation” (1993:177).
64 Respondents I interviewed said that the wearing of niudaar was prohibited after the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, and very few respondents from Huzhu were old enough to have some memory of niudaar. However, Schram points out that some sartorial prohibitions existed beforehand. In 1913, the Living Buddha of Tiantang Si forbade Tu women from wearing their traditional costume and ordered them to adopt Tibetan-style dress (Schram 1954:119). A little later, Ma Bufang, a warlord from the “Ma Dynasty” which controlled much of northwestern China from the 1860s until the founding of the People’s Republic, also imposed sumptuary restrictions by forbidding the Tu from wearing niudaar and other traditional clothing, as well as speaking their own language (Limushishiden and Stuart 2006:71).
65 See chapter four for a more extensive discussion of these tourist enterprises.
show *huari niudar*, or the niudar worn by women living in the Huari region north of Xining (Schram 2006:265). Respondents complained that the subjects in picture b have their backs to the camera, and that it is in black and white. Picture eee shows the front view of an ayi from Tongren County. She wears a heavy sheepskin robe, and the split on the left-hand side is barely visible in the picture. However, her red sash is prominently tied in the front. Respondents from Huzhu disliked this picture since the woman’s face is covered. However, there are other photographs in this pile in which the subject’s face is obscured or where the subject’s back is toward the camera. Neither of these two pictures portray prototypical features of Huzhu Tu clothing. Their lack of color and lack of embroidery markedly contrast with the preceding five pictures liked by respondents in Huzhu. They are not clear members of the Tu category; one can argue, then, that these pictures are among those least culturally salient to respondents from Huzhu County.

### 7.2 Tongren likes and dislikes

Not surprisingly, Tongren respondents markedly preferred the pictures from their own village. Task two included nine pictures from Tongren County in the collection of Tu photographs; the average responses to six of these pictures by those from Tongren is significantly different from the responses by those from Huzhu. These six pictures were among those most consistently favored by Tongren respondents. Five of these (a, s, rr, ww, and ggg) portray clothing worn for *χeican*, the harvest festival commemorating the local mountain gods. Pictures a, rr, and ggg show men wearing *yerza* (summer hat), which are the hats reserved by the Tu (and Tibetan) villages for the harvest festivities of the sixth month in the lunar calendar. Red strings cascade from the top of this white conical hat.

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66 This hat was originally called *xangza*.
67 This is the same hat Amixaqong, a Buddhist god, is pictured wearing.
in the summer, to shield their heads from the rain or from the sun.\textsuperscript{68} In picture a, the men are dancing with towels, and their distinctive turquoise blue socks mark this as a Tu rather than Tibetan celebration of the festival. Pictures rr and ggg are close-ups of young men whose cheeks are pierced, once again marking these pictures as distinctively Tu from Tongren.\textsuperscript{69} Pictures s and ww show the front and back of a young woman’s clothing worn during χeičaŋ, which I have already described. The sixth picture (q) is of a young man dressed up for Wutu, a winter festival celebrated in just one Tu village (Nianduhu) in Tongren County. (I describe Wutu in much more detail in chapter four.) In doing this task, respondents from Tongren lingered over these pictures. They often pointed out the people they knew in the pictures to me or others who were also listening. When asked why they liked these pictures, a typical response was, “This is from our village; of course I like it.” It is of particular interest that these two festivals, Wutu and χeičaŋ, are a major part of the cultural tourism industry in Tongren County. These two festivals are heavily promoted as tourist events, and the five Tongren Tu villages have profited in recent years. So not only are these six pictures recognizably local, but they also represent arenas of local life in which the economic livelihood of the villages increasingly depends.

Nineteen Tongren respondents also chose picture yy as a favorite; this was the most liked picture out of all sixty-two photographs. Although this picture was featured in the twenty-third edition of \textit{China’s Tu Nationality (Zhongguo Tuzu)} as part of a collage of pictures of the Tongren Tu, none of the respondents identified the woman in the picture as coming from one of their

\textsuperscript{68} When touring the clothing collection in the Ethnic Museum of the Central University of Nationalities, I was surprised to see what I thought was an example of this hat. However, this hat was part of the display for Mongolian clothing, not Tibetan or Tu clothing. Perhaps the Mongolians wore the hat because of the link with Amixaqong, or maybe Amixaqong is identified with this hat because of Mongolian influence. Or, it is possible the presence of this hat in Longwu valley might be a remnant of material culture from Mongolian settlers. As tantalizing as this link is, it is unlikely that this could ever be proven to be more than speculation.

\textsuperscript{69} Shamans from the Tibetan villages in the Longwu river valley who celebrate this festival slash their foreheads as a blood offering (Epstein and Peng 1998). However, only in the Tu villages do large numbers participate in this part of the festival.
villages. Rather, many mentioned that she appeared to be a Tibetan princess from Lhasa. One respondent declared that he worshipped Tibet ("Wo chongbai Xizang"), and thus he chose the one identifiably Tibetan picture from the stack as one of his favorites. This choice is not surprising; the Tongren Tu identify themselves as a subgroup of Tibetans rather than as members of the Tu minority nationality, as the results for the previous two tasks have shown. Even though picture yy is not categorized as prototypically Tongren Tu, it is still selected, revealing the cultural importance and salience of the Tibetan minority nationality for those Tu living in Tongren County.

7.3 Age, education level, and gender

I also ran chi-square tests to evaluate whether a picture was liked (or not) was related to respondents’ age, education level, or gender; I wanted to assess whether or not location was more significant than other variables in the selection of a particular picture. Less agreement existed between the other three variables (gender, age, and education) and liking or disliking a particular picture. The choice of fourteen pictures (or 22.6% of the total number of photographs) was determined by whether the respondent was from Tongren or Huzhu County. In contrast, six pictures (two for each variable, or 3.2% of the total number of photographs) was consistent with the respondent’s gender,70 age,71 or education level.72

70 Responses to only two pictures indicate a relationship between one’s gender and liking or disliking those pictures. Men disproportionately disliked picture k; nine men (thirty percent of all respondents) selected this picture as one of their least favorites. In this photograph, two young men from Huzhu carry flat drums and are dressed in brightly colored, unbuttoned sleeveless robes of patterned silk over loose long-sleeved black robes. They are participating in a festival celebrated in Huzhu shortly after the spring planting; the festival marks the completion of planting and involves a time of asking local gods for a bountiful harvest. It is of interest that eight of the men who disliked this picture were from Tongren County, and they disliked this photograph for what they perceived to be poor imitation. One respondent commented that the young men looked like they were supposed to be shamans (they carried the correct drums), but they did not have long hair, and they were not dressed appropriately. The role of the shaman is central to ethnic tourism in Tongren County, as chapter four will discuss. Men liked picture bbb, while no females selected this picture. Six men selected this picture as one of their favorites; four of these men were from Huzhu County. One man commented that this girl was clean and pretty; another said that she is wearing what Tu women now wear. One is left to speculate why men favored picture bbb over picture uu, which portrays similar content. I snapped both of these pictures on the same day at a smaller tourist enterprise in Xiaozhuang Village. The young
To summarize the results for the likes and dislikes portion of the task, we see, not surprisingly, that respondents liked pictures from their own cultural area, and particularly those pictures that conveyed what they see as their own distinctive culture. These pictures are those that are most culturally salient to the respondents; they serve as exemplars for their respective categories of membership. Respondents from Huzhu County liked pictures that are prototypically Tu; respondents from Tongren County liked pictures that are from their own village area or were thought to be identifiably Tibetan. Interestingly, a majority of the photographs selected by those in Tongren (six out of the seven) portray clothing that is worn for women in both of these pictures are wearing similar performance costumes. The primary color of the jacket and pants is bright pink satin, and the stripes of the sleeves include pink, purple, and lime-green. The only two perceptible differences between the two pictures is that the young woman in picture bbb has some embroidered needle holders hanging from her costume and she is dancing. This picture thus more closely fits the popular image of the Tu.

Responses to just two pictures indicate a relationship between one’s age and liking or disliking a particular picture. An unexpected number of young respondents (seven, or thirty-seven percent) disliked picture h; an unexpected number of middle-aged respondents failed to select this picture. Picture h is a black and white photograph taken by Schram of a rich Tu woman. She wears the *huari niudar* (crested niudaar) and a winter jacket with striped sleeves. She wears wide pants under her skirt. Respondents complained about this picture being black and white; one commented that the clothes were obviously old. Historical images of the Tu are not readily available within China. As I have pointed out before, the historical costumes in museums or the model minority villages are not historical artifacts, but renditions of historical artifacts. Young people disliking this photograph may be simply due to their dislike of the lack of color. Or, perhaps their familiarity with imitation is something akin to Baudrillard’s simulacra (1995). The representations in museums and the model minority villages conceal the absence of reality, and when respondents from Huzhu are confronted with this historical artifact, they are confused by this sign. The dislike of this picture by young respondents, the majority of whom are from Huzhu, suggests erosion of the bond between the sign and signified. I take up this discussion more in chapter four. A significant number of young respondents liked picture q, which portrays a young wutu painted in tiger stripes, with raw meat hanging from his mouth and spears loaded with loaves of bread in his hands. As I pointed out above, this festival has started to feature prominently in the ethnic tourist industry in Tongren, and it has catapulted this festival in importance in the younger generation’s minds.

Responses to just two pictures indicate a relationship between one’s level of education and liking or disliking a particular picture. Picture o shows an older woman from Huzhu sitting and facing the camera. She wears a padded black cotton jacket and dark blue pants; a light pink scarf is wrapped around her head. More respondents with some amount of elementary education liked this picture than was expected, while no respondents with some high school or college education liked this picture. This woman is dressed in the representative clothing of an older woman from Huzhu; we can surmise that she likely had no or just a few years of education. Thus, her status is likely similar to those who disproportionately liked this picture, while she may represent the backwardness of being an uneducated minority nationality to those with more education. I should note, however, that this picture was not disproportionately disliked by those with more education. Picture xx, which I described above, was disproportionately liked by those with no education. All six of these respondents were from Huzhu County and were older.
tourist events. The next chapter explores in more detail the historical context for tourism and its relationship to ethnic identity in Tongren County.

8. Conclusion

After the definitive defeat on the mainland of the Nationalist Party in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) faced the project of unifying one-fifth of the world’s population into a nation-state. To complicate matters, ethnic minorities who lived in peripheral, yet strategic, borderlands composed about eight percent of the population. In the 1950s the CCP deployed teams of researchers to accomplish the task of defining which groups made up the multi-ethnic state. A group’s status as a minority nationality was determined by a combination of Stalin’s criteria of nationhood and Lewis Henry Morgan’s model of social evolution. Stalin relied on a classical theory of categorization to delineate essentialist characteristics by which a nationality could be determined: a historically constituted, stable community of people bound by a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up, which is manifested in a common culture (McKhann 1995:47). By the time the political climate shifted in the late 1950s and the ethnic identification project terminated, the CCP had recognized fifty-four minority nationalities, who along with the Han majority composed the multi-ethnic state of the People’s Republic of China.73

As material began to be produced describing the nation’s fifty-five minority nationalities, representations of these groups began to be widely available to the public. These images idealized certain characteristic features of each minority nationality, one of which is clothing. Consequently, dress has become a way in which the identity of the wearer is attributed. Gladney summarizes this process as follows,

73 The Jinuo were not approved as a separate group until 1978, becoming the fifty-fifth minority nationality.
“…nations become mapped through the imposition of borders, boundaries, and categories of configuration upon previously borderless, unbounded, or uncategorized regions, peoples, and spaces, creating a national ‘geo-body’ by which the component parts are constituted. This geo-body then becomes constitutive in the representation, revelation, and relocation of the peoples and places therein” [2004:28].

I have highlighted two other aspects central to understanding how clothing works to display identity in China. First, clothing, and by extension ethnic identity, is prototypical in nature. That is to say, each minority nationality has an associated prototype of characteristic features, or what it is supposed to look like, rather than a list of defining properties. Exemplars exist for each minority nationality; I have described in detail the historical development of the prototype for the Tu minority nationality. Consequently, rather than a list of necessary and sufficient attributes for a category, a given person (or representation) can be judged as a central, clear-cut member of a category, while another might be less so. Task one established which clothing is most prototypically associated with which ethnic minority in Qinghai Province. Further, the boundaries of category membership are fuzzy, indistinct, unclear. Task two explored these boundaries for the Tu minority nationality. Second, the nature of clothing is impermanent. Clothes can be easily changed, and to a certain extent, a different ethnic identity may be signaled by this change of clothing. A minority nationality in China has the option of wearing identifiably ethnic clothing and therefore taking on an ethnic identity, or wearing Han clothing. Some minorities in China, like the Tu in Tongren, have even more than just these two options. Dressing up as a particular minority nationality or as the Han majority works by modifying those signs which conventionally display the identity of the actor. This mimetic faculty, “…practice[s] an everyday art of appearance, an art that delights and maddens as it cultivates the insoluble

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74 This quote implies that the CCP was working with a clean slate, so to speak. In tracing the history of the image of the Tu, I have shown that the imposition of categories and boundaries was in no way on previously uncategorized or unbounded groups. However, the resulting geo-body is indeed constitutive of the representation, revelation, and relocation of China’s minority nationalities.
paradox of the distinction between essence and appearance” (Taussig 1993:176). Despite this theoretical flexibility, people’s choices are contextualized. That is to say, they operate within the boundaries of structure. When dressing for a particular occasion, Tu in Tongren may choose between Tibetan robes, western jeans or a suit, or the traditional clothes from their own village. And they do play within these parameters. My translator donned a Tibetan kila for the celebration of Children’s Day (eschewing the Tu robe that women just a bit older wore), jeans and a leather motorcycle jacket as she accompanied me on interviews around the village, and the Tu kila when she danced in χeɕcant as a teenager. On the other hand, it would be inconceivable for a young Tu woman from Tongren to don the black hair covering worn by Hui women, and unlikely for her to wear the multi-colored striped sleeves and hat of the Huzhu Tu. By choosing pictures they liked and disliked, as well as completing the lumping portions of tasks one and two, respondents signaled which categories they themselves belonged to. These results show official recognition as Tu to be irrelevant to those Tu living in Tongren County. Local village identity remains most salient, but the Tongren Tu also consider themselves a subgroup of Tibetans.75

We can understand these results by what Gladney terms as relational alterity (2004:191). Simply put, identity forms in a field of social relations. As Bateson puts it, it takes two somethings to make a difference (1972:78,96). As a crude example, groups A and B consider themselves separate, but when a higher level of opposition enters the picture, they come together to form group C. Identity is constantly constructed in imitation of and resistance to an imagined other. Taussig writes, “…mimesis registers both sameness and difference, of being like, and of being other. Creating stability from this instability is no small task, yet all identity formation is

75 These results contradict Tapp’s thinking about the effect of the 1950s ethnic identification project. He argues that it has minimized the level of sub-ethnic group distinctions while actually reinforcing taxonomically upper levels of ethnic group identity (2002:75). It is certainly true that taxonomically upper levels have been reinforced. “Tu” was not even a category until the 1950s project. However, we see that for the Tongren Tu, sub-ethnic group distinctions are still germane for everyday matters of identity.
engaged in this habitually bracing activity in which the issue is not so much staying the same, but
maintaining sameness through alterity” (1993:129). The field of social relations is not only
defined by the self-other relationship, but also the particular sociohistorical moment. As
Herzfeld points out, “Performance is always embedded in ‘real’ events’” (2005:24). Thus
relational alterity is best understood as dialogical rather than dialectical; these relations move
back and forth and up and down, depending on the nature of the interaction. Context is
paramount. Nonetheless, the fluctuating alterities can seem stereotypically fixed and represented,
enabling people both within and without the groups to market such alterities. In the next chapter,
I explore the field of social relations for the Tongren Tu, and more specifically, how cultural
tourism has birthed a context in which they can strategically reformulate self-other relations.
Chapter Three. Takers Anyone? Land Use and Thangka Production among the Tongren Tu

1. Introduction

On February 2, 2007, my husband sat and talked with Jyaxi over steaming gongbao jiding in the county seat of Tongren. Jyaxi, originally from Guomare (one of the five Tu villages in Tongren County), had just arrived back “home” after more than ten years away and was looking for work. He had heard from an uncle that my husband was in need of a language teacher and linguistic consultant, and so had called. As they ate, Jyaxi related his story. When he was around nine years old and in primary school in Guomare, a Tibetan monk came travelling through the Longwu river valley. He had lived in India for some time, but had returned to speak in schools to talk about life and educational opportunities in India. Jyaxi’s interest was piqued, and he sought out more time with this monk. The monk invited him to go to India to study, and as Jyaxi relates, without his parents’ knowledge, he left that night for India.76 Jyaxi spent the next eleven years of his life in schools for Tibetan refugees in India, graduating with a high school degree. He had reconnected with his parents in 2006 when they travelled to Daramsala for the Dalai Lama’s annual Monlam teachings, and had just returned to his home village via Lhasa. He spoke fluent Tu, Tibetan (both Amdo and Central dialects), and English; his Mandarin, however, was very poor. And so his conversation with my husband was primarily in English. Throughout their conversation, Jyaxi repeatedly used the phrase, “our Tibetan language.” When my husband asked Jyaxi if he would be willing to teach him the Tu language spoken in Tongren County, Jyaxi responded that he was fluent in “our Tibetan language” and would be able to teach him. By “our Tibetan language” Jyaxi meant the dialect of Tu spoken in Guomare.

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76 Jyaxi’s story is not unique; scholars estimate that around one thousand Tibetan children are surreptitiously sent to schools for Tibetan refugees in India each year (Kolás 2003:70).
Gasare, Nianduhu, and Toujia. Later my husband asked Jyaxi what his aspirations for the future were. Jyaxi explained that he would most like to translate English language health materials into “our Tibetan language” so as to positively influence the lives of poverty-stricken Tibetans everywhere. My husband was confused; he wondered to himself how translated materials for this little-known dialect with only 6000 speakers and no orthography could have this kind of impact. As Jyaxi continued to expound, my husband finally realized that in this context, by “our Tibetan language” Jyaxi meant literary Tibetan. Throughout the rest of the conversation he listened as Jyaxi used the phrase “our Tibetan language” to refer to his own dialect of Tu, spoken Amdo Tibetan, and literary Tibetan.

Jyaxi’s use of “our Tibetan language” exemplifies the flexible nature of relational alterity discussed in the last chapter. This *us-them, self-other* contrast is basic to group distinction and identity. The structuring principle of this contrast works in such a way that the *us* category has a small, well-defined membership contrasting with everyone else, *them*. This is not to say that the world can only be conceived of in terms of just two categories; finer distinctions can of course be made. However, this structuring principle predicts that there will be smaller, well-defined sets in contrast with everything outside the set. The idea that group distinction works this way is certainly not new to the field of anthropology. In Evan-Pritchard’s work on the Nuer (1940), he proposes socio-spatial categories as a means of understanding Nuer categorization. He argues that they view different units as concentrically nested within each other. Beginning with the center and working out, these units are the hut, homestead, hamlet, village, tertiary tribal section, secondary tribal section, primary tribal section, tribe, other Nuer tribes, Eastern and Western Nuerland, Nuerland, Dinkaland and other foreign countries, and the government operating from various centers—for a total of thirteen categories. The structuring principle is not violated; who
is considered part of *us* is conceptualized as occurring along various boundaries depending on how wide ego draws the circle of inclusion in a given context. In the same way, Jyaxi creatively applied “our Tibetan language” to define who was “us,” and implicitly, then, who was “them.” At its narrowest, the phrase meant the small complex of four Tu villages in Tongren County; at its broadest it encompassed the entire Tibetan-speaking world. In a similar way, respondents doing the stimulus tasks used the term *maŋə* (first person plural inclusive collective pronoun). The Tongren Tu applied *maŋə* to describe those pictures they identified as being from their own village (deiwa) and therefore self (pictures sixteen and twenty-five in task one). This use is represented in the following figure.

![Figure 6. The Narrowest Application of *maŋə*.](image)

However, respondents also extended this term in task one to include a subset of Tibetans. When splitting the photographs of Tibetans into groups, certain photographs (pictures one, thirty, forty-eight, and fifty-three), were placed into a pile sometimes called *maŋə wodə*, or “we Tibetans/Tibetans like us.” Like the Nuer’s socio-spatial categories and Jyaxi’s “our Tibetan language,” this use of *maŋə* suggests that this core concept of what is considered self by the Tongren Tu is not static. The next figure illustrates the nature of this flexible border.
I suggest that this notion of what constitutes maŋə and how the concept is extended is an example of habitus. Marcel Mauss (1934) first introduced this term into contemporary usage, but Pierre Bourdieu (1977) re-elaborated it in the way used by theorists today. For Bourdieu, habitus refers to an embodied set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions and is socially acquired. It is embodied, meaning that it is internalized knowledge; it is inside the heads of actors. Because it is embodied, this knowledge is seemingly thoughtless, unconscious, and a matter of routine.\textsuperscript{77} Richard Nice, Bourdieu’s translator, points out that the semantic domain of dispositions in French is broader than in English; it includes predispositions, tendencies, propensities, and inclinations. Habitus is generative; it acts as a system of cognitive and motivating structures. It is the means by which people reproduce structure without necessarily being aware that they are doing so. This internalized set of dispositions structures the actor’s thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions. Foley writes, “The mandated behavior is thus inculcated in the habitus, which in turn, reproduces it” (1997:260). The practice generated by habitus is not mechanical reaction shaped by structure alone. As an actor experiences different contexts or different fields which necessarily make different demands, his dispositions are transformed and remade by these new experiences. However, this set of dispositions is also durable, as Bourdieu makes plain. “The dispositions ‘inculcated by the possibilities and

\textsuperscript{77} I agree with Strauss and Quinn’s criticism of Bourdieu which points out that the embodied knowledge represented by the habitus is unsayable. They argue that this knowledge is not forever barred from awareness (1997:46). Fajans makes a similar point. In her work on the Baining, she points out that sometimes this embodied set of dispositions is active knowledge; actors can consciously draw on public cultural values and schemas (1997:278).
impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed by the objective conditions’ generate dispositions compatible with these conditions, and pre-adapted to their demands. The most improbable practices are therefore excluded” (Jenkins 1992:50). Its limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, by one’s individual, class, ethnic, national history. It is socially acquired. Bourdieu explains, “I wanted to insist on the generative capacities of dispositions, it being understood that these are acquired, socially constituted dispositions…” (1990:13). It is laid down in each actor by his earliest upbringing, learned through everyday practice. Bourdieu refers to this process as the “apprenticeship through simple familiarization” (1977:88). Different social agents have different relationships to structure, which in turn is internalized.

Bourdieu’s habitus, in fact, sounds similar to prototypes, schemas, metaphors, and idealized cognitive models (all ways cognitive anthropologists (and others interested in cognition) talk about the generation of cultural knowledge). All of these are ways of talking about how information is represented, processed and learned. What is particularly useful, then, about the notion of habitus is Bourdieu’s explanation of how change can happen. History continually transforms the social order. However, the impact of external forces is internally mediated, reinterpreted, and transformed by the actor (Ortner 1989:17). Ortner explains, “…one dimension of the theory concerns the ways in which a given social and cultural order mediates the impact of external events by shaping the ways in which actors experience and respond to those events” (1989: 200). An actor responds to historical conditions through his understanding, which is generated by the habitus.

What I argue in this chapter is that the Tongren Tu conception of maŋə, this flexible notion of “This is us” which encompasses the Tongren Tu villages and nearby Amdo Tibetan
farmers if need be, has mediated the impact of recent Chinese history by shaping the ways in which the Tongren Tu experience and respond to those events. This chapter seeks to understand how the Tongren Tu world and notion of identity is being transformed. I argue that before “Liberation,” the notion of maŋə (being like but somehow different from the surrounding Tibetan populations) was a well-established pattern of practice. However, this was challenged by the new categorization (Tu) of the 1950s. The boundaries of the institutionalized categories of Tu and Tibetan are much more rigid, and I look at the ways in which the Tongren Tu have tried to reproduce more flexible understandings of maŋə, as well as play with the alternative modes of social identity presented by this historical opportunity. In order to do so, I will relate aspects of oral history interviews conducted with eleven individuals to some influential moments in recent Chinese history.

2. Before Liberation

The conceptualization of the five Tu villages in the Longwu valley as somehow different from the surrounding Tibetan populations is certainly not new. As early as the 1590s, the five villages were called Ji, Wu, Tuo, Li si zhai, (the four Ji, Wu, Tuo, and Li stockades) (Guomare and Gasare together made up Li zhai). Annals throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties consistently refer to this unit of five villages as Situn (the four villages/camps). Tibetans in the near vicinity also historically spoke of these villages as Han si zhai (the four Han (Chinese) stockades). People remember themselves as distinct in certain ways from the surrounding Tibetans before liberation. Men from these five villages worked as traders, ferrying goods and

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4My use of the term “liberation” reflects the borrowing of the Chinese word jiefang, into the Tongren dialect of Tu to designate the Communist Revolution.

79 By emphasizing changes in recent history, I do not want to implicitly attribute a mythical past to the Tongren Tu or in any way suggest that before 1949 they were somehow outside of history. However, I do suggest that interactions with external forces in the past fifty years have resulted in some structural changes that have produced alternatives for the Tongren Tu.
products between Han and nomad Tibetan areas. This income supplemented the farming done by the women, allowing for a higher standard of living than that of even the Tibetan farmers who lived in Longwu valley. Many of those I interviewed remember eating meat daily throughout the year, as well as suyou (yak butter). Because the men were businessmen, they were much more familiar with the world outside of the Longwu valley. One woman remembered her father’s travels to Beijing when he accompanied a reincarnated Buddha there. Another man told of his father traveling to Xining, Lanzhou, and beyond. Because of their diverse business associations, they were also multi-lingual. Men commonly spoke their mother tongue (Tu), Tibetan, and Chinese. In light of the previous chapter’s discussion of the link between clothing and ethnic identity today, people’s memories of their clothing is of special interest. Men wore Tibetan robes, usually in black. Women, however, wore the long, wide robes with splits along the two sides that are worn presently only by three or four young women at χeiṣaŋ, mentioned in chapter two. The robes worn every day were black, and were made with lighter-weight cloth in the summer and heavier-weight in the winter. Beneath the robes women wore wide pants; women remembered these pants being black, green, blue, or red. Women normally wore leather shoes; heavily embroidered shoes were reserved for holidays such as χeiṣaŋ and New Year’s. Women also exchanged their black robes for colorful silk ones on these holidays. The year a young girl turned fifteen, she started to wear the $p^h\ot^h\ə$ (an embroidered, rectangular, stiff piece of material overlaid with short strands of coral worn at the nape of the neck) when she danced in χeiṣaŋ for the first time. The $p^h\ot^h\ə$ was then part of her everyday

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80 Women were primarily responsible for planting and weeding; they mainly grew highland barley, with a little wheat and soybeans. Men were responsible for irrigation. Everyone helped with the harvest.
dress until she was married.81 The strands of beads on the pʰoᵗʰə worn every day were not made with real coral; this more precious version was saved for special occasions. The day a girl began wearing pʰoᵗʰə was marked by a special celebration. The previous evening, eligible young men with good family connections would be invited over to the home of the young woman where there would be singing and special food. Very early the next morning a well-off member of the family would invite the girl and her family over for a meal. Relatives were invited to come, and they brought gifts of money, cloth, and tea leaves. After women were married, they continued to wear the tʰər, a round silver medallion worn where the ends of their hair were gathered together. However, they were still required to wear the pʰoᵗʰə whenever they entered the monastery.

All these villages venerated Gomerelaŋ (alternatively Erlang shen) in the complex of religious ceremonies run by the village shamans. Gomerelaŋ is thought by those living in Tongren to have Han Chinese ancestors, and worship of him set them apart from surrounding Tibetan villages.82 Despite these differences, these five villages were culturally similar to the surrounding Tibetan population. Perhaps most salient was their adherence to Tibetan Buddhism. All three of the men I interviewed who had been born well before liberation had been sent to their local monasteries to become monks when they were children. One of the women I interviewed married a reincarnated Buddha (a Tibetan) resident at Longwu monastery. The monasteries in these five villages created links with the wider Tibetan world.

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81 One elderly woman told me that she wore the pʰoᵗʰə until she was twenty. When I then asked her how old she was when she married, she told me that she did not wear it anymore.
82 Erlang shen (also Yang Jian) is a Daoist god with a third eye in the center of his forehead which sees truth. He may be the deified version of mythical folk-heroes from the Qin, Sui, and Jin who aided in regulating China’s torrential floods. He is thought to be the son of Li Bing, who was appointed governor of Sichuan by King Zhao of the state of Qin. Erlang is credited in aiding Li Bing in building Chengdu’s famous aqueducts and therefore developing agriculture in the Chengdu plain. He also makes appearances in the Journey to the West as the nephew to the Jade Emperor (Taoism 2007). The Minhe Tu also worship Erlang shen. It is generally recognized by the Minhe Tu that his image came from elsewhere; several stories circulate about its origins (Li Meiling, class with author, April 26, 2005).
3. After Liberation

Although the People’s Republic of China was officially established in 1949, the implications of this moment were delayed in the Longwu river valley. Ma Bufang, a warlord of the famous Ma clan who ruled northwest China after the fall of the Qing, controlled Qinghai from 1931-49. He was virulently anti-communist; consequently, the organization of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Qinghai was quite weak and the dates for liberation vary according to location. Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha gives 1952 as the date for liberation. Another source points to late August, 1949, when some designated representatives from Tongren traveled to Xunhua to greet troops from the People’s Liberation Army as it was making its way from Linxia in Gansu to Xunhua and then on to Xining. After Xining was liberated, the Military Control Commission of Qinghai sent a number of comrades to Tongren, and on the twenty-second of September, 1949, the first people’s political administration (Tongren County People’s Government) was established (Huangnan gaikuang 1985:40).

As part of the “invention of tradition” for the new nation state, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences sent seven teams of over seven hundred members to research the groups who had applied for minority nationality status. In 1952, those responsible for researching in Qinghai determined that the five villages in the Lonwu Valley were part of the larger Tu minority nationality (Tongren si zhaizi (wutun) tuzu lishi diaocha 1985:171). The provincial CCP adopted a strategy of rapid development based on massive migration of Han Chinese from the eastern parts of China and extraction industries in the Qaidam Basin. This was simultaneously accompanied by initial attempts at collectivization. However, the Tibetans (as well as the Hui and Salar) did not welcome the new regime; armed resistance continued throughout most of the

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84 Incidentally, this was before even Xining, the provincial capital, was liberated on September 5, 1949.
1950s. This culminated in 1958 in a rebellion in Xunhua where Han Yimu, a former Salar soldier of Ma Bufang’s, and his forces joined pastoral Tibetans to fight against the CCP (Goodman 2004:386-387). All of these changes at the provincial level meant little to the Tu living in Tongren; liberation effectively did not come here.85

After the CCP in Qinghai put down the 1958 rebellion, it pushed forward with its implementation of the Great Leap Forward in 1959-60, particularly emphasizing in-migration of Han Chinese and land reclamation (Goodman 2004:387). In Tibet, a surge of protests in 1959 erupted into bitter fighting and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India. Many Tibetans were killed, monasteries were destroyed, religious activity was repressed, and ethnic dress was forbidden. In Qinghai, the CCP carried out a series of repressive campaigns in the early 1960s. Local leaders, especially those who were Hui, Salar, and Tibetan, were sent to labor camps for suspected opposition to the government. Goodman writes, “Essentially assimilationist policies were pursued, and almost all local activity that could be associated with specific minority nationalities was at first discouraged and then in the Cultural Revolution not allowed at all” (2004:387). It was these shifts in policy that started to affect the daily life of the Tongren Tu. Monasteries throughout the Longwu river valley were closed. For most the change was peaceful; the three men I interviewed who had been monks quietly integrated into the community, seeking further education, farming, and marrying. One, who had served a reincarnated Buddha as an assistant and therefore had acquired some Mandarin in his travels, capitalized on his linguistic ability to work as a Mandarin-Tibetan-Tu translator and became a cadre. For others, however, this time was characterized by violence. One man, who was only seven or eight at this time, recalled

85 What I mean by this is that monasteries remained open, women continued to dress in the distinctively Tongren Tu robes and wear the pʰo’ ol’s, and land and animals were still privately owned. There were still no schools in the Tu villages. In my interviews, only one man referred to liberation as occurring in 1949. When the majority used the term, “liberation” (jiefang), they actually referred to the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution.
soldiers coming to the village with guns and jeeps. He remembered his family handing over all of their money to these soldiers. Tears welled up in the eyes of a seventy-two year-old woman as she recalled the day when her young husband, a reincarnated Buddha, was taken away and presumably killed. Her father, Nianduhu’s χombo (village leader), also disappeared; she herself was beaten and suffers permanent damage in her ears. Many simply said that all they had was confiscated. The monasteries were stripped of all religious decoration; the large thangkas which were unveiled on the twelfth day of the new year were destroyed. The shamans were prohibited from celebrating baŋ, wutu, lapsi, and χeicaŋ, as well as from maintaining the mountain god temples or chanting scriptures. Daily religious rituals within the home were suspended. Men no longer travelled as traders, but took on agricultural roles if they could not find jobs with the government. As land was collectivized, the village of Nianduhu lost arable land to the new “Han” city (Tongren) which was built west of the old Longwu market town. The ownership of livestock was also collectivized. Collectivization was accompanied by the household registration (hukou).

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86 These four festivals will be described in much detail in chapter four.
87 This new city housed all prefectural government buildings (Lin 2005:46).
88 A former village head (cunzhang) I interviewed talked about this initial loss of Nianduhu’s farm land. Although I do not have numbers for how many mu (1 mu=0.1647 acres) were lost in 1958, figure eight shows the boundary of Nianduhu’s arable land before this time. Additionally, refer to table eighteen to compare the average amount of land owned by a family unit before 1958 with the present. When the private ownership of land ended, urban areas were defined as state-owned, while rural areas were owned by the collective. However, the state had the right to expropriate collectively owned land if it was in the public interest (Ho and Lin 2003:685). The conversion of arable land in this case must have been deemed to be in the public interest.
89 All of the people I interviewed remembered their families having, at the very least, a cow, a couple of donkeys, and some goats before collectivization. In some cases, people owned quite a bit of livestock. One family owned over fifty goats (the father served as a secretary before liberation). The reincarnated Buddha owned over two hundred cows and yaks.
Map Three. Nianduhu Farmland before 1954.\textsuperscript{90}

system, which served as an administrative mechanism to regulate people’s mobility (Selden 1993:14). This eliminated the possibility for men to function as traders. Food became scarce. Goodman writes that the massive famine in Qinghai resulting from the policies of the late-1950s caused a death rate in excess of four per thousand (only Guizhou and Anhui Provinces suffered more) (2004:387). One elderly woman remembered that on her wedding day there were no special festivities or food because of the deprivation. Another recounted there was nothing available for a dowry when she married.\textsuperscript{91} The whole village gathered together at lunchtime to eat bread and drink tea communally. Traditional dress was by and large confiscated and destroyed; only a few families surreptitiously hid the robes, shoes, \textsuperscript{p}h\textsuperscript{0}\textsuperscript{h\textordmasculine}, and \textsuperscript{t}s\textsuperscript{h\textordmasculine}. Elementary

\textsuperscript{90} The thick black line indicates the boundary of Nianduhu’s farmland to the south; it extended east to the Longwu river banks. The current boundaries of Nianduhu are at the northernmost portion of this map.

\textsuperscript{91} This contrasts with earlier. The elderly woman who married the reincarnated Buddha remembers her dowry in 1954 being one thousand \textit{yuan}, a horse, and red silk cloth.
schools were opened in the Tu villages, and middle and high schools for minorities were opened in Tongren. Educational opportunities were previously limited to those males who entered the monasteries, or for those few who left the area. One woman recounts how embarrassed she felt when the government came to the village to register all the children for school. She tells of the elderly people in the village saying how inappropriate it was for females to attend school. Nevertheless, children began to spend their time in the classroom, rather than roaming the hills with the livestock or helping out in the fields as they had done previously. While migration and industry remained key to Qinghai’s development strategy throughout the 1960s, the social upheaval associated with the Cultural Revolution also came to the Longwu river valley. One man who studied in Xining returned to Tongren to teach in the newly established nationalities high school. But, he remembers, there were soon many “movements” within the communist party. Teachers were removed, and then one day around twenty-five students were taken away. So he applied for a transfer to Henan Mongolian Autonomous County in Huangnan Prefecture. He reasoned that since Huangnan Prefecture’s biggest schools were in Tongren, they attracted more attention. Henan was more remote, and so he thought he would be less noticed. But his experience in Henan was still difficult. He related,

“So I was in Henan. It was difficult, very difficult. During this time, we would have just half a piece of bread to eat. One person would get 18 jin [of wheat] to eat a month. I was a teacher, but there was work to do, a lot of work. All of the students had to go out to dig and to farm. Students had to work; teachers had to work. During this time, a

92 Baoan also had one school for the few Han children who lived in town (Baoan was historically the administrative seat in the Longwu valley). One man recalled the day his curiosity overcame him and he went to the school to peek in the windows, just to see what school was like.
93 One man told of how he left for Xining in 1955 for school. There was no public transportation from the Longwu valley in those days. He walked to Xunhua (fifty-three kilometers), and then on to Hualong where he could finally catch a bus the rest of the way.
94 At least one man became the village shepherd; he was responsible for taking the commune’s goats out daily. His daughter only remembers him being in charge of fifty goats; this reflects a significant decrease in the number of livestock.
95 1 jin=1.34 pounds
teacher had to dig one mu of land [per day] for earthen bricks” [conversation with author, August 7, 2007].

4. Post-Mao Reforms

In the late 1970s, CCP politics shifted in the direction of reform and openness. The institutions and laws regulating the relationship between the land and its users underwent significant changes. The household responsibility system was adopted in the early 1980s; by 1984 ninety-five percent of former production teams had contracted land to households and adopted independent household management (Selden 1993:177). This new system shifted land use decisions to the household. Rural collectives contracted agricultural land to households for production. They in turn paid fees to the collective for use of the land, but had the right to keep the income generated on this contracted land. Land was contracted on the basis of household size and composition (Ho and Lin 2003:686-688). One elderly Tibetan woman and her husband (who was originally from Nianduhu) moved to Nianduhu in 1970. With the start of the household responsibility system, her family was granted twelve mu (a traditional unit of area; one mu is equal to one-fifteenth of a hectare, or 0.1647 acre) of land. There were seven in her family; she remembers this amount of land being sufficient for their needs.96 In 1986, the Land Management Law which institutionalized these changes was passed; the State Land Administrative Bureau was established to monitor and enforce this new law. Scholars have since pointed out the ambiguity institutionalized in the 1986 law. Article 31 protected cultivated land and strictly controls its conversion into noncultivated land. Article 9 permitted the state to expropriate land for public use as long as it pays compensation in accordance to the law; article

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96 In my oral history interviews, I asked people if they remembered how much land a family who was considered well-off before collectivization would own; the consensus was around twenty mu.
47 laid out the guidelines for compensation payments. Furthermore, article 38 protected the rights and interests of developers in accordance with the law (Ho 2001, Cai 2003, Notar 2006). It is this ambiguity in law which has been most exploited to the detriment of the Tongren Tu, but especially those living in Nianduhu, as will be discussed momentarily. Under the 1986 law, ownership of land resided with the collective (the “natural” village); households explicitly did not have the right to convert land for non-agricultural use (Ho and Lin 2003:688). It was only with state approval that rural land can be converted to non-agricultural purposes. However, in his 2003 article, Cai points out that the state has often proved to be predatory in land usage, usurping designated arable land for self-serving purposes (680). Additionally, the pent-up demand for better housing and rapid growth in the more open commercial sector fueled the desire for land. This growth led to the almost uncontrolled conversion of rural land throughout most of the 1980s. The government set up a number of measures in order to stem this loss of farmland. In 1991, it called for the protection of primary farmland regions, following in 1994 with the “Regulations for the protection of primary farmland” (Ho and Lin 2003:693). Ho and Lin conclude, “However, the taking of farmland by cities and towns, railways and highways, industrial and mining sites, and TVEs [township-village enterprises] continued to remain at relatively high levels” (2003:698). Between 1978 and 1996, the official figures state an annual decrease of 218,000 hectares of farmland, which yields a four percent decrease in total arable area (Ho 2001: 395).

Since 1954, the new part of Tongren, called the zhoushang (prefectural part) by locals, has steadily grown towards the village of Nianduhu; today, the stores and apartment buildings of the prefectural and county seat seamlessly blend into the mud-brick pingfangs (enclosed

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97 If they must move, people are allowed a subsidy for resettlement. They must be compensated for the crops in the ground as well as the land itself. They should also receive a lump sum equal to six to ten times the average annual output in the three years prior to the requisition (Chinadaily 2004).
courtyard houses) of the inhabitants of Nianduhu. The elderly Tibetan woman who was allocated twelve mu in the early 1980s today has only four, which she emphasizes is not sufficient for a family which has in the meantime increased to twelve members through marriages and births. Many of those I interviewed today have only one mu or no land at all. The following table compares the average number of mu farmed by a Tu household over the past century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average # mu/household</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qing⁹⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before collectivization⁹⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007¹⁰⁰</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18. Average Number of Mu Farmed by a Tu Household.

These numbers reflect a more dramatic conversion of agricultural land than the national average (a forty-five percent decrease in contrast to four percent decrease nationally as cited above).

During my seventeen months of fieldwork, I observed three apartment buildings, two large danweis, two gas stations, and a new road constructed on land that had been farmed when I first arrived in Nianduhu in March, 2006. However, unlike many other peasants facing similar fates throughout China, most I interviewed in Nianduhu were not dissatisfied by this state of affairs.

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⁹⁸ This information comes from the 1999 edition of the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture annals (Huangnan zangzu zishi zhouzhi 1999:300). This number includes land from all five Tu villages (si zhaizi).

⁹⁹ I calculated this number based on information obtained from the oral histories I conducted. This number reflects land holdings in Nianduhu, Nianduhu laka, and Guomare. Seven people remembered the number of mu their family farmed before collectivization. I excluded one from this calculation; her family lived in a nomad area and had 155 mu. Two were born just around the time of the communes and have no memory of their family’s land holdings; another only came to Nianduhu after collectivization. One woman could not remember how much land her family farmed. This number is quite similar to the average number of duan/family given in the Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha for Nianduhu (Ji tun) in 1956 (7.6 mu=1 duan) (1985:184).

¹⁰⁰ I calculated this number based on information elicited during the interviews in which I administered the stimulus tasks. I asked ten respondents how many mu they farmed. This number includes respondents from Nianduhu, Nianduhu laka, Wutun, and Baoan. This number is smaller than the average number of mu/household for all of Tongren County, which is given as 12.40 mu/household in the Huangnan annals (Huangnan zangzu zishi zhouzhi 1999:301).
Cai (2003) notes that under present legal circumstances, peasants are politically weak when it comes to defending their land use rights, but that they still engage in *ex post* resistance. Notar documents how the Bai in Dali are variably compensated for their loss of land. Some are not compensated at all, while others are compensated at well below the market value. The extra wealth gained from the sale of land does not trickle down but goes instead to profit officials and private companies. This has lead to a growing sense of discontentment (2006:126). In Xining, farmers staged a sit-in on the street in front of my apartment in August, 2005, to protest the unfair compensation of their land. I did hear occasional grumbling from those in Nianduhu. For example, some land along *Tuanjie lu* from Nianduhu into Tongren had been converted into a strip mall-type structure. This two-story building (the first story was intended for use as a small business or store with the second story space divided into living quarters) stood unfinished, its windows bare and garage doors closed. One friend complained of the stupidity of this building. Someone had speculated that Muslim businessmen would flock to this opportunity, and good farming land had been sold to build this folly. She concluded her discourse by sighing and saying that Tu people loved money too much.101

However, I more often heard positive remarks about current times, despite dramatic shifts in available amounts of arable land. One family who still had seven or eight mu considered this land as a kind of bank account. While they farmed this land, they also relied on it when they needed to increase their cash flow. The most recent mu they had sold garnered them 50,000 RMB. With this money they built two new houses for their sons and bought a car, new cell phones, and a digital video recorder, among other things. Although the walled portion of Nianduhu used to be surrounded by fields on all sides of rich farmland (*shuidi* (irrigated land)),

101 Ironically, this same friend today lives in one of the new apartment buildings built on this formerly rich farmland.
now fields are limited to just two sides.102 The encroaching town of Tongren and the newly constructed road are not solely responsible for the loss of arable land. The Tu are also participating in the construction boom. The Tu previously stayed close to the walled borders of the old village; today, pingfangs line both sides of the road connecting the walled village to Tongren. From April to July, 2007, I saw three new pingfangs constructed on agricultural land. This loss of land means fewer people are needed for agricultural work. Before collectivization, the burden of the agricultural cycle fell on the shoulders of women. Today, women are still primarily responsible for what agricultural work needs to be done. But today’s agricultural tasks are much less time intensive, with the widespread usage of fertilizers and tuolaji (tractors), as well as because of the decrease in amount of land available to be farmed. Consequently, women are not as busy as they once were. This raises the question of what work men (and an increasing number of women) do, which will be discussed next.

Besides radical restructuring in land use and management, the reforms and openness beginning in the late 1970s translated into greater freedom for local cultural and religious expression. Several scholars have documented these changes in the Tibetan Buddhist context. Goldstein and Kapstein’s edited volume traces the renewal of Tibetan Buddhism in China since 1978. The book outlines how Tibetan Buddhists today are negotiating the revival of their Buddhist heritage (1998). In another article Kapstein points to Party Secretary Hu Yaobang’s visit to Tibet in 1980 as a key turning point for Tibetans. His sympathetic response to the poor conditions in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and call for sweeping reforms were accompanied by a series of contacts between representatives in Beijing and representatives of the

102 I cite Nianduhu as an example because this is where I did my fieldwork. While Nianduhu’s loss of land might be the most dramatic because of its proximity to Tongren (the county and prefectural seat), the other four Tu villages in the Longwu river valley are also subject to similar pressures. Significant monastery expansion projects in Wutun and Baoan and the new road construction through Guomare and Gasare have swallowed up arable land. These four villages have also experienced their own construction boom resulting in village “sprawl.”
Dalai Lama. Some Tibetans were permitted to visit exiled family members and places of Buddhist pilgrimage in Nepal and India, and Tibetans living abroad were allowed to visit their homes in China. This renewed contact meant moral encouragement as well as finances for rebuilding and restoration (2004:239-240). Temples and monasteries throughout Qinghai (as well as other Tibetan Buddhist areas) started to be rebuilt and reopened (Goodman 2006:389). The revival of Tibetan Buddhist material culture was not limited to architecture, but also extended to other art forms, such as painting. Between 1998 and 2000, Kolås and Thowsen traveled throughout the Tibetan regions of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan to document cultural survival in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. In their travels, they encountered artists from Tongren County, but not just in the Longwu river valley. In Ngaba Prefecture (Sichuan), artists had been imported from Regong103 (Kolås and Thowsen 2005:67). Taling Monastery (Tashi Chodanling) in Dari County, Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Qinghai), had also hired artists from Regong to create new frescoes and thangkas for their monasteries (Kolås and Thowsen 2005:66). In fact, “Most of the Qinghai monasteries we visited had invited artists from Rebkong or from Labrang in Gansu. In general, most monasteries reported that artists from these two places, and in particular from Rebkong, had done the artwork, although local villagers usually took care of construction” (Kolås and Thowsen 2005:67). In Tongren, they visited the Regong Art Gallery, which had been started in 1978 after a 20-year interruption in thangka painting. At this time there were still 4 famous artists alive and around who could serve as teachers at the art institute. One of the interviewed painters informed them that four village districts in Regong County had been centers of art production since the early fifteenth century. He estimated that there were around one thousand painters in those four districts as of 1999

103 Alternatively Rebgong, Rebkong. The Tibetan name for Tongren County; this will be further explicated below.
What the painter excludes from his description of the four village districts with over a thousand painters is that they are Tu. One is left to wonder why.

5. Tu Thangka?

Upon leaving the narrow Longwu gorge and entering the Longwu River Valley, the road passes under a sturdy yellow arch embellished with artistic flourishes and the characters, 热贡艺术 (Regong yishu “Regong art”) to signal entrance to the homeland of Regong art. The adoption of this officially approved appellation successfully evades the issue of who actually produces the art. Rebgong is an Amdo Tibetan word meaning “elm valley” or “all together.” The word historically referred to not only a geographic place including present day Tongren and Zeku counties in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, but its meaning also extended to ethnicity. The Tibetan tribes living in this area were called the Regong 12 zu (the 12 Rebgong clans).

However, Regong yishu only came into use in the early 1980s. Beginning in the 1960s, Wutun yishu (Wutun art) first appeared in print to refer to the Tibetan Buddhist art produced in this area. Soon afterwards, the term Tongren yishu (Tongren art) also began to be published. Both terms are geographic place names of Mandarin origin. It was not until after the third plenary session of the 11th Central Committee in December 1978 that prefecture and provincial level officials from the cultural bureau investigated what term would actually be most appropriate by interviewing Tibetan cadres and painters. They determined that “Tongren yishu” implied a larger geographic area than the four villages where the art was produced. (Ironically, using similar reasoning, Regong yishu should have been dismissed as a possibility.) Conversely, “Wutun yishu” designated a smaller geographic area (only Wutun village), excluding the other three villages producing art. A second argument provided by the officials was that the use of a Tibetan word more accurately reflected the Tibetan Buddhist content of the art, or as the annals
of Huangnan put it, the phrase focuses attention on the *Tibetan-ness* of the painting and sculptural style (Huangnan zangzu zizhi zhouzhi 1999:1132, emphasis mine). Regong yishu, it was decided, also better expressed the Tibetan origins of the artistic style. So in 1981, the various levels of government agreed that the artistic style in the region would be called *Regong zangzu yishu* (Rebgong Tibetan art), or Regong yishu in its shortened form (Huangnan zangzu zizhi zhouzhi 1999:1131-1132).

Once consensus was achieved about which term best represented the art forms produced in Longwu valley, its use quickly spread. In 1982, the Exhibition of Tibetan Folk Painting and Painted-Sculpture Art from Wutun, Qinghai Province (*Qinghai sheng wutun zangzu minjian huihua, nisu yishu zhanlan*) premiered in Beijing and Shanghai, as well as other east coast cities (Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha 1985:171). The government established and began to administer the Regong Art Research Institute where artists worked as cadres for the state (Stevenson 2002:209). In 1998, the Great Thangka of Tibetan Art and Culture of China was completed in Regong. The piece measures 600 meters long and 2.3 meters high; over 300 artisans and craftsmen participated in its creation. The Guinness Book of Records lists this as the largest thangka ever completed, and hails Regong as the ‘homeland of Tibetan painters’ (Stevenson 2002:216). Coffee table books with such titles as *Regong Art* (translated into English, no less) introduce Wutun as the, “hometown of Zang [Tibetan] nationality painters” (Regong Art Editorial Committee 1999:1). Today, walking through the streets of Tongren, one sees stores, institutes, and museums, all bearing the name Regong yishu. The branding campaign has certainly worked.

Nonetheless, the brand successfully obscures the ethnicity of those producing the art. The Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture’s annals identify the four villages involved in the
production of thangka painting and sculptures as Wutun, Nianduhu, Guomare, and Gasare (Huangnan zangzu zizhi zhouzhi 1999:1131). Other sources, both books and interviews, more or less agree. What most sources do not go on to specify is the ethnic makeup of the four villages. Omitting this information leaves the reader, the tourist, the prospective buyer to infer that since the area is referred to by a clearly Tibetan word and is located within the boundaries of a Tibetan autonomous prefecture, then the inhabitants must be Tibetan. Not so. In 1952, the government classified the five villages of Baoan, Wutun, Nianduhu, Guomare, and Gasare as belonging to the Tu minority nationality (Qinghai tuzu shehui lishi diaocha 1985:171). And as already pointed out, recognition of these five villages as a group distinct from the surrounding area is recorded throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties.

However, the officially recognized ethnicity of the painters and sculptors involved in the production of Regong yishu is rarely advertised in official or tourist publications promoting the area. Tourists, both foreign and domestic, make the pilgrimage to Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture with the desire to consume “authentic” Tibetan life and art. Between 1999 and 2004, 717,500 tourists visited Tongren County; of this number, 15,800 (2.2%) were from overseas. One Chinese tourist agency (China Tibettour) advertises Tongren County as the third most visited tourist location in Qinghai for its status as the birthplace of Regong art. The tourist agency promotes the Tu villages as, “...a bright gem in the treasury of Tibetan culture” (China Tibettour). In the summer of 2007, Global Learning Across Borders and the Pratt Institute, with support from the Rubin Museum of Art, sponsored a study abroad program during which a group of students from the United States spent the bulk of their time in China living and studying art techniques in Guomare, one of the five Tu villages. The title of the program was, “Artistic Traditions of Amdo,” (making reference to the larger geographic context of Huangnan
Prefecture) and it described itself as, “a program that will carry students and teachers on a forty-day pilgrimage over the Tibetan plateau and to the northeast grassland region of Tibet where we will visit and study with many of the finest masters who are responsible for keeping this region's rich artistic heritage alive and well,” (Artistic Traditions of Amdo 2006).

Academic writing, for the most part, does little to clarify this point. In their recent book, Kolås and Thowsen write about this area, “"For many, Tibetan art has become synonymous with thanka painting, and in the Tibetan areas we visited, we found several places where painted and embroidered thanka are still being created by local artists. …At the Rebkong Art Gallery, we were informed that four village districts, all in Rebkong County, have been centers of art production since the early fifteenth century" (2005:144). Readers would assume that these four village districts are Tibetan.

Only a few academic articles and books (in particular those discussing the Tu minority nationality) reveal that those living in Nianduhu, Guomare, Gasare, and Wutun belong to the Tu minority nationality. And even in this arena the identity message is mixed. A group of teachers from Xining came to visit me during the May holiday of 2007. My Mandarin teacher had introduced me to her colleagues as a graduate student from America studying Tu culture. One of the teachers, whom I had not previously met, researched the thanka painting of Longwu valley as a side research interest, and the other teachers quickly established him as an expert by referring to the numerous trips he had made to the area. They deferred to him as he explicated the history of the thankas we viewed at the monastery in Nianduhu. As we walked into the monastery, he commented to me and to the other teachers that although I had said the village was Tu and its inhabitants spoke the Tu language, the villagers were really Tibetan in lifestyle. Another scholar of Tu culture writes in her explication of the origins of Wutun art style that one
would be mistaken to consider Wutun art as a “Tu” craft. She argues that the history of the origins of the art is not simple and thus one cannot judge what minority nationality or region is actually involved with the art tradition (Cao 2004:224).

Figure 8. Thankga (photograph taken by Robb Fried, April 7, 2006).

Indeed, the history of the origins of the Regong art style is muddled. Very little has been written about the history of the art style in Regong. Pratapaditya Pal, one of the earliest art historians specializing in Tibetan art, states that the school of thangka painting associated with the Regong area is the Manris school, which developed in Dege, a Kham area of Sichuan, in the 16th century (Pal 1984:129). David Jackson, another Tibetan art historian, affirms the Rebgong
art style as one of the regional schools that developed out of the Manris tradition, with the incorporation of Chinese influences. He places its origins around 1715, when Tshe-’pel of bDe-chen-gsang-sngags-mkhar-pa was sent by authorities in central Tibet to paint murals at the new monastic center at bKra-shis-'khyil. Other artists mentioned during this time period from the Regong area are Che-shos lha-bzo Blo-bzang-bshes-gnyen and Gung-ru mkha'-'gro Blo-bzang-chos-sgron in the 17th and 18th centuries (incidentally, the latter is the only known sculptress in Tibetan history) (Jackson 1996:317). Stevenson, however, argues that the beginnings of the Regong style are much earlier than the mid-1500s, suggesting a timeframe congruent with the establishment of the earliest monasteries in the area (in the mid 800s) (Stevenson 2000:330).

Chinese scholars also point to a much earlier date, the beginning of the Yuan dynasty (1301), for the birth of Regong’s artistic tradition. At this time, the Tibetan king Basiba sent Lajiezhinawa to the Amdo area of present-day Tongren. Accompanying him were several accomplished artists and sculptors. Two of these, Sangdanrenqin and Luozhesanggai, built Longwu Monastery in 1301. As the people living in present-day Tongren area converted to Buddhism, they also learned the skills and artistic techniques of the various masters who accompanied Lajiezhinawa (Ma Chengjun 2003:244). Ma Chengjun additionally mentions a stele from 1600 commemorating Wang Tingyi, the leader of the four village stockades. The names of several craftsmen (including builders, masons, and blacksmiths) appear on this stele, but of interest for our purposes is the name of a painter, Wang Dazhi (2003:246). This stele suggests that some sort of painting tradition existed in this area earlier than 1715, the date Jackson proposes. Another interesting point to gain from this stele is the mention of the four village stockades, which we can assume from my previous discussion are what today are termed Tu villages.
The earliest examples of Buddhist art in the Regong area have long since disappeared. Thangkas are painted on cotton cloth, and so they deteriorate over time. This is especially true for those installed on the lower levels of monastery buildings which are exposed to the elements. Stevenson also points out that many thangka paintings have disappeared or been destroyed in the various waves of political unrest in China during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s (Stevenson 2000:333).

The earliest piece of art in the Regong art style that still exists is a mural inside the Canzan Leang Temple in Nianduhu’s monastery. This eight-paneled mural has been dated to the time of Kangxi during the Qing (1654-1722) (Cao 2004:225). Nianduhu’s Miqin Temple has another mural that is among the oldest examples of Regong yishu; this painting was done by a famous master, Weitang Huadan, and his disciples, and pictures the Sixteen Arhats (Cao 2004:225). Art in the Regong style from a slightly later period (early 1800s to the mid-1900s) is more plentiful. Examples can be found in both Kumbun and Labrang, two large monasteries in the Amdo area, since these monasteries were somewhat protected during the political upheavals of the last century (Stevenson 2000:337). Shen Xueyan, a Chinese art historian, reports that art from Rebgong can even be found in the Yonghe Gong in Beijing and in the monasteries of Chengde, the summer retreat of the Qing emperors (Shen 1988:37). This would not be surprising, for by the nineteenth century, Rebgong painters and sculptors, and particularly those from Wutun, were renowned throughout the Tibetan world for their work (Jackson 1996:358). Artists from the Regong area apparently traveled all over China and beyond (Stevenson 2000:337).

Since few early examples of the Rebgong art style exist and little is mentioned in the written historical record, we can turn to oral history to shed some light on the origins of Regong yishu. Oral traditions abound. A form of the story about the Tibetan king Basiba was told to me by a painter from Wutun. When asked about the history of thangka painting, he said that these
disciples from Tibet came specifically to Wutun to teach villagers there how to paint. Stevenson records the legend of a painter from Nianduhu who was famous for his painting and sculpting. At the end of his life he constructed an image of Maitreya, the future Buddha, and placed inside of it all of his paintbrushes and sculpting tools. He prayed to Lord Buddha that his craft would continue in future generations, and then disappeared. As an answer to his prayers, over the course of several generations, more and more artists have appeared in the Nianduhu region (Stevenson 2000:332). Both of these traditions locate the origin of Regong yishu squarely in what are presently Tu villages. Sabo Tsering, a painter interviewed by Stevenson, tells the following story,

“(It was) sometime in the Tang Dynasty, at the time that the Tang princess Wen Cheng was sent to Tibet to marry King Srong btsan Sgan po. At that time a Tibetan army division passed through the area of Reb gong, among the soldiers there was one who was skilled at painting and the local tradition began with him. Until that time there was no such tradition of Buddhist painting even in Central Tibet. It was introduced from India. The Seng ge shong Monasteries (Wutun) had not yet been built. At that time there was an army garrison in the area, somewhere near the present location of Bla `brang bKra shis `khyil (Xiahe, Gansu)” [Stevenson 2000:329].

Of particular note in this story is the positioning of Regong as the heartland for all Tibetan Buddhist art. Not only is this posited by location, but also by time. By associating Regong yishu’s origins with the Tang dynasty (618-907), and even more specifically with the reign of famed Srong btsan Sgan po (the Tibetan king credited with the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet), the painter is implying that Regong—not Lhasa--serves as the historical center for Tibetan Buddhist art. Painters I interviewed always claimed to know nothing about the origins of their craft; I certainly did not discover any narratives like the ones shared with Stevenson.104

104 Stevenson mainly interviewed monks who are literate in Tibetan. The majority of those painters I interviewed were not monks and had not attended much school. I suggest their reluctance to speculate on the history of Regong yishu has to do with their perception that there is a received history of their craft. They assume this is the kind of history that monks know, and so rather than be ashamed by being mistaken, they refuse to guess. In one interview, I
However, they all affirmed that painting had originated in their village, whether they were from Wutun, Niandu, or Guomare. Ma Chengjun also cites a story known in Regong that also sheds some light on the question of why the Tu villages (not the Tibetan villages) in the area produce art. He writes,

“Legend has it that long ago the people of Wutun, Niandu, and Guomare could not understand the Tibetan language or read the Tibetan script, which made reading and studying Buddhist scriptures very difficult. Gedanjiacuo, the living Buddha at Longwu monastery, called all of these villages’ Buddhist monks together and told them to study the artistic traditions of Buddhism. He gave out work assignments: to the monks from Wutun he gave tools necessary for sculpture, to the monks from Niandu he gave paintbrushes, and to the monks from Guomare he gave tools necessary for carving wood. He told all of them to learn these crafts. Subsequently, these villages have developed these particular specialties. People in Wutun are experts at sculpting, people in Niandu are experts at painting, and people in Guomare are experts at carving” [2003:245, my translation].

People today generally continue to accept these villages’ specialties, with the exception of Niandu’s. As already mentioned, the village of Wutun has been closely identified with the artistic tradition in the Regong area, and even more specifically, thangka painting. Villagers in Niandu greatly begrudge this. Indeed, mention of this association elicits a sense of bitterness on the part of those living in Niandu about the rivalry between the two villages. Craftsmen from Niandu assert that the most famous thangka painters were from Niandu, not Wutun. When asked why Wutun is so famous for its art, there is much speculation. One artisan I interviewed suggested, “A few years ago, some people came to Wutun to make a movie. People from Niandu took some of their thangkas and duixius over to Wutun and were part of this movie, and so then people mistakenly thought that their thangkas and duixius were part of Wutun arts and crafts” (conversation with author, May 9, 2007). This sense of Wutun stealing the fame that rightfully belongs to Niandu is common. Another artisan complained to me, “Anywhere was told that the Buddhist scriptures contain a story about how thangka came to Niandu, but he (a former monk) was uncertain about the details.
you go, it’s Wutun that’s famous. Nianduhu isn’t” (conversation with author, May 30, 2007).
When asked why he thought this was, he explained that there were many from Wutun who had traveled to the east coast of China, as well as outside of China, to paint. Then people from elsewhere had quite naturally come to think that all thangka came from Wutun. He concluded that Nianduhu just did not have this kind of advocate. People often warned of Wutun’s thangkas being fake. On March 24, 2006, three members of Qinghai Nationalities’ University accompanied my husband and me to Nianduhu to introduce us to the family who had agreed to host us for our initial visit. On arrival, the university faculty asked if they could see some thangka paintings; they wished to purchase some as gifts for visiting dignitaries to the university. As Lozang, the oldest brother of the family, started bringing out thangkas for the teachers to look at, I asked about what place was most famous for thangka painting. He replied that although Wutun used to be most famous for thangka painting, it produced many fakes now. Another painter’s comment perhaps best illustrates the sense of frustration of those living in Nianduhu. He asserted that Nianduhu is the birthplace of painting, and that although Wutun claims this honor, it can’t possibly be because it used to be a Hui village (conversation with author, April 30, 2007). This is perhaps one of the most scalding accusations a Tu (or a Tibetan) living in Tongren County can make. Throughout my time living in this area, people would in the course of casual conversation say quite negative comments about the Hui (who are Muslim), and while sorting pictures for my elicitation task, informants often took the opportunity to express their dislike for the Hui (see chapter two). But in fact, I found very few artists in Nianduhu who exclusively painted thangka; this contrasted with my experience in Wutun. In fact, a number of the artists I interviewed from Nianduhu did not know how to paint thangka.
What seems to be without much dispute is Nianduhu’s claim to *duixiu* as a specialty. Artisans in Nianduhu, one of the five Tu villages, argue emphatically that duixiu, the particular art form for which this village is now known, originated there. One artist affirmed, “Maybe only our village does duixiu” (conversation with author, May 30, 2007). Most of the younger artisans I interviewed stated that duixiu was unique to Nianduhu, but when asked about the details of this development (such as when the craft developed, by whom, etc), responded that they really didn’t know much about the history of duixiu. But older artisans readily tell what they consider the definitive history of duixiu in Nianduhu. One middle-aged man explained,

“Before, it was just one person who could do it…he and a student created it. So, the father of Huangge went to another monastery to paint…I don’t remember the name of the monastery or where it is. In this monastery they were making *cintamani*.” He watched them, and since he’s very smart, he thought about doing this himself. What’s more, he thought besides doing the cintamani, he could also do thangka, choosing suitable colors himself and buying silk himself. So after he saw this and returned home, he started to do duixiu himself” [conversation with author, May 9, 2007]. Unlike others, he cautioned that the craft of duixiu itself was not created in Nianduhu; rather, the application of the craft to Buddhist images is the innovation stemming from Nianduhu. Later on in the interview, this artisan identified Tsichem (the father of Huangge in the above passage) as the most famous for doing duixiu, because he was the first to do it. However, I interviewed another man who laid claim to this honor. But even though there was this confusion about the

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105 *Duixiu* translates literally, “piled-up embroidery.” In this art form, artisans first draw a picture on heavy paper. They then cut out the picture’s elements—the figures of people, animals, flowers, birds, as well as the stylistic background designs. Next they choose silks and satins of various colors and decorative designs and paste the pieces of the picture onto the silk. Then, the pieces on the material are trimmed, leaving a small border of material. Artisans first smear glue along the edge of the paper while heating an iron tool with a flat square head over a burner. They then fold the material border onto the glue and apply the heated tool on top of the material so as to adhere the material to the paper. Once all of the paper pieces have been covered with the material in this way, the artisan reassembles the picture backwards, using the heated iron and glue when necessary to reassemble the original picture. *Regong Art* explains the final effect: “The whole design is composed of pieces and pieces of silks and satins. It can produce rather strong stereoscopic effects, just like a colourful silk relief sculpture” (1999:53).

106 *Cintamani* is a magical jewel which manifests whatever one wishes for. These jewels appear in thangka paintings and duixiu, in the borders for the large thangka paintings hung in monasteries, and in wood carvings on the doorframes to people’s pingfangs.
details of which particular individual thought of applying the duixiu technique to this new use, natives of Nianduhu firmly claim this craft as their own, and include this craft as an important component of Regong Yishu.

![Figure 9. Duixiu (photograph taken by author, April 23, 2006).](image)

As alluded to earlier, this was not always the case. Before “Liberation,” thangka painting took place mainly in the monastery. Monks would be apprenticed to a master, learning from him the precise measurements of Buddhist iconography and painting techniques. They had to accompany and learn from their master for years and pass a number of levels in order to be considered proficient enough to start painting. Nianduhu’s monastery had a handful of masters

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107 One elderly man from Nianduhu remembers that one or two men who had left the monastery to marry also painted.
who could paint; most of the people I interviewed had no family members during this time period who could paint thangkas. However, after the monasteries closed in the late 1950s and monks married and settled down, they retained their skills and knowledge of thangka painting, even though they were forbidden from actually producing religious art.\textsuperscript{108} With the end of collectivization, men in the Tu villages returned to their former, more minimal roles in agricultural work, helping out with irrigation and harvest. With the loosening of restrictions on religious activity, former monks began to paint and do duixiu once again. Men had time on their hands.\textsuperscript{109} All of the work they had been responsible for before “Liberation” was defunct. Forests had long since been destroyed and the population had shifted in their need for fuel to coal. The hukou system was still in place, making a return to trade difficult. Readymade clothes were inexpensive and readily available. At the same time, demand for skilled religious artists steadily grew as Tibetan Buddhists started to rebuild temples and monasteries. Men apprenticed themselves to these former monks, and the locus of artistic activity split. Today, as before, the monasteries remain as a training ground for new artists. However, homes throughout the five Tu villages in the Longwu river valley also serve as artistic centers. The family I initially lived with had three sons who were involved in the production of thangka and duixiu: one as a monk in a monastery and two independently in their homes. An elderly man when comparing the past to the present situation said, “However, everyone in a household are all artists. Today, besides the two elderly people of the family, everyone else makes duixiu or makes thangka” (conversation with author, November 7, 2006). Today, ninety-two percent of the households in Niandu huhu and Wutun are involved in the production of Regong yishu. Wutun has even sought and gained

\textsuperscript{108} This is not to say that the production of thangkas ceased entirely; rather, it was done underground.

\textsuperscript{109} What I am describing is a general trend; there is, of course, individual variation. Some former monks who knew how to paint did not resume painting. Men who had secure government jobs did not surrender them in order to pursue thangka painting or duixiu production. The majority of men, though, were part of this trend.
national status as a cultural production *danwei*, or work unit (Guojia wenhua chanye qinfan jidi—Regong wenhua yishu cun 2007).

The transition out of the monastery is not the only border that has been crossed. In the past twenty years since the beginning of the household responsibility system, the average amount of land farmed by a household in Nianduhu has dramatically decreased. This has meant that women, who traditionally took care of the fields, have increasingly less agricultural work to do. While some women do part-time labor making bricks, waitressing in Tongren, or doing road construction, a number today help out their husbands (or others) make duixiu. One artist I interviewed had taught his wife her duixiu skills. He explained, “If she worked part-time [otherwise], the work would be hard. Doing duixiu is fairly simple and relaxed” (conversation with author, August 4, 2006). In contrast to other jobs that do not require particular skills, helping out in the production of duixiu enables a lot of flexibility in women’s schedules. They are still able to do all of their household chores, such as making bread, cooking, washing clothes, and cleaning; when they are done they can sit down and assemble some cintamani jewels. When it is time to plant or weed the fields, they simply take a few days off.

There are at least two stories circulating about how the gender divide was initially crossed.111 I interviewed one woman who claimed she was the first woman to start doing duixiu. She divorced quite young, and so was looking for a way to provide for her two sons who stayed with her. She had little land to farm, but was quite skilled at sewing. Her sewing skills helped her understand how duixiu is assembled. (Once the image has been glued back together, a

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110 An ex-patriate friend visited Nianduhu during harvest in the summer of 2008. She stopped to chat with some women who were harvesting in the fields on the outskirts of the village, and in the course of conversation was surprised to discover that they were actually hired day-laborers from Quma, a Tibetan village up the valley from Nianduhu. They were being paid six RMB an hour to harvest for some families in Nianduhu who considered the use of their time better spent elsewhere.

111 Women are only involved making duixiu, not painting thangka. Since Nianduhu is the primary producer of duixiu among the five Tu villages, this is a phenomenon largely confined to this village.
border is sewed on.) She watched others make duixiu, and then ventured out.\footnote{From an outsider’s perspective, this might seem implausible. Both Ma Chengjun and Cao describe duixiu as a very complicated art (Ma Chengjun 2003:254-256; Cao 2004:234-235). But when comparing duixiu with painting, a common response by artisans in Nianduhu was to dismiss the former, saying, “Everyone does duixiu” “Artisans in Nianduhu, a number of whom paint and do duixiu, concede that duixiu is easier. In one interview, I asked an artisan how his wife learned how to do duixiu, and he boasted that after a few days of watching, she could start doing it too (conversation with author, May 9, 2007). This man was likely not exaggerating. His wife did not do any of the drawing or the reassembling of the piece, but only the less skilled work of gluing the paper onto the fabric and putting together small pieces to form a small element, like a flower or a cintamani jewel.}

People initially were not very accepting; at least in these four villages, it is considered taboo for women to draw the image of the gods portrayed. However, she continued to make the cintamani jewel borders, as well as other smaller background elements in the piece. Acceptance grew, and she was involved in making the large thangka hanging in the scripture chanting hall in Nianduhu’s monastery, as well as the large thangka which is unrolled on the twelfth day of the new year. She also taught other women her skills. The other explanation I was given about how women became involved in the production of duixiu was offered by the man I interviewed who claimed to be the innovator of duixiu production. He said that around fifteen years ago, a foundation from Canada granted the village money to teach women the skills needed to do duixiu. He gathered a group of women and taught them what they needed to know.\footnote{These stories are certainly not mutually exclusive.}

What is undeniable is that women form an important workforce in today’s production of duixiu. Although they are restricted from working on the images of deities, they are able to make everything else;\footnote{The continued enforcement of this rule seems a bit arbitrary. Since the widespread availability of copy machines in Tongren, men rarely draw the image. Rather, they simply copy (or trace) pictures from art books that contain the precise iconographic requirements. The maintenance of this taboo suggests that today it serves to reinforce power differentials in male and female relationships.} one could argue that females today actually do the bulk of the work (in terms of number of hours) involved in making a duixiu.

Before liberation, thangka production was taught as part of the monastic education system. These skills were closely guarded; Jackson states, “...the details of an artist's technique are secret instructions and that anyone caught teaching them to an outsider would, by law, be

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expelled from the community’” (1996:60). An elderly man who had learned to paint in this system remembers, “In the past, painters were painters. One could not just casually decide to become a painter. Painting required passing many levels. There were many levels between the first and the highest. Only once you had passed all of those could you finally be considered a real painter. There simply were not those who just decided to become a painter” (conversation with author, November 7, 2006). I have implied that thangka and duixiu skills today are taught in more informal contexts (for example, a husband teaching a wife). Thangka and duixiu skills do continue to be passed down in the monastery, where young monks apprentice themselves to well-known artists. However, these skills are taught in yet another formal context: schools. Students can major in art with a specialization in thangka painting at both Qinghai Nationalities University and Qinghai Normal University. Besides becoming eligible for a sought-after fenpei (assigned) teaching position, a degree to paint yields more credibility, networking opportunities, and artistic freedom. One recent graduate I interviewed talked about the flexibility his degree offered. He actually enjoyed “Western-style” landscapes more than Tibetan Buddhist religious art; he enjoyed the freedom in the experimentation allowed in contrast to the rigidity the religious art demanded. However, he made more money painting thangkas, so he paints thangkas on commission to earn an income while painting landscapes as an artistic outlet. He also pointed out that he was able to charge more for his thangkas because of his degree.

Thangka painting is also taught at the vocational high school in Tongren.

115 Before the reforms of the late 1970s, all jobs were assigned. Jobs were secure, benefits were guaranteed, and a pension was given upon retirement. Today, fewer and fewer jobs are assigned, and so the competition to gain one of these jobs is fierce among prospective teachers in Qinghai Province.

116 This is not to imply that innovation never happens in thangka painting. For example, the influence of Chinese artists has resulted in the greater penetration of landscape elements into all schools of thangka painting (Pal 1984:155). However, thangka painting does tend towards uniformity in style (Pal 1984:29).
I have only seen duixiu taught, however, at the elementary school in Nianduhu. Around seven years ago, the government decided that elementary schools needed to provide a specialized class in addition to the regular curriculum. Each school was given freedom to choose what to offer, and the school leaders at Nianduhu’s elementary school, in consultation with the teachers, decided to offer a class in duixiu. Duixiu class is not an extra-curricular activity. Starting in fourth grade, all children attend, and the grades earned in this class are part of their grade point average. A local woman who was teaching in Guomare at the time was invited to instruct this class, and she has designed a curriculum. The government buys all of the supplies necessary for the class. To practice the duixiu technique, the children create much simpler works than the images normally made. In the examples hanging in the room, they had created pandas, girls skipping rope, peonies, Monkey from The Journey to the West, as well as cintamani jewels and portraits of Buddha. A commonly held view by theorists of education is that schools create citizens (Tobin et al. 1989:109). Joshua Fishman writes, “As a formal institution of socialization, education is necessarily also co-responsible for and engaged in sociocultural socialization, i.e., in socialization for ethnic membership and for ethnic consciousness” (as quoted in Hansen 1999:xi). In this instance, the elementary school in Nianduhu is engaged in socializing children into their own distinctiveness within the wider Tibetan Buddhist world.

While duixiu is considered a form of thangka, it is less prestigious than painting. This begs the question of why artists in Nianduhu have transitioned from one craft to the other. Mere ease alone does not explain the widespread move from painting to duixiu. This transition is in fact an economically pragmatic decision. Duixiu is in fact a lucrative enterprise. One man

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117 This was perhaps done to encourage male enrollment. In contrast to the rest of China, Nianduhu’s elementary school does not struggle with enrolling females; parents send their daughters to school. However, they either send their sons to the monasteries or apprentice them to a master to learn duixiu and painting techniques. In the younger grades, enrollment is fairly equal, but in the later grades, the number of females in a class is half to two-thirds greater than the number of males.
explained, “If you compare the two, duixiu is a little easier and goes a little quicker. Painting a thangka takes longer, and the money earned is actually not ideal. A duixiu goes much quicker, and so even though one duixiu sells for much less, in the end, you can end up making more money” (conversation with author, May 9, 2007). A duixiu is completed much more quickly. The men I talked to could finish an average-sized duixiu (around 70 cm high by 50 cm wide) in around three days, and it would fetch a price of anywhere from 130-200 RMB. One artist claimed he regularly completed around seventeen a month. But artists are often involved in much larger projects. One artist was involved in the production of a twelve-meter long wall hanging¹¹⁸ for a monastery in Yushu prefecture of southeastern Qinghai. The reincarnated Buddha of this monastery had commissioned this family to create a duixiu hanging, and was paying 15,000 RMB for their work. He was working with his father and his cousin on this project, and he estimated it would take about three months to complete this task. Another family was commissioned to complete a similar wall hanging for a monastery in Inner Mongolia; they, however, only had one month to complete this project. They were paid 10,000 RMB for the completion and installation of this piece. Two brothers worked together on this project, and they hired four women to help with the assembly of the piece. If an artist worked for eleven months of the year (allowing time off to celebrate the New Year festivities and χεiɕaŋ) and only produced average-sized duixiu, he could hypothetically earn 14,300-22,000 RMB. These figures are not merely hypothetical calculations. A recent article reports the average income of painters in Regong between 13,000-15,000 RMB (China Tibet Information Center 2008). This annual salary is well above the average income for the rest of Qinghai province, which is 5,735 RMB

¹¹⁸ These wall hangings are comprised of different panels of the average-sized duixiu described above that are connected by lines of cintamani jewels. I have seen them hanging in temples of monasteries from the ceiling. The overall effect is like a tapestry. The pictures in the panel do not tell a cohesive story.
This influx of income has created an agentive moment for the Tongren Tu, fueling real change in the social organization of the village.

In January 2000, the CCP formally announced its “Open Up the West” program to socially and economically develop China’s western and interior regions. One of the new sectors highlighted for expansion by the provincial CCP is tourism (Goodman 2004:393). Tourism and the production of thangka and duixiu have become inextricably linked. In 2006, the Tongren county government reported that the sale of thangka and duixiu produced in Nianduhu and Wutun brought in 14,910,000 RMB, seventy percent of its total income attributed to tourism (Guojia wenhua chanye qinfan jidi—Regong wenhua yishu cun 2007). A thankga painter observes, “When the tourist peak season comes, a thangka painting can bring us about several thousand yuan of income” (China Tibet Information Center 2008).

And indeed, villagers strategically use the influx of visitors during the two festivals attended by tourists, Wutu and χeicāŋ, to create contacts with prospective customers. A conversation I had with some journalists in August, 2007, comically illustrates this effort. I was
about to enter an acquaintance’s house for breakfast on the morning of the last day of χeičaŋ, the harvest festival in the sixth lunar month; about the same time two British reporters and their driver drove up in their shiny new Toyota SUV. They asked us where the day's festivities would be, and also jokingly asked where the nearest coffee shop for a cappuccino and a pastry was. A friend invited them to join us for bread\(^\text{119}\) and milk tea, the nearest cultural equivalent. The reporters currently lived and worked in Tokyo and Hong Kong respectively, and were on a sort of a festival trek, attending the big horse race in Yushu and then the smaller ones in Henan County. They asked us about villages they could go to that were less commercialized, less influenced by tourism...they were wanting to capture 'authentic' festival activities on film rather than a version that was more commercialized. In the course of the conversation, the reporter living in Hong Kong, said about thangka sellers in Nianduhu, "Thangka is like marijuana." And he explicated, talking about how men would sidle up to him and whisper, "Want to buy some thangka?" Recent editions of the Lonely Planet’s guide for China point tourists to this area specifically to buy art.\(^\text{120}\) The section for Tongren reads,

> “Visiting the monastery Wutun Si not only gives you a chance to meet the artists, but also to purchase a painting or two, fresh off the easel. ...Divided into an Upper Monastery and a Lower Monastery, this is the place to come if you’re interested in Tibetan art. Generally, the monks will offer to sell you some thangkas on a tour; if you want to look first, there’s a gallery outside the Upper Monastery. These are no amateurs—commissions come in all the way from Lhasa, and the prices, ranging from Y200 to Y800,

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\(^{119}\) This is hteima, the bread eaten at every meal. Women use a starter from the previous day’s dough to make fresh bread in the morning. A portion of the starter is mixed into a dough of flour and water. After the bread dough is kneaded, it is shaped into a flat circular disc (about 2 inches deep and 18 inches in diameter) and placed into a heavy cast iron pan. The pan is placed on the floor of the outdoor oven (the oven is usually outside the walled compound the family lives in), and the pan is covered with its lid. Women cover the pan with straw and heap it up to the ceiling of the oven, start the fire, and let the bread cook for about an hour.  

\(^{120}\) My 2002 Lonely Planet guide to China lists outlying villages of Tongren as worthy of interest, pointing these villages as a potential source for Tibetan thangka paintings made by local artisans (Mayhew 2002:948). By the 2005 edition, though, Wutun features prominently in the section about Tongren; the 2007 edition even names a specific monk in Wutun to contact.
are a good deal, especially considering that a small thangka takes a minimum of one month to paint” [Pitts 2005:880].

In artfully branding the art and the place with a Tibetan ethnonym, the government has been able to implicitly promote the image of an authentic Tibetan community for tourist consumption. The village and county level governments have also responded to tourist demand with enthusiastic action. In an effort to meet this demand, the face of the Tongren Tu villages is changing. Roads and paths are being paved to encourage comfortable travel in and out, temples are being built and repainted, and families are embarking on expensive construction projects to convert their homes into “model peasant homes” (where a tourist, for a fee, can enjoy the “simpler” peasant life and food and see an artist at work). The following chapter will discuss this topic in greater detail.

121 I highly doubt that a thangka of the grade that would take a month to paint could possibly be bought for 200-800 RMB. Maybe this is the sort of “fake” that the villagers of Nianduhu complain about.
The promotion of place and art as Tibetan at the official level is not without the tacit approval of the Tongren Tu. A conversation I had with a monk in the spring of 2006 is representative of my interactions with those I met during my research in Nianduhu, one of the four Tu villages. After greeting and exchanging pleasantries using the Tu language, I asked him what nationality he was. “Oh, Tibetan,” he replied. After pointing out that he had just spoken

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122 This fresco portrays a young Tibetan man painting a thangka. Behind him stand a Mongolian man, a Han man, and a Tibetan woman who all watch as he paints. A young Tibetan boy grasps the hand of the woman, but he is peering backwards at an elderly Caucasian male tourist whose view of the painter is seen through his camera lens rather than his own eyes. Interestingly, a young male monk stands off to the other side of the painter; he is also intently watching. The outer walls of Wutun’s monastery appear in the upper right corner of the fresco. This fresco pictorially displays the themes of this chapter: the shift of the locus of painting outside the monasteries’ walls, the economic shift from trading and agriculture to painting, and the influx of tourism.
the Tu language with me, something a Tibetan would not do, and that he lived in Guomare (a Tu village), I then asked what nationality was listed on his *shenfenzheng* (his identity papers). He immediately responded, “It says I’m Tu, but I’m Tibetan.” Most I interacted with had little attachment to Tu identity, culture, language, or history, and simply thought of themselves in terms of their local village or as relating to the wider Tibetan world, as the results from the stimulus tasks showed in chapter two. Kolås and Thowsen found that, “For instance, near Rebkong (Tongren) we came across a village that was classified as Tu in the 1950s, although the villagers themselves claimed they were Tibetans. They declared they speak Tibetan, dress Tibetan, are Buddhists, and are unable to understand the language spoken in other Tu villages in Qinghai” (2005:39). One Tu friend who had traveled throughout China and to India insisted on referring to the Tu language as a dialect of Tibetan. Linguists would disagree with his folk categorization. These languages are not historically related; Tu belongs to the Mongolian branch of the Altaic language family whereas Tibetan is classified with the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. When the Tu in Huangnan refer to themselves in their own language, they either use *măngə* (us) or *chize* (the four [Tu] villages). But when speaking with those not from the four villages, they resort to a term borrowed from Amdo Tibetan (*Dolda* or *Hor*) or a term borrowed from Chinese (*Tuzu*) when pushed to distinguish themselves from Tibetans.

Even those who do feel a sense of pride in being Tu are willing to act pragmatically in terms of their identity status. One painter bluntly summarized, “When people go to other parts of China (Beijing or Shanghai) to sell thangka, they say that they are Tibetan, because Tibetans are famous and Tu is a very small minority. So they just say they are Tibetan” (conversation with author, May 2, 2007). People desire to buy authentically Tibetan Buddhist art, which becomes

123 Let me point out again that chize simply does not occur in everyday usage.
equated with Tibetan art. A Tu thankga is simply seen as inauthentic. One day in the summer of 2006, I accompanied my translator, who was a recent high school graduate, to the county seat of Tongren. My translator had spent some time investigating village history by reading and talking with older individuals in Nianduhu, and he often talked about wanting to preserve Tu language and culture once he graduated from college. We stopped by his father’s home to drop off some papers needed for his college admission, and it was over tea that he asked me if I thought he should become Tibetan. He had just tested into the Tibetan department at Qinghai Nationalities University, and he felt that if he wanted to look for a job as a Tibetan translator once he graduated, his minority status as “Tu” would be a liability. After we talked about the advantages and disadvantages of officially changing his minority status on his hukou (his residence papers), he concluded that it was his mother’s idea and her money, and so he probably should do what she wanted. And so my translator became Tibetan.

I must emphasize that most Tu living in Huangnan are not actively trying to hide their identity.124 Simply put, their Tu identity has very little salience to their daily life. Rather, the rhythms of their daily life orient them to identify with the surrounding Tibetan Buddhist community and the spiritual center of Lhasa. A quick look around a home in Nianduhu illustrates the links south and west to Tibet and Lhasa. The most central room of houses in this area is a dedicated space for daily household religious rituals and is where the family’s personal thangkas, sculptures, and photographs of living Buddhas are located. The majority that I observed included a picture of the Dalai Lama, despite government prohibition against personal possession of such a photograph. Every home prominently displayed a large glossy poster of the

124 In the winter of 2005 I heard from another foreigner that the five Tu villages in Tongren had petitioned the local government (county, prefectural, or provincial was not specified) for wholesale redesignation as “Tibetan.” I shrugged this information off as rumor, for I never heard of this again. However, Ma Chengjun confirmed this; the government denied their request (conversation with author, March 27, 2009).
gleaming white Potala Palace above the kang in the room where guests were typically served. Because Huangnan is a Tibetan autonomous prefecture, most schooling uses Amdo Tibetan as the medium for instruction. Until somewhat recently, Chinese language instruction was not begun until children reached the fifth grade in elementary school. Consequently, most villagers are quite fluent in Tibetan and only partially so in Mandarin. And so in the common room, where the family gathers to eat each meal and sit in the evening, the television is consistently tuned to the provincial Amdo Tibetan television station. Young adults watch the latest Tibetan music videos on VCDs, and the ringtones of cell phones interrupting dinner are snippets of Tibetan pop songs. This conspicuous consumption of Tibetan popular and religious culture signals the growing connection the Tongren Tu make with the surrounding Tibetan population, a Tibetan center, and a Tibetan identity.

6. Conclusion

Before liberation, the notion of máŋə (being like but somehow different from the surrounding Tibetan populations) was a well-established pattern of practice. However, after 1952, the Tongren Tu were supposed to enact a new category, that of being Tu. For the Tu living in Tongren, this new token was empty and meaningless. The photographs of Tu dress and descriptions of Tu culture that were circulated increasingly bore little resemblance to their way of life and conception of themselves. This distance was felt even in the sociolinguistic realm. Despite their grammatical and lexical similarities, speakers of Tu in Tongren claim to not understand the Tu spoken in Huzhu and Minhe Counties.¹²⁵ This new category of “Tu” challenged the flexible nature of identity generated by the habitus. Whereas the conception of máŋə was closely linked to the broader context of the surrounding Tibetan population, the

¹²⁵And vice versa. I played a story told by a Tongren Tu speaker for some friends from Minhe County. They kept asking me, “Is that Tibetan?”
category of Tu was not. This new category created a rigid boundary between the two populations, suggesting a shift in symbolic capital and relationships of power. However, events in the last fifty years have created a new field of context. This new field has been culturally mediated and reinterpreted; the Tongren Tu experienced and responded to historical events in given ways. Structure has been replicated, but not duplicated. Today, nearly all in the villages of Nianduhu and Wutun, as well as many in Guomare, Gasare, and Baoan, participate in the production of Regong yishu. This shift has transcended secular-sacred and gender divides, resulting in the transformation of the social order. It has also been accompanied with the underscoring of close linkages with the wider Tibetan world. While maŋə remains the most experience-near, unquestioned, and prereflective category for self-identification, the Tongren Tu have been confronted with a choice. Interactions with the state, whether on identity papers, household registration forms, school attendance, etc., demand a declaration of identity. Tourists need to be reassured that the art they are purchasing is authentic. Maŋə is not an option, and so the Tongren Tu today choose “Tibetan” (which in their conceptualization of identity can be considered an extension of maŋə). But because of the dialectic nature of practice, this choice becomes inculcated in the habitus, which in turn reproduces it. On August 6, 2007, I attended the big day of χeiçaŋ (the twenty-fifth day of the sixth lunar month) with my friend Kuantaiji. She dressed up for the event, wearing a pale pink silk summer Tibetan robe with a lavender blouse. Around her neck she wore three coral necklaces. From anyone’s perspective, she looked like a young Tibetan woman. When I complimented her on her jewelry, she replied, “This is my family’s pʰọtʰə.” It took a moment for me to register that her family had disassembled the pʰọtʰə they had hidden away through the upheavals of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and that she and her sisters had all worn when they danced in χeiçaŋ when they were
teenagers after the reforms. Now it had been reassembled into coral necklaces for Kuantaiji and her sisters to wear, a distinctive of Tibetan dress. However, unlike in the Tibetan practice, it was still only worn by the unmarried sisters, on the day when young (Tongren Tu) women traditionally danced to symbolize their availability for marriage. *Plus ça change...* ¹²⁶

¹²⁶ The more things change, the more they stay the same.
Chapter Four. ‘Shopping Tu Culture’: The Signifying Work of Ethnic Tourism

1. Introduction

On October 13, 2006, I stood outside the entrance to Beijing’s Chinese Ethnic Culture Park (Zhonghua Minzu Yuan). After reading so much about model minority villages in Gladney (1994), Schein (2000), and Walsh (2001), and after living in Qinghai for two years, I was eager to see for myself how Tu culture was portrayed and performed in China’s capital. My time was limited, and since I knew that I would not be able to see both sides of the park, I scanned the map to ensure I would see the exhibit I had traveled so far to see. I saw on the map that the location of the Tu exhibit was in the northern half of the park, and after paying the entrance fee, I set off. After heading to where I thought the Tu should be and not finding anything, I pulled out a second map handed to me when I bought my ticket. I was dismayed to find no mention of the Tu on this map. In fact, right next to the phrase stating that all of China’s fifty-six minority nationalities are in the park, only forty-four exhibits of minority nationality culture were listed. And indeed, the Tu were not among the forty-four. I finally found another copy of the map I had originally consulted outside the entrance, and determined exactly where the Tu exhibit should have been located. I retraced my steps, and right where the map said the Tu should have been, I found a pile of dirt. I later found out that the Tu exhibit was in the process of being constructed, explaining its elusive status. While ironic (the character for earth/soil/dirt and for the Tu minority nationality is the same: 土), this anecdote of looking for the Tu reflects tourist desire and disappointment.
Before the seminal work *Hosts and Guests* was published in 1977, there was a dearth of research on tourism in the field of anthropology. But since 1977, the anthropology of tourism has blossomed. Although tourism was once labeled a frivolous subject of study, a proliferation of books, journals, and conference sessions use tourism as a lens through which to view broader anthropological issues, such as commodity fetishism, globalization, and power. One small indication of this rapid growth was the 2001 publication of *Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21st Century*. Nash summarizes the concerns of anthropologists studying tourism: “Taken in its broadest sense, the field deals with a transcultural, historically conditioned social process involving the generation of tourists, their processing, and the consequences of touristic actions for all involved” (2001: 169). In recent years, the anthropology of tourism has proved increasingly popular among Western scholars who study the minority nationality question in China. They use tourism as a means to explore issues such as identity, authenticity, modernity, and popular culture among different minority groups in China. Oakes’ 1998 study of tourism among the Miao in Guizhou examines the tensions inherent in tourism as a project of modernity that seeks to preserve tradition and the ways in which the Miao use these tensions for resistance and the promotion of an alternate identity. In Schein’s 2001 ethnography of the Miao, she explores how identity is constructed through tourist events; by means of selective cultural performance, the Miao are cast as the exotic, primitive, and feminine Other, sharply contrasting with the modern and masculine state. Gladney’s most recent book (2004) includes a chapter devoted to China’s minority nationality “theme parks” and the role these representations play in China’s official vision of history, development, and nationality. Notar’s volume takes as its subject Dali and the Bai people living there (2006). She examines the question of authenticity as she presents the representations in popular culture of Dali and the tourists seeking this imagined
place. What none of these works explores, however, is how tourism engages the meaning-making processes which are implicated when talking about identity, authenticity, modernity, and popular culture. Instead of reiterating the work these authors have ably done in explicating the messages of ethnic tourism in China, in this chapter I dissect the signification processes involved in tourism in the Tu areas of Qinghai Province and explore how meaning is conveyed. By way of example, return to my experience of looking for the Tu in the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park. Rather than consider the messages conveyed by this elaborate representation of minority culture, I seek to understand how the park works as a sign to communicate these messages.

Meaning-making is the process by which humans appeal to cultural knowledge to interpret the “raw material substance” of the world around them (Frake 1994:247). Culture gives meaning to actions by situating the underlying intentional states in an interpretive system (Bruner 1990:11). Tourists routinely appeal to cultural knowledge, in the form of already established representations. In the case of minority nationalities in China, and more specifically the Tu in Qinghai, these representations start being formed well before the tourist arrives at his destination by what he reads in the newspaper and travel guides, what he sees on television, and what he hears when he talks to the travel agent who helps him plan for his trip (refer to chapter two for a more extended discussion about the formation of these representations). Once he arrives at his destination, he constantly measures this representation against his experience; as he listens to the tour guide, reads informational placards, and eats and dances with young Tu women, he situates the events of the day in the interpretive system that was already formed before his travels began. This is not to say that his representation of the Tu does not change. His travels are, of course, integrated into his already-formed representation of the Tu. But as with any representation, adjustments are likely to be minor rather than a radical departure from the
existing representation. It is in this process of forming and tweaking a representation that evaluations of identity and authenticity, messages about nationalism, and images of modernity are made.

But further complicating the meaning-making process, however, is the particular way in which ethnic tourism is an act of meaning. In ethnic tourism, ethnic minority culture itself is commodified, and it becomes an arena where embodied notions of identity are enacted, debated, and contested (Desmond 2001). The following selection from Carroll amusingly highlights this tension between reality and representation.

“‘That's another thing we've learned from your Nation,’ said Mein Herr, ‘map-making. But we've carried it much further than you. What do you consider the largest map that would be really useful?’

‘About six inches to the mile.’

‘Only six inches!’ exclaimed Mein Herr. ‘We very soon got to six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile.’

‘Have you used it much?’ I enquired.

‘It has never been spread out, yet,’ said Mein Herr: ‘the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well’”

[Carroll 2006:115-116].

We rarely mistake a representation for what it actually represents. Ethnic tourism, nonetheless, engages and manipulates this tension. Evaluations of authentic displays of culture and identity are implicit in ethnic tourism. The tourist visiting ethnic places desires to share in the real culture of the places visited or at the very least to see life as it is lived. But she often returns home from her experience disappointed, as she senses she has been unable to make incursions into the culture she has visited. By way of illustration, Schein contrasts two Miao villages. The China Travel Service in southeastern Guizhou has established Shang Langde, a Miao village and the
home of Yang Daliu (1830-72), as a special tourist destination. Tourists can enjoy a feast served by young Miao women, visit a museum where Yang’s weapons are stored, and watch a simulation of Miao New Year processional dancing. Xijiang, another Miao community in Guizhou, lacks official designation as a tourist destination (and accompanying government investment), although a local entrepreneur has attempted to tap into the tourist market by setting up a display of local handicrafts for sale. Schein relates that travelers (Han Chinese) often return from Xijiang to confide in her that, “…the local Miao people…were Sinicized: the women wore pants, and many people even wore Western-style clothing. Could I recommend a village in the region where they might see the ‘real’ Miao?” (Schein 1993:119). Model minority villages and festivals are scenes of cultural performance with the tourist cast in the role of an audience member. The act of buying cultural souvenirs, whether religious icons or folk art, is simultaneously an act of consuming minority nationalities’ material culture. The tourist equates his experience with minority nationality culture itself, for the bodily performance of the performers guarantees cultural authenticity (Desmond 2001). He departs for home, satisfied (or not, as the case may be) that he has seen “real” Miao, Bai, or Tu culture. “‘The term of the sightseer’s satisfaction,’ writes Percy, ‘is not the sovereign discovery of the thing before him; it is rather the measuring up of the thing to the criterion of the preformed symbolic complex’” (as quoted in Culler 1981:134). It is in how this signification works that I am most interested.

In order to understand the meaning-making processes at work in ethnic tourism, I adopt a semiotic perspective of meaning-making. The value of a semiotic framework is that it considers how ethnic tourism stands to the tourist for minority nationality culture itself and how ethnic tourism works to display, transform, and mask minority nationality culture. In Peirce’s

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127 Yang Daliu was a famous Miao rebel during the Qing dynasty and has since been canonized by the state as a class protorevolutionary (Schein 2000:190).
framework of semiotics, signs differ in the extent of the arbitrariness of the relationship to that which they refer, and it is this aspect that proves particularly insightful. The distance between the signifier and its sign proves to be fundamental. The three best known sign-types described by Peirce are the iconic, indexical, and symbolic. Each describes the kind of bond (the ground) that exists between the sign and its object. An icon signifies by its perceived resemblance to its object; in its form it is perceptibly like its representation. Icons are highly motivated, meaning that they are constrained by their signifier. A photograph is an icon of that which the photograph represents; it is like the thing it represents and is used as a sign of it. An index signifies by expressing contiguity to the object for which it stands. There is real connection between the signifier and its sign; the sign is affected by the signifier. The rise of mercury in a thermometer is indexical for a rise in temperature; smoke indexes fire. A symbol signifies by convention, law, or general rule, which determines that it stands for an object in a given way. The relationship between the signifier and its sign must be consciously learned. Words are symbolic, because as signs they stand for the objects they represent by convention. They fulfill their function regardless of any similarity or analogy with objects. A word of caution: this explication implies neat boundaries. In fact, characteristics of all three sign-types might simultaneously be present, but one inevitably has dominance. In the rest of this chapter I turn to some episodes of ethnic tourism among the Tu living in Huzhu Tu Autonomous County and in Tongren County of Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in order to illustrate how ethnic tourism works iconically and symbolically. A semiotic analysis reveals ideology, and so I

128 Peirce’s semiotic framework is complex, and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to detail the intricacies of it here. Daniel (1984, 1996) and Rochberg-Halton (1986) adapt Peirce’s system in an anthropologically relevant way. Peirce’s sign is composed of three elements in triadic relationship: something (the sign form or interpretant) stands to someone for something (the object) in some respect or capacity (the ground) (Rochberg-Halton 1986:46). It is with “some respect or capacity” that I am most concerned.
130 I do not mean to say, however, that icons are somehow “natural”; I agree with Herzfeld’s point that icons are still culturally constituted even though they seem natural. This makes icons, “…the perfect instrument for performative nonperformance” (2005:32).
conclude the chapter by arguing that as we come to understand how ethnic tourism signifies, we can then see how questions of authenticity and identity emerge.

But in order to appreciate the significance of the episodes described in the rest of this chapter, they must be contextualized more generally within the development of tourism with China and Qinghai. Zhang Guangrui divides the development of tourism in the PRC into three periods. Between 1949 and 1978, the government considered travel bourgeois; consequently, tourism was considered a socially taboo activity. The little tourism that did take place served as a foreign affairs activity (think of Nixon on the Great Wall, for example). But after 1978 with the beginning of the Open Door policy, this attitude changed. Between 1978 and 1985, the government used tourism to serve both political and economic ends. For example, a differential pricing policy existed, distinguishing overseas Chinese from other foreign tourists (Zhang Guangrui 1995:9). Because tourism was a new sector, the government prioritized international tourism throughout the 1980s by devoting resources to its development (Qiao 1995:123). 1986 marked the beginning of the third era in tourism’s development. The national government declared tourism a comprehensive economic activity, and outlined certain goals and purposes for its development (one of which was to earn foreign exchange). The CCP today includes tourism in its plans for social and economic development (Zhang Guangrui 1995:9). I argue that one could add a fourth era: the growth of domestic tourism. Domestic tourism was only advocated as a desirable activity for the first time in the mid-1980s (Walsh 2001:224). In 1992, the CCP established a market economy within the tenets of socialism. This resulted in an increase in the amount of money earned by the individual, as well as more discretionary income. Traveling became a real option for leisure. The loosened grip on the economy also encouraged growth in the service industry. Entrepreneurial individuals invested and built hotels and restaurants that
catered to tourists (Qiao 1995:123). Transport systems and ticketing procedures also improved throughout the 1990s (Walsh 2001:231). The tourist industry has developed rapidly: from 1978 to 1991 it saw an average increase in visitors of 25% per year (Zhang Guangrui 1995:3).

The development of tourism in Qinghai has lagged in time and scale behind the broad outline of tourist development at the national level that I have just sketched. The province lacked no international travel service until 1983. Between 1985 and 1995, average tourist arrivals were just 10,000 per year (Zhang Yongwei 1995:46). Since the launching in 2000 of the “Open the West” campaign, officials in Qinghai count tourism as one of its key opportunities for development. Strategists have selected Qinghai’s mountains and its minority nationality’s religious culture as its main selling points. And the tourist industry is growing. Between 1999 and 2004, Tongren County alone received 717,500 visitors, an average of 143,500 per year. In 2005, this jumped to 194,000 tourists. In 2008, Huzhu County welcomed 520,000 tourists between the months of January and August (this is five times the number of tourists visiting the whole of Qinghai Province in the decade 1985-1995) (Ma Yufang 2008). The recently completed Qinghai-Tibet Railway, notable for its status as the world’s highest railroad, has also meant an increase in the number of tourists coming to Qinghai. In July 2006, the month the railway opened, 1.63 million tourists visited Qinghai Province, up 34% from the previous year (Chen 2006). In an effort to meet this demand, hotels and restaurants have sprung up, a tourism major is now offered at Qinghai’s universities, and money is being poured into road construction. 171 million RMB was allocated in 2001 and 2002 to encourage linkages between district centers and county towns (Goodman 2004:392).

131 Government tourist agencies had previously controlled the tourist market.
These changes can be seen at the local level. Since the summer of 2004, the government has poured money into widening the road from Xining to Tongren. The 200 kilometers can now be made quite comfortably in less than two hours on the new controlled access highway. In the summer of 2006, much work went into marking the landscape as distinctively Tibetan. In traveling to Tongren from Xining, the first retaining wall after crossing the Yellow River welcomes, “我可爱金色家，热贡” (My beloved golden home, Regong). Across the Longwu River above this wall looms the sacred symbol om fashioned out of white rocks that gleam against the mountainside. Other retaining walls were newly decorated with scenes from three festivals celebrated in Tongren County that are especially popular with tourists. The rock wall of the first bend of the road in Longwu gorge has been painted with a colorful rendition of the symbol om, and another bend in the road reveals a brightly colored 30-foot-tall portrayal of Sakyamuni. The landscape prepares the prospective tourist for the mysteries of Tibetan Buddhism well before she ever arrives in the Longwu River valley.

The face of the five Tongren Tu villages is also changing. Roads and paths are being paved to encourage comfortable travel in and out, and temples are being restored and repainted. The Tongren County government has invested money into advertising to attract more tourists and has been commissioned by the national government to protect local minority culture. But change has not been restricted to the realm of physical features; festivals have also proved to be fertile ground for tourist development. I turn now to three tourist sites or episodes to illustrate how ethnic tourism is functioning semiotically.

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132 The road traverses through Hualong Hui Autonomous County before this crossing, and so the changes to the landscape markedly contrast with the minarets and mosques prominent in this Muslim area.
2. χeiçaŋ: Unmediated Ethnic Tourism

During χeiçaŋ,\(^\text{133}\) which occurs during the sixth month of the lunar calendar (between the sixteenth and twenty-fifth day) just before harvest, tourists and photographers make their way to Tongren County. χeiçaŋ is the most important festival belonging to the shamanistic religious system; the whole community (excluding the Buddhist monks) participates to appease and honor the local mountain gods and ensure a successful harvest.\(^\text{134}\) This festival is celebrated not only by the Tu villages in the Longwu river valley, but also by a number of Tibetan villages there; Ma Guangxing lists the names of six (2003:102). While the basic structure of the festival is similar throughout the river valley, each village has its own variations. Since the events of the festival have already been documented, rather than reduplicating others’ efforts, I focus on those aspects unique to the village of Nianduhu. Nianduhu celebrates the festival from the 20\(^{th}\) to the 25\(^{th}\) day of the sixth month. On the 20\(^{th}\)-23\(^{rd}\), individual clans dance;\(^\text{135}\) the 24\(^{th}\) is the most important day, and every household in the village must send a family member to participate.\(^\text{136}\) On the 25\(^{th}\) day, Nianduhu laka, a small village adjacent to Nianduhu, holds a smaller version of the festival.\(^\text{137}\)

\(^\text{133}\) χeiçaŋ is the Tu word for this festival. Tibetans call this festival glu rol (alternatively klu rol, laru, or lurol); in Mandarin Chinese it is known as liu yue hui. In this chapter, I use χeiçaŋ when I talk about the festival as celebrated in Nianduhu or any of the other Tu villages. I use the Tibetan spellings when I refer to the celebration in Tibetan villages, and liu yue hui when I reference Chinese tourist literature. This festival has been well-described in Western literature; see Kolås and Thowsen 2005, Stevenson 2000, Epstein and Peng 1998, and Stuart, Banmadorji and Huangchojia 1995. It also features prominently in Chinese scholarship; see Cao Yali 2004, Ma Guangxing \textit{et al.} 2003, Ma Chengjun 2003

\(^\text{134}\) During the sixth lunar month monks are observing yerni, a month-long Buddhist observance during which monks chant scripture all day. During this period of time, they are not to leave the monastery, and women are forbidden from entering the monastery.

\(^\text{135}\) When using Chinese, buluo and dui are used interchangeably. The Tu word is tsʰowoa, which I translate as clan. Nianduhu is divided into eight clans; these divisions existed before the communist revolution. These eight clans are believed to be descendants of Gome rilaŋ’s troops. Besides Gome rilaŋ, four other mountain gods have guardianship over the village, although they are subordinate in status. The largest clan, sodra, is responsible for the daily offerings and maintenance of Gome rilaŋ’s temple. The other seven clans are assigned to the remaining four mountain gods.

\(^\text{136}\) Participation is enforced. Each day’s festivities begin at Gome rilaŋ’s mountain-top temple with a roll call. The names of all the families from the clans dancing that day are read, and if no one is present from a certain household,
Each village in the Longwu river valley is protected by one primary mountain god. These gods were formerly famous generals, and the dancers are thought to be the generals’ soldiers. In Nianduhu, Gome rilaŋ, a Han general, is the mountain god who presides over the festivities (see footnote 7 page 96 for more information about Erlang shen, the Han Chinese designation for this deity). Tradition has it that inhabitants of Nianduhu are descendents of Gome rilaŋ’s troops. Even today, military elements still feature prominently. The first few dancers leading the line of dancers carry weapons (knives, javelins, and tridents). Other aspects of the men’s clothing are warriorlike. The men wrap woven braids of black cord around their heads, so as to appear as if they have long hair. The Tu have a saying, “Soldiers have hair; war horses have brands.” So in wearing the fake braid, men are implicitly asserting their status as soldiers. Some speculate that the distinctive turquoise blue socks worn by the men in the festival come from the uniform of the Red army during the communist revolution. The shaman for Gome rilaŋ dons a military helmet at various points during the festivities. On the 24th day of the festival, the shamans brandish weapons amidst whoops and vigorous taunts towards Quma, a historic enemy village up the valley. At this time, lerhta, paper with a curse written on it, is burned so as to effect destruction and bad luck on Quma. The dances themselves are thought
to be stylistic reenactments of historic battles between the coalition of Dzungar Mongols and Tibetans of this region and the Qing army (Stevenson 2000:257).

Despite these militaristic undertones, the stated purpose of the festival is to make offerings to the gods for good crops and to avoid sickness. The gods require several different kinds of offerings. First are the dances. All of the dances take place on the floor of the village’s primary threshing floor; the images of the mountain gods preside over the dancing in a tent at the south end of the space. Two different kinds of dances are performed in Nianduhu: *hlarsei*, a dance for the gods which ensures blessings, and *lersei*, a dance specifically for the water gods to ensure water and good crops. The dances are performed by members of the villages roughly according to age sets. The older men of the village (around age forty-five and up) wear towels on their heads; younger men don *yerza*, a flat-topped conical hat now worn only for this dance. Finally, young women, some dressed in the Tu clothing from this area but the majority dressed in Tibetan robes, dance (see chapter two for more extensive description and discussion of the clothes worn during this festival).

Besides dancing, a number of other offerings are required. The gods require two categories of offerings: *gersan* (white offerings) and *mersan* (red offerings). Gersan include

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139 There are three categories of gods who gather together on this day to receive these offerings. *Hla* are the gods in heaven. They include Buddhist and mountain gods, and were all originally humans; consequently, images of them can be made. They are able to help people. *Dibdri* are gods of the air. They were not originally people, and so no images are made of them. They don’t really hurt or help people; they are usually irrelevant to people’s lives. *Le* are the gods in the earth. They live in water, plants, rocks, and the earth itself. They like to harm people, but they are also afraid of particularly brave or strong people. There is no interaction between the levels, and there is no real hierarchy between the three levels. However, within each level hierarchical relations exist between the gods.

140 The young women wearing Tu clothing are somewhere between the ages of 15 and 19, and this is in fact their coming out dance. They are now considered eligible for marriage. In the past, this dance was reserved for only these young women; today, younger girls of any age also dance this dance. They, however, do not wear Tu robes but renditions of Tibetan robes from Lhasa.

141 I argue that the celebration of this festival also serves to publicly reaffirm the patriline of this village. The Tu trace descent patrilineally, and prefer a patrilocal postmarital residence pattern. Married women do not dance. And so these six days of dancing implicitly emphasize again and again those who are considered insiders and those who are considered outsiders. This is becoming less obvious, though, with recent changes in marriage patterns with intermarriage with Tibetans becoming increasingly common.
white-colored objects: milk, flour, and yogurt. Mersaŋ include red-colored objects: blood, animal offerings, animals made of tsampa\textsuperscript{142} that have been colored red. Kamer (literally “skewer”) is a kind of mersaŋ and involves a subset of the dancers wearing the yeryza. On the night of the 23\textsuperscript{rd}, the young men who desire to participate (the youngest I observed participating were around thirteen, the oldest in their early twenties) spend the night up on the mountain in Gome rilaŋ’s temple in order to be ceremonially pure for the next day.\textsuperscript{143} They may not have any contact with women, sexual or otherwise. If they are pure, it is said participating in kamer will not hurt, and their cheeks will not bleed. On the morning of the 24\textsuperscript{th}, after all of the men of the village have assembled at Gome rilaŋ’s temple and the shamans have entered a trance state, amidst the bang of drums and the loud encouraging whoops of the men, those willing to participate in kamer crowd inside the temple with their sharpened skewers. A small group of older men who are specialists in the practice pierce each side of the cheek with a short skewer; the resulting effect makes it appear as if one long skewer pokes through one cheek and comes out the other.\textsuperscript{144} Once the skewers have been inserted, the young men keep them in as they proceed down the mountain to the threshing floor, where the dances take place. They wear the skewers throughout the morning’s dances before they are removed.\textsuperscript{145} In addition to dancing,

\textsuperscript{142} A dough made of butter, sugar, roasted barley flour, milk tea, and sometimes dried yak cheese. The flour is mixed in a tea cup with sugar while a lump of butter is added to the tea; the liquid is poured over the flour. The mixture is mixed with one’s hands until the appropriate consistency (akin to playdough) is reached. It is then eaten. Tsampa is considered Tibetan nomads’ food, but elderly in the village often eat it for breakfast.

\textsuperscript{143} I suspect kamer functions as a rite of passage for the young men. The males participating are in the transition stage of becoming recognized as mature adults.

\textsuperscript{144} In the past (apparently before these villages became Buddhist), animal sacrifices were considered the appropriate mersaŋ; a live goat or sheep was placed on the fire at the conclusion of the 24\textsuperscript{th} day. However, killing is contrary to the tenets of Buddhism. In order to meet these regulations, as well as still offer mersaŋ, those in Nianduhu began practicing kamer. One informant claimed that one person’s kamer is equivalent to sacrificing one sheep; this suggests that perhaps several animals were sacrificed.

\textsuperscript{145} Different villages in Longwu valley practice different kinds of kamer. In Nianduhu laka, in addition to piercing their cheeks men pierce their backs. In Siheji, men draw blood by hitting their foreheads with a knife (Stevenson 2000:257).
each family must also prepare qoxem (a food offering),\textsuperscript{146} for the final qoba burnt offering, a bottle of alcohol, and clothes (long silk scarves) for the gods.

Another important aspect of the festival occurs each day at the conclusion of the dances that take place on the threshing floor. Qaghza is when the five mountain gods individually visit each house in the village. The images of the mountain deities sit in hlarGem, which are sedan chairs. The sedan chairs are intricately painted and decorated with carved wood in the style of the temples of the area. Each clan selects four young men who are strong and good; they are responsible to carry the hlarGem of the mountain god venerated by their clan.\textsuperscript{147} At the conclusion of each day’s dances, the four shamans (who are still in a trance state) and their respective hlarGem leave the main threshing floor and split up, visiting each household. By the end of the six days, the shamans have visited every house in the village. Each house in the village prepares for the visits by opening up the household shrine and setting before it a table of offerings. These offerings might include beer, fruit, yogurt, flowers, grain, flower, bai jiu (liquor distilled from maize or sorghum), tsampa, hada (a long piece of silk, usually white, used as a gift of honor among Tibetans, Mongolians, and Tu); bread is noticeably absent. When the shaman and the hlarGem enter the courtyard of the house, the hlarGem is set before the offerings so that the mountain god faces the family shrine. The family kowtows three times to the back of the mountain god, while the shaman pours out some of the beer on the ground and sprinkles the

\textsuperscript{146} Qoxem consist of an arrangement of special foods that the gods deem good: grain, candy, fruit, hjerhti (a small ceremonial bread in the shape of a bulb), maj'a (bread shaped into a stick), tsheindzi (bread shaped into long strings), tidzu (bread shaped into squares), and tarsa (bread shaped small circular pieces). All of these breads are made out of a dough of flour, egg, oil, and sugar, and once shaped, they are all deep fried. Except for hjerhti, all of these breads are used both for consumption and for ceremonial purposes.

\textsuperscript{147} Throughout the six days of dancing, a group of old men known as kaGowa, basically preside: they take roll, they monitor the dancing, they pierce the cheeks for kamer, they make sure the spectators sit at a suitable distance, they keep the shamans in line, they select and supervise the young men who carry the hlarGem. These older men are chosen because of the respect they command in the village. They do not have many duties or official decision-making power outside of festival rituals.
yogurt or the grain on the ground. At this time, the shaman communicates any messages, usually a warning, he may have for that particular household, as well as the necessary precautions the family needs to make in order to avoid this misfortune. He also levies fines for lack of participation in the festival at this time.\textsuperscript{148} As the shaman then prepares to go, the men carrying the hlarGem and the entourage attending the shaman gather up the beer and the fruit for their own consumption; the head of the household discretely slips some money into the hands of the accompanying kaGowa.\textsuperscript{149} The shaman starts banging his drum and leaves.

Celebration of χeićaŋ was banned during the Cultural Revolution, but the festivities resumed again after 1979. Sometime in the 1990s, reporters, photographers, and tourists began attending χeićaŋ. The festival takes place during the summer, which is Qinghai’s busiest tourist season. But the weather alone can’t account for the growth of tourism; marketing is also involved. Qinghai generally, and this festival more specifically, is billed as a place to see forgotten, remote Tibetan culture. The provincial television station produces a special program for Tibetan New Year each year; in the summer of 2002 they filmed Laru to feature in the program of 2003. Outdoor recreation stores throughout Xining advertise liu yue hui with flashy photographs as one of the trekking adventures offered to see Tibetan culture up-close in Qinghai. Lurol [sic] even receives brief mention in popular Western travel guides for China. More recent editions of the Lonely Planet guide recommend this “famous” body-piercing festival (Pitts 2005:880; Mayhew 2007:906).\textsuperscript{150} Frommers guide to China gives a little more information about the festival, noting that it commemorates the crucial role of the Tongren area in the signing of a Sino-Tibetan peace treaty in 822. It further notes that the festival has a decidedly “pagan

\textsuperscript{148} One fine I witnessed: the household was required to bring ten bottles of beer and three hada (white, yellow, and blue) up to Gome rilaŋ’s temple before the festivities started the following day.
\textsuperscript{149} The amount of money is not set, families usually give just a few yuan.
\textsuperscript{150} The 2002 edition has no mention of this festival.
feel” (Foster 2008:768). The Bridge Fund report of the Xiajon Shrine improvement project (March-July 2002) agrees that, “This ritual is increasingly popular among both Chinese and foreign tourists and professional photographers” (2002:3). One tourist describes her experiences of the increased popularity from the 2007 festivities,

“NOW...we saw western tourists. Photographers, Chinese and westerners, getting in the people's faces, slipping into each others (sic) shots. I refered (sic) to them as the Tourist (sic) paparazzi. News agencies, camcorders, video recorders...and mass of activity. Eventually, I joined the paparazzi down there...trying to get my own best photos and look like I worked for CNN... [Travels with Sheila 2007].

The main attraction for tourists is kamer, which is billed as a rare body-piercing festival not seen anywhere else in Tibetan regions. Very few outsiders attend the days leading up to the climactic performance in Nianduhu. But on the 24th, both Han Chinese and foreign tourists and photographers make their way to Gome rila’j’s temple. Most foreign tourists attend this festival as part of a larger Tibetan Buddhist festival trek. Throughout Qinghai, horse racing festivals take place around the same time in Kham and Amdo Tibetan nomadic areas. In 2007, I chatted with a woman from California who was part of a small tour group (just four people total) who had just driven in from Yushu (Jyekundo) where they had attended the large annual horse festival. Even after I told her that the village she was visiting was Tu, she kept asking me what it was like to live in a Tibetan village and how well I spoke the Tibetan language. The larger tourist groups generally show up just in time to observe kamer and film the first bit of dancing that takes place on the threshing floor. Photojournalists and solo adventure trekkers who are interested in a more “authentic” experience stay the day.

151 Actually, visitors descend on Tongren for all the days of the festival; they typically go from village to village on successive days so as to attend only the final day of festivities in each village. In 2007, the week liu yue hui was performed, hotels were booked up at least a month in advance for the week of liuyue hui.
The villagers of Nianduhu have responded to accommodate and profit from this influx of outsiders. For 50 RMB, outsiders (both male and female) are draped with a hada and are allowed entrance to Gome rilaŋ’s temple to document the young men being pierced. Tourists are allowed to photograph and film the festival from the center of the dance area on the threshing floor. (The threshing floor is an empty square surrounded by houses. The large white tent filled with qoxem is stationed at the southern end of the square, and the hlarGem with the images of the mountain gods are set directly in front of this tent. In the center of the square is a large pile of tree branches to be burned in the final qoba offering. The dancers generally dance in a clockwise circle around this pile, and the audience lines the edges of the square. The center area is reserved for the shamans, the kaGowa, and now, for photographers.) Usually, effort is made on the part of the kaGowa to direct all dancing and shamanic activity so as to not disturb outsiders. In fact in 2007, Gome rilaŋ’s shaman, locally known as Three Eyes, was cautioned to keep his distance from outsiders. (In 2006, his hlerGam ran down one American tourist who got too close while photographing and was unable to get away in time.)

152 Three Eyes is the most feared shaman. He is a young man in his twenties, and is called Three Eyes because he reportedly knows about villagers’ infractions, even if he has no possible way of knowing. He is the shaman responsible for disciplining people at festivals for infractions.
Villagers are eager to meet potential customers of the religious art they produce, and invite outsiders to come home with them for a meal in order to cultivate contacts. When the festivities cease around lunch and dinner time on the 24th, one sees villagers shepherding outsiders through the narrow lanes to their homes for dinner. In 2006, my translator’s mother repeatedly urged me to come to lunch on the 24th and bring all of my friends. I accepted for myself, but told her that I didn’t have any friends visiting. When I came for lunch, she scolded

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In 2007, I was surprised when two Italian backpackers showed up in the courtyard of the home where I was staying around dinner time on the 24th. They were backpacking around Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai, following a route of Tibetan Buddhist festivals. They had read about this festival in *Lonely Planet* and had made their way to Nianduhu. They had heard of great stories of Tibetan hospitality, and so were pleased to be invited to my landlady’s home for a meal of soup, noodles, boiled mutton, bread and tea.
me for not bringing my friends. When pressed, she further expounded, referring to the forty-odd Western tourists who had shown up to view kamer. She had expected me to invite them along with me to lunch and help her access this group of potential contacts.

Even with these accommodations for those tourists who attend, I argue that this event remains “real.” The tourist perceives his experience as unmediated—while measures are taken by the shamans and the kaGowa to avoid or accommodate, this is done quietly beforehand. From the tourists’ perspective, they are allowed to observe and document their experiences through their own eyes (or own lens, as the case may be). Their experience is unnarrated by others. They rely on the “evidence of their own eyes.” Their experience of the festival reflects what they see as a basic reality.

3. Wutu: Ethnic Tourism as iconic

In January of 2007, the staging of an annual festival, Wutu, contrasts semiotically with χεικαŋ. But before talking about the extraordinary nature of this particular event, I will describe the festival of Wutu and baŋ. Wutu takes place on the twentieth day of the eleventh lunar month, and is celebrated only in Nianduhu.154 Wutu can actually be considered the culmination of a week-long festival called baŋ, which is celebrated by other Tu villages in Tongren County, as well as Nianduhu. During the evenings of baŋ, members of the same clan gather together at the temple of their protector deity. The image of the mountain god sits at the south side of the temple in his hlerGam, and receives hadas and kowtows as men enter the temple. The men then gather in a circle on the floor around the stove; women crowd around the windows which have

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154 Ma Guangxing reports that before 1958, Wutun also celebrated this festival (Ma Guangxing et al. 2003:139). But villagers I interviewed in Nianduhu repeatedly stressed that they are the only village in China that has ever celebrated this festival.
been thrown open. The shaman,\(^{155}\) dressed simply in a \(t\)e\(^b\)la.,\(^{156}\) begins by beating a flat drum in the four directions—first south, then west, north, east, and ending again at the south (he begins and ends with the clan’s mountain god as an affirmation of allegiance). A middle-aged man accompanies him on the gong. The shaman then sits directly in front of the mountain god and asks for volunteers. After much joking and reluctant protests, a man is pushed forward and is given an offering to hold (offerings include milk tea, incense, flour, bread, butter, or a paper flower.) He sits to the left of the master of ceremonies. This process is repeated until no more are willing.\(^{157}\) Once all those who volunteered are seated with their offerings, the shaman asks the first volunteer a series of questions. He is asked which language he is most comfortable using, what offering he is holding, whether or not he has a sweetheart and what her name is, and finally what kind of performance he will do.\(^{158}\) The volunteers may sing (all songs are in Tibetan or Mandarin),\(^{159}\) tell a funny story, or imitate an animal. The audience of remaining men and women enthusiastically laugh, cheer, and make catcalls about each performance. Once a performance has been completed, the master of ceremonies drops two bear claws on his drum as

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155 Chinese sources refer to this man as a shaman (fashi); in Chinese our Tu friends called him a fake shaman (jia de fashi). In Tu, this man was referred to as kwa, the word designating the other four shamans. He however is not a characteristic kwa: his hair is not long, he is not a hun (a person outside the monastic system who is skilled in reading scriptures and fortune telling; just like monks or living Buddhas, hun can be consulted when sickness or misfortune comes), he does not enter a trance state, and he does not participate in the other festivities belonging to the shamanic religious complex. When pressed, people would admit that he was not really a kwa, but had no other referential term for him. Besides officiating at baŋ and wutu, he must be visited on the last day of the year in order to obtain a picture of a horse and mani jewel which is placed in the naʁo (traditional area for cooking, eating, and sleeping) to ensure wealth and good reputation. I will refer to him as a shaman, keeping in mind these qualifications.

156 Tibetan robe worn by men in the Tu villages of Huangnan.

157 There seems to be no special number of participants needed for this ceremony; however, I was told that thirteen would be the ideal number of participants.

158 Ma Guangxing includes three other questions (Ma Guangxing et al. 2003:133-134). He writes that the shaman leads off with a formulaic question whose meaning is unknown. He also asks where the man’s happiness and prayers are located.

159 The Tu living in Huangnan have no songs in the Tu language; Tibetan songs—both nomad ballads and pop songs—are known and sung. Older people living in the village don’t remember hearing any Tu songs while they were young. The nights I observed baŋ, the Tu language was used to organize the proceedings of the night, as well as for the joking between the audience and the participants. Tibetan was the language of the formal proceedings.
a form of divination in order to determine whether or not the mountain god found the performance acceptable. If the performance is unacceptable, the volunteer must try again, to the great delight of the audience. Once all of the volunteers have performed, the official part of the ceremony ends. The volunteers break their circle, and all of the men are poured some milk tea and draw close around the fire. Different men are cajoled to sing, and the evening is spent trading songs. When the older generation of the village was young, this informal part of baŋ served as a time for courting and flirting. It was normally taboo for men and women to relate across gender lines unless they were family members. But on this night, a couple could publicly trade songs back and forth and use their songs to establish and suggest relationship. This was a night of license without social repercussion: old flames could steal away for one night together and young men and women could gather together in a home and talk and flirt into the night.¹⁶⁰ Wutu then takes place after the last night of baŋ.¹⁶¹

Chinese scholars write that wutu is the local word for tiger (Ma Chengjun 2003:396), but the Tu disagree. They say since the history of this festival is very old and they lack a writing system, they don’t know what the word means, or even if it is Tu or Tibetan. The festival’s stated purpose is to remove all sickness, misfortune, and evil from the village. These things are placed on the wutu’s bodies and then are washed away as the wutu wash themselves.¹⁶² This festival belongs to the complex of religious activities belonging to the shamanic worship of the mountain gods, but the timing of the festival coincides with the Tibetan Buddhist religious

¹⁶⁰ Baŋ no longer serves this function. Very few women attend any more, and I heard no women sing. It was suggested to me that since young people now attend school and have much more freedom to form relationships, they have stopped attending this festival. Another hindrance is that baŋ does not take place during an already-established school holiday, and so there simply aren’t very many young women around to attend. (From middle school on, students must attend school in the county seat, and so they board in the dorms there.)
¹⁶¹ The word wutu is used to designate the festival, as well as the men who participate in the festival.
¹⁶² Nianduhu is the only Tu village in Huangnan to celebrate Wutu and indeed, the only village in Qinghai. The other Tu villages in Huangnan conclude baŋ by burning paper which symbolizes all of the bad things.
calendar. In the eleventh lunar month, all of the year’s work has been concluded for the agricultural cycle, and so the community devotes time to chanting and reading scripture. This activity concludes on the twentieth day, which is also the day wutu is celebrated. The new year is fast approaching, and so the festival is part of the preparations made for this major event.

Seven men, five young unmarried males and two who are older and married, dance as wutu. In the middle of the day, they assemble at the mountain-top temple of Gome rilaŋ. Other men from the village come to watch and help with the preparations, but women traditionally are not allowed to be present. The shaman from the preceding nights of baŋ wears the same ʈɕʰəla from previous nights, but tied around his head is a white hada, on top of which sits the ghodren.163 He oversees the wutu’s preparations and makes ritual offerings. Temperatures in Qinghai averaged -8.5° C (16.7° F) on the day Wutu was celebrated in 2007, but the wutu strip down to just pants which are rolled up above the knee, and ash is patted on the exposed skin of their upper body, face, arms, and legs. They are then painted with calligraphy ink with the markings of a tiger or a puma. (The tiger and puma are considered fierce animals, and so the men dressed as these animals are thought able to bear the burden of all the village’s sickness, misfortune, and evil.) Each wutu is given two long sticks to hold upright, one in each hand. The shaman then leads the wutu in kowtowing to Gome rilaŋ. The wutu all drink large draughts of bai jiu, and then proceed out of the temple. They circle around the sanjeh164 in a slow cadenced dance of a step and hop, followed by the shaman who bangs his drum and his assistant, who beats a gong. Then, the five younger wutu run down the mountain to the village, while the two remaining wutu, as well as the master of ceremonies and his assistant, continue their slow rhythmic dance down the mountain.

163 Chinese is pilu mao; a miter with four panels of Buddha. This is the same type of miter given to Xuanzang by the Emperor before he sets off in the Journey to the West.
164 A raised square platform, about two meters wide and long, for offerings of cedar branches and flour.
and through the village. The younger wutu climb the old city walls of Nianduhu and individually run from roof to roof. Members of each family stand on the roof with kamtɕʰilja, to thread onto the sticks held by the wutu. The bread represents everything bad that might be experienced by the family, either in the previous year or in the year to come. By carrying away the bread the wutu remove all bad things from the family’s home. Once all of the village homes within the old walled portion of the village have been visited, the wutu reconnoiter as a group and run down to the river, where the bread is cast in and the wutu wash off their animal markings. Once they dry off and dress, they jump over a fire lit by the master of ceremonies to insure that the evil doesn’t return to the village.

Wutu celebrated in January of 2007 was a little different. In this particular year, the county tourist bureau invested money to promote winter tourism. In negotiations with the villagers of Nianduhu, the government proposed that villagers charge a fee for tourists to observe the transformation of the young men into wutu, to have more men participate in the festival (rather than the traditional number of seven), and to provide more colorful clothing for the men to wear. The older people in the village were initially unwilling to compromise, but later conceded the first and last points. The village reputedly received 100,000 RMB ($12,820) for its cooperation; no one, however, could report how the money was distributed. Outside the Xining airport on the interstate running between Lanzhou and Xining, a colorful billboard displaying a picture of a monk painting a thangka invited would-be tourists to Huangnan Prefecture between

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165 The bread dough does not differ from the bread prepared for daily consumption, which is made from flour and water with a starter similar to sourdough. However, the usual, large, circular disc shape is formed with a hole in the middle, so it can easily be placed on the sticks carried by the wutu. There is yet another special bread, tarsaŋ, made for the previous nights of baŋ. The bread dough includes oil and sugar and is deep fried rather than baked, and so it is richer than the daily fare and is considered a real treat for children especially. This bread is meant to be exchanged with others; one friend told me about how when she was little she would agonize how to best divide her tarsaŋ so as to get large pieces in return from her friends.

166 When the bread is stacked too high for the wutu to carry, the discs are removed and kept by relatives of the wutu.
January 8 (the day on which Wutu fell) and March 4 (the last day of New Year’s celebrations).
The government also organized a special trip and invited television, magazine, and newspaper reporters to participate in festivities surrounding Wutu.

These reporters and photographers first made their presence known on the last night of ḃaṅ, which fell on January 7. Before the ceremony began, a small group of men from the village assembled in a side room of Gome rilaṅ’s temple and entertained one another by singing for the fifteen or so reporters and photographers. As in previous nights, the songs were all Tibetan, but rather than using Tu for speaking, Tibetan was the chosen form of communication among the villagers and those filming. The shaman hit a gong to signal the beginning of the ceremony. He was asked to repeat the gonging for the cameras. He then made the ritual offering of flour and juniper branches in the *sarṣughteru*, after which he blew a conch shell. In order to accommodate the cameras, he first blew the conch in the courtyard before climbing on top of the gate to blow the conch, where it should properly be blown. After ringing the bell, he descended the ladder and the ceremony began. In contrast to previous nights when much cajoling had to take place before reluctantly accepting, young men eagerly volunteered to participate. Young man after young man also chose to sing for his performance in front of the camera; only one deviated and imitated the noise of an animal for his part. Tibetan continued to be chosen for all aspects of the performance. The ceremony took place in the inner area of the main temple; all of the cameramen stood on the outer porch and squeezed themselves around the three doors which were flung open. But at one point early on, one of the villagers escorted a television reporter and his

167 A white, conical oven in which offerings of flour and juniper branches are burned. They can be found in the courtyard of most homes in Nianduhu, as well as in temples.
cameraman into the inner sanctum, and the reporter controlled this area by shooing others from his space.

The first scheduled activity on the morning of January 8 took place in the square in front of the theater on the main street of Tongren, which the government had planned to be part of the television programs resulting from the trip. Officials were draped with white hadas and posed for pictures in front of a huge banner proclaiming the opening ceremonies for the winter tourist season in Regong, Qinghai. A red banner swooping between buildings lining the main street carried the slogan, “Culture promotes tourism…Tourism advances culture.” Giant placards lining the sidewalk in front of the square briefly informed tourists about Wutu with a short introduction to and pictures of the festival, as well as about Regong art. Flyers detailing the artistic achievements of Nianduhu and Wutun and the government’s commitment to protect and guard the unique culture of Regong (including art, Tibetan opera, Wutu, and χeican) were distributed to the crowd standing around the outskirts of the square.

The program kicked off with a series of speeches by government officials, who then took their seats at the tables surrounding the square. The master of ceremonies then introduced the program, which included a representative dance from χeican, an act from a Tibetan opera about the winning of Princess Wenchang’s hand by the clever Tibetan ambassador, and a Tibetan circle dance. The photographers sprang into action, entering the performers’ space to capture the event for their various television stations, magazines, and newspapers. Ironically, the performance represented none of the winter cultural events that the ceremony was kicking off. χeican takes place just before the harvest in the sixth month of the lunar calendar. Neither the Tibetan opera nor the circle dance take place on particular dates. During the performance a reporter
approached one of the young men from Nianduhu who was watching the spectacle. He repeatedly questioned him when Wutu would start that afternoon. The young man indifferently replied that it would be starting at 2:00 in the afternoon, but that the reporter was welcome to come back to the village then (around 11:00) if he desired. After some discussion back and forth (which included the reporter querying whether or not the young man was performing as a wutu), the reporter called his accompanying photographer over from the middle of the square where he was taking pictures, and they left for Nianduhu. The program continued until noon, at which point those participating in the official trip trooped off to a local restaurant for a banquet before Wutu began.

Over the border between Nianduhu and Tongren, normally marked only by the transition from paved to dirt road, hung a red banner welcoming tourists to the Wutu event. The slogan read, “Explore the mysterious Wutu folk custom, see and appreciate the plateau’s local customs, Regong’s duixiu township welcomes you!” By about 2:00 in the afternoon, well over two hundred tourists, journalists, and photographers were assembled at Gome rilaŋ’s temple on top of the hill overlooking Nianduhu. Village men were collecting a 30 RMB entrance fee at the door into the temple, but those who were part of the official trip wore pink passes around their necks which also allowed them entrance into the temple. Those who paid the entrance fee received a glossy laminated photograph of a previous year’s festivities, as well as a short description of the meaning of the festival. Two women dressed in heavy silk Tibetan robes and hooked up to wireless microphones served as masters of ceremonies for the event; one stood on the roof of the

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168 At χeičaŋ the previous summer, my husband had been waved into the inner sanctum of the temple; the doorkeepers greeted him in Tu and told him that since he lived in the village, he didn’t need to pay. At Wutu, however, he was barred from entering. This irritated our friend and translator, who marched off to reason with the doorkeepers. She returned infuriated that the men still refused to admit my husband for free, even though she was related to them. The men apologized and explained that they weren’t free to make the decisions themselves and had been instructed to charge admission to everyone not involved in helping the wutu prepare.
temple, giving a running commentary of the preparation and supervising the crush of people inside, while the other stood outside, waiting to corral the crowd once the dancing had started.

Inside the temple, preparations were stalled as the men waited for the late arrival of the faux leopard fur shorts and boots furnished by the government. When the bag finally arrived, the seven men selected as this year’s wutu snickered as they accepted their clothes. When they emerged from the side room where they had dressed, the crowd inside the temple began to film and snap pictures as the five young men and two middle-aged men rubbed their bodies with ash and then were painted with jet-black calligraphy ink with the markings of tigers and pumas. Once the first three were finished, they waited around for the others to finish up, and an impromptu photo shoot started, with young Han women standing next to the painted young men. One young man in particular seized the chance to ham it up, and he posed as a tiger about to pounce over the shoulder of the woman, to the great delight of the crowd. (The young man was scolded by older men from the village the following day for his cavorting.) The master of ceremonies used standard Mandarin to continually urge the crowd inside to not crush the young men; the villagers spoke to one another steadily in Tu. After the men were all painted and the requisite offerings were made, the seven men, followed by a young man beating a gong and the shaman who supervised the ceremony, emerged from the inner part of the temple. The head of the tourism bureau in Regong, one of Nianduhu’s duizhang (team leader), and the two masters of ceremonies directed the crowd of people outside to make room for the wutu to dance around in a circle and encouraged the dancers to make a few more loops around before they were finished. The crowd dispersed as the wutu ran and walked down the mountain.
Once I ran down the mountain and watched the younger wutu enter the village, I followed my translator to a relative’s house inside the village walls where we could wait for the wutu to pass through. A photographer also followed us and squeezed his way into the courtyard before the door shut behind us. The wutu came to the house and accepted their offerings of bread. They then assembled at the northern gate to the village before leaving and running down to the edge of the creek, where photographers lining both sides of the frozen banks were waiting. The wutu had to force their way between photographers in order to reach the narrow stream of running water. As the seven men washed off the ash and paint, a fight broke out between two late arrivals as they both angled for the best shot. One conceded and jumped the stream to try the other side for a suitable place; the other threw a parting rock at him. The ceremony ended, and the throng of tourists, journalists, and photographers left.
This staging of Wutu can be considered iconic. It was scripted by government officials, mediated and narrated from beginning to end by official masters of ceremonies over portable loudspeakers, and shaped by the demands of photojournalists. It was selectively filtered and transformed, rather than allowed to unfold spontaneously and automatically for the tourists and photojournalists. But the event was nonetheless still perceived to resemble its object. The success of this staging depends on its high modality cues. Icons possess high modality cues because the signifier and the signified appear to be identical: the distinction between the real and its copy disappears. Tagg writes,

“"The signifier is treated as if it were identical with a pre-existent signified and... the reader's role is purely that of a consumer... Signifier and signified appear not only to unite, but the signifier seems to become transparent so that the concept seems to present itself, and the arbitrary sign is naturalized by a spurious identity between reference and referents, between the text and the world" [1988:99].

Tourists perceived this staging of Wutu as actuality, as live, as fact. And those aspects of the festival that had been manipulated for the event actually authenticated it from the tourist point of view. Kent Grayson observes, “Instead of drawing our attention to the gaps that always exist in representation, iconic experiences encourage us subconsciously to fill in these gaps and then to believe that there were no gaps in the first place... This is the paradox of representation: it may deceive most when we think it works best” (1998:41). How did this work in this performance of Wutu? The extended length of the celebration with the addition of the morning program and banquet made the event more formal; after all, what is a tourist event without food? Red banners

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169 At one point, the female master of ceremonies (a hostess from a local TV station) was doing crowd control and instructed some teenage boys from the village to step back and respect the local culture, which sent them into fits of laughter. Other villagers responded with disgust at being bossed around at their own festival by an outsider—and a woman at that.

170 Modality is the reality status accorded to or claimed by a sign.
are used throughout China for events of any importance, from sales to the permanent banner on the Forbidden City in Beijing wishing long life to the PRC. The costumes made the event undeniably ethnic. Photographs taken with the wutu become documentary evidence that the tourist was really there. The masters of ceremonies merely drew attention to what was going on. The crush of photographers marked the festival as something worth documenting. Umberto Eco argues that through familiarity an iconic signifier can acquire primacy over its signified. Such a sign becomes conventional, “…step by step, the more its addressee becomes acquainted with it. At a certain point the iconic representation, however stylized it may be, appears to be more true than the real experience, and people begin to look at things through the glasses of iconic convention” (Eco 1979:204-5). The alterations to the event appealed to other representations of tourism and celebration familiar to Chinese tourists. This reinforcement of the familiar made the 2007 staging of Wutu appear to be more true than any previous performance of the event.

4. Xibu tuzu minsu wenhua cun: Ethnic tourism as symbolic

In the celebration of χeiçaŋ, we see how ethnic tourism displays Tu culture, and in the performance of Wutu in 2007, we observe ethnic tourism transforming minority nationality culture. I move now to a different geographic locus, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, to illustrate how ethnic tourism masks minority nationality culture. While tourism in Huangnan revolves around specific events (mainly Wutu and χeiçaŋ) and a certain brand (Regong yishu), the tourist experience in Huzhu more closely fits the tourist model common in minority groups in China described by the authors referenced at the beginning of this chapter, where certain cultural

171 I have seen pictures from previous Wutu in which the men rolled up whatever pants they had on. In one picture, a young man’s pants from his school uniform are prominent, in marked contrast with the faux fur shorts provided by the county government in 2007.
172 “The Western Tu Folk Custom and Culture Village”; the largest model minority village in Huzhu County.
practices are commodified and performed. In Huzhu, visitors flock to consume Tu minority
culture itself by visiting model minority villages for a few hours.

A billboard at the intersection of Dongguan jie and Jianguolu in Xining in the summer of
2007 captures this contrast. The billboard featured a large picture of a smiling young woman
dressed in the prototypical Tu costume described in chapter two. The multi-colored stripes on
the sleeves of her robes were displayed prominently as she held her arms out in front of her; in
her hands she grasped a bowl of qingke jiu, Huzhu’s famous liquor distilled from highland barley.
In large type, the phrase, “Gouwu tuzu wenhua,” (“Shop Tu culture”) was splashed across the
bottom of the billboard. In smaller type in the right bottom corner of the billboard was the
address for one of Huzhu’s larger model minority villages. This invitation to consume Tu
minority culture is part of China’s more general tourist fascination with its minority nationalities.
This kind of model tourist village abounds, even in Han areas like Beijing (the Chinese Ethnic
Culture Park) and in Shenzhen (the Folk Cultural Village park). And in recent years they have
begun to proliferate in Huzhu County.

Along the main road from Xining to the county seat of Huzhu, just before the road veers
into the city limits, lies the small village Xiaozhuang. The homes abutting the road to the west
have been converted to seasonal tourist attractions; during the summer tourist season, they are
open for business. These homes are small-scale, family operations. To the east side of the
road are two much larger model villages, which cater to larger groups and charge more

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173 These model villages open at the start of China’s summer tourist season, the May holiday, and close sometime in
the fall after school has started.
expensive entrance fees.\footnote{The literal Chinese translation for both of these establishments is “village”; one is a 
\textit{minsu cun} (folk customs village) and one is a \textit{wenhua cun} (culture village). In Western literature, this type of tourist attraction is labeled a model minority village. I will follow this convention, but it might help the reader to conceptualize a model minority village as a culture theme park, similar to Epcot Center, rather than as a village in the literal sense.} But the tourist experience at both is quite similar, differing in scale rather than in actual content.

My visit on July 6, 2007, to one of the larger model villages typifies the tourist experience. Upon my arrival, I was greeted by a young couple dressed in prototypically Tu clothing. The young woman greeted me by hanging a white hada around my neck and offering me a drink of qingke jiu from the tray of three bowls that the young man was holding. (In Qinghai, it is commonly known that a visitor entering a Tu home is given three bowls of qingke jiu as a way of greeting: one while standing outside the main gate, one while standing on the threshold, and one after crossing the threshold.) The group I was with was then invited to enjoy the grounds before eating.

Inside, one half of the complex was devoted to elaborate wood structures with placards explaining traditional Tu architecture. The buildings surrounded a small open-air garden, which again was marked with explanations about what Tu typically grow in the courtyards of their homes. These structures were divided into rooms of various sizes in which smaller groups of visitors could more intimately eat their meals. The other half of the complex was devoted to the restaurant where larger parties could eat, and a large raised outdoor stage. Lining the walls of the restaurant were various photographs documenting historical memories (a Tu man greeting Mao Zedong in 1969, for example) and key tidbits about Tu culture (embroidery, clothing, and marriage customs). Another small display was a working home brewery, offering an explanation of how the Tu used to distill qingke jiu in their homes, as well as the opportunity to purchase some of this home brew. There was also an area where the tourist could be photographed
modeling Tu clothing. After about forty-five minutes, we were asked to sit down in the restaurant to eat our meal. None of the dishes we were served was presented as Tu specialties. Indeed, the menu featured standard dishes that could be ordered just about anywhere in China, except for a few Qinghai specialties such as youmai cai (a leafy green vegetable), dadou (roasted broad beans), niang pi (steamed noodles made of flour and water, served cold with cucumber, vinegar, sesame oil, garlic, and red pepper flakes), gouniao mo (oily fried flat bread), and lujiao cai (literally “deer horn vegetable,” a deep-fried green vegetable). After finishing our meal, we were directed to plastic chairs surrounding the outside stage, and soon an after-dinner show began.

Fourteen members (all young and mostly female) in this particular troupe were performing that day. The show began with a short fashion show of Tu clothing in which some historical variations (including niudaar, the headdress described in section three of chapter two) of Tu clothing were featured. A female master of ceremonies informed the audience about the relevant features of each set of clothing as orchestral folk music blared out of the speakers. This was followed by a performance of hua’er, antiphonal love songs sung in the local Chinese dialect in call-response style between courting couples. These folk songs are most famously sung on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month, usually at a mountain temple. Participants can either improvise their own lyrics or make use of pre-existing rhymes. Hua’er is not uniquely Tu, but is rather representative of China’s northwest, sung by villagers living in Gansu Province, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, and Qinghai Province.
In fact, hua’er is ubiquitous bus music in Xining. While singing a few hua’er, the singers danced the *anzhao* circle dance\textsuperscript{175} while a few swung on a circular swing.\textsuperscript{176}

Finally, the show concluded by the staging of a mock wedding ceremony. The master of ceremonies narrated as some of the traditional elements of a Tu wedding ceremony were enacted: the two brides ritually combed their hair and cried with other young females, the matchmakers went through the motions of determining an auspicious date.\textsuperscript{177} To the delight of the audience, the master of ceremonies asked for two volunteers to serve as the grooms. Amidst much laughter, two men donned silk vests and the brocaded felt hats worn by Tu men on holidays, and were led by the two matchmakers to their waiting brides. They were then led through the steps of a dance. At the conclusion of the show, we were encouraged to peruse the stalls built into the outside wall of the village to buy some mementos to take home with us. The stalls sold a variety of identifiably ethnic (but not necessarily Tu) souvenirs, such as machine-embroidered fanny packs and small cloth paintings of voluptuous, kneeling Tibetan nomadic women. Also outside the entrance to the culture park waited a number of middle-aged *ayi* (aunties), who had enjoyed the back view of the show and were now eager for the chance to sell their own hand-embroidered Tu souvenirs.

\textsuperscript{175} While dancing in rhythmic steps in a circle, the dancers alternatively bend their bodies and lift their arms down to the ground, up to the sky, and then stretched out. This is meant to symbolize reverence for the earth and the heavens and friendship to those around them. It is of note that this dance is Tibetan.
\textsuperscript{176} *Lunziqiu* originates from a child’s game played on a tire of a hand-pulled cart during the harvest festival. Today, a tall iron axle spins at high speed with two swings flying around it; acrobatic stunts are performed on the flying swings. It has become one of the most prototypically identifiable features of Tu culture.
\textsuperscript{177} For more information about marriage customs among the Huzhu Tu, see Li *et al.* 2003.
As mentioned previously, the tourist experience at the other establishments in Xiaozhuang differs mainly in scale. While the larger establishments more overtly display museumizing effects, all of the businesses present a living display of minority culture for the tourist, striving to leave the tourist with the idea that he has enjoyed an afternoon of authentic Tu culture. Performers bring the visual and verbal representations the tourist had formed before the trip to life. The tourist sees the Tu ‘in situ,’ enacting their cultural practices. Their bodily presence guarantees this sense of cultural authenticity. (Indeed, the content of information and the material culture viewed at the model villages is strikingly similar to the displays in Qinghai’s provincial museum.) But at the end of the day, the tourist drives back to his hotel, the

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178 In addition to historical structures that have been relocated to its grounds, the other model village contains a small museum of artifacts of Tu culture, including baskets, mill stones, eating utensils, religious objects, furniture, and specimens of clothing and embroidery.

179 MacCannell introduces two types of museum displays: collections and re-presentations. A re-presentation basically is a reconstruction, and it must always arbitrarily, “…cutoff from what would have surrounded it in its
performers remove their costumes and return home, and the proprietors lock up until the next day’s tourists arrive.

Ethnic tourism in Huzhu functions symbolically. The model villages fulfill their function (portraying Tu minority culture) regardless of similarity or analogy to the object itself. Signification in this instance is conventional. The tourist knows that he is not seeing artifacts of niudaar, for example—the costumes are entirely composed of modern synthetic fabrics. He knows the performance of hua’er is staged—he is not visiting on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month. He knows that the marriage ceremony he participates in is for entertainment only, with no accompanying responsibilities. The modality cues alert the audience, as well as the performers, that impersonation is taking place. But the experience works because both the tourist and the performer willingly suspend their disbelief and collude together to enjoy the theater effect. This helps us to understand why busloads of Tu from other villages also come to enjoy the spectacle at Xiaozhuang.

5. Conclusion

Thus far, I have illustrated how ethnic tourism functions semiotically among the Tu living in Qinghai. I have proposed a continuum of tourist experience; from χeiːcaŋ which can be understood as unmediated, to Wutu in which the property of iconicity dominates, to the model villages in Huzhu which function symbolically. I conclude by showing how messages of authenticity, identity, and modernity are implicit in this semiotic analysis.

original context…” (1989:78). The model villages substitute living models for mannequins, but there still exists the arbitrary cutoff between representation and reality. They could be termed living museums.
Outside of the small village of Xiaozhuang, the rest of the Tu villages in Huzhu Tu Autonomous County receive very little tourist traffic.\textsuperscript{180} Daily life is lived and festivals are celebrated without thought of the expectant tourist. But where the two worlds meet, as they occasionally do, disjuncture occurs. The sixth day of the sixth lunar month (the traditional day for singing hua’er) in 2007 (July 19\textsuperscript{th}) was a rainy day. Still we (a friend visiting from the U.S., my husband, and I) persistently slipped and slid up the trail at Wufeng temple where several Tu friends had assured me I would hear really good hua’er. We weren’t surprised not to meet many people making their way up the mountain. The rain was steady, and the roads coming up to this mountain were incredibly muddy, making them quite treacherous. I resolved to enjoy the famous Qinghai scenery (the rapeseed flowers were in full bloom, providing a sharp contrast of bright yellow against the green fields of wheat) on this unusually quiet hike. We had made our way halfway up the mountain, when I heard one voice creaking out a song. We climbed up to the temple where the song was emanating, and found a small group of local men standing in the rain surrounded by a group of five women tourists from Beijing.\textsuperscript{181} The women were crowded around the lone man who was singing: one with a digital audio recorder, and the others with cameras, both digital and video. The man finished his song and rejoined his friends. As he made motions to leave, the women asked if anyone else would be willing to sing. The men all laughed and joked as they grabbed a young woman who was coming down the trail and tried to persuade her to sing for the tourists. As they pulled out their cameras in anticipation, the young woman flashed the tourists a glance and ran down the trail. The women continued to persistently badger

\textsuperscript{180} Tourists also visit Beishan, a national forest park in the northwestern corner of Huzhu County, and Youning si, Huzhu’s only Tibetan Buddhist monastery, located in the eastern part of Huzhu County. 
\textsuperscript{181} The men were recognizably local both by their heavily accented Mandarin and by their clothing. They all wore worn, dark suits with caps pulled over their heads and homemade knitted sweaters under their suits. The women were recognizable both by their very standard Mandarin and their clothing. They all wore Goretex parkas, hiking boots and pants, wide-brimmed floppy rain hats, and they carried expensive photographic equipment.
the group of men, pleading with them to sing more hua’er. They complained that they had heard about this festival’s fame and had traveled so far to come to Huzhu to hear it sung. As the men continued to refuse and laugh at the women’s dismay, one of the women turned to me and asked if we had any cigarettes we could give the men so they would sing. The women continued to try to persuade the men for about ten minutes; finally, the same man who had been singing when we first came to the temple stepped forward and sang another selection for the women.

This episode illustrates the disappointed expectations of the tourist. The women were likely expecting something more akin to the following description:

“Whether out in the fields or up on the mountain-top, in a temple, males and females, old and young, all love to sing and all are accomplished at singing. …Wherever a hua’er festival is held, Tu hua’er singers usually cannot stop singing. For most, singing so moves them that they will improvise and compose lyrics freely; the response comes freely. For this reason, the Tu homeland is called, ‘The heartland of hua’er’” [Tuzu jianshi 1982:108, my translation].

Instead of seeing and hearing something more akin to this glowing description, the women found resistance among the local people on that drizzly day. Most Tu villages in Huzhu are removed from the tourist industry. Consequently, most simply are not receptive to demands for performance. But more important, I would argue, is how ethnic tourism works in Huzhu. Because ethnic tourism works to mask and even pervert reality, villagers refuse to participate in the more iconic-type of tourism that is more transparently reflective. They are accustomed to the lack of connection between ethnic tourism and how they go about their daily lives, and they resist any intrusions. The women tourists, on the other hand, were expecting something authentic. The representations they formed before travelling to this remote corner of China led them to expect to find the Tu, not the symbolic representation of them available in Xiaozhuang.
But most tourists come to Xiaozhuang (or to the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park in Beijing, the Folk Culture Village in Shenzhen, or any number of these kinds of ethnic tourist attractions) expecting a symbolic representation.

Authenticity isn’t something “out there.” It cannot be found in the objective material attributes of an artifact or an experience, but rather in the interpretation of genuineness and one’s desire for it (Spooner 1986:200). As Graburn states, “…[A]uthenticity is a concept tourists carry with them in their heads” (1999:351). So, valuation of authenticity displays more about the tourist than the object. MacCannell uses Goffman’s dichotomy of front and back regions to theorize about authenticity. He proposes six stages describing a tourist’s entry into a social situation. Stage one, two, and three, are all front regions, places where the audience or the outsider is relegated. However, they progressively mimic the appearance of the back region (the space inhabited by performers, where real life is lived). Stages four and five are back regions, with progressive amounts of openness and access provided to the outsider. MacCannell defines stage six as Goffman’s back space; this is what motivates the tourist’s consciousness (MacCannell 1989: 100-102). But MacCannell’s formulation is problematic, because he assumes that tourists universally have as their goal a desire to experience the back space. This is not necessarily so. Oakes comments about tourists to a model Miao village in Guizhou,

“Not that their Chinese tourist counterparts were themselves fooled when they visited the village. They knew they were getting a performance too. The difference was that Chinese tourists expected a performance and generally had a fun time during their visits, drinking wine, dancing with the natives, and themselves dressing up in costume” [1998:2].

This begs the question of why Han tourists desire performance.
Daniel writes, “We identify who we are by who we are not” (1996:16). There have long been interactions between minority groups and the central government of China. These relationships have served various functions, but I am most interested in the latest re-defining of this relationship associated with China’s ethnic identification project of the 1950s, which converges with the inception of the People’s Republic and its modernization project.

Historically, by 1800 the West disdained China as backward, the yellow race, the antithesis of modern (Mungello 1999:98). In the Great Leap Forward, and then especially when Deng Xiaoping announced the Open Door Policy in China and thus initiated the post-Mao reform era (1979 to present), China concertedly pursued modernization (mainly defined as economic growth and the development of infrastructure). While China’s economy remains the fastest growing in Asia, fifty-six percent of its population is primarily involved in agriculture. Despite these contradictions, the Chinese state positions itself as modern, and uses representations of its minority nationalities to cast off historically inferior positions assigned by dyadic relationships vis a vis its minority nationalities (Schein 1997:478). Such representations capitalize on essential, enduring traits of “traditional” culture, promoting the vision of authentic minority culture in a supposedly untouched premodern society (Litzinger 2000:39). Gladney writes, “The minorities play an important role in China’s official vision of history, nationality, and development. Their ‘primitivity’ contrasts with supposed Han ‘modernity.’ …’Han’ness’ for the Chinese connotes civility and modernity” (1994:102). The objectification of minorities provides the state with important symbolic capital in the projection of itself as modern. Authenticity is a project of control by the Han state. McKhann observes, “First, the government is highly selective in what aspects of nationality culture it chooses to promote. Clothes, dance, song, and ‘festivals’ (i.e., annual rituals with the religious content largely extracted) are the
principle subjects of government presentations of minority culture” (1995:44). The discourse of modernity places this controlled authenticity as a sign of difference. The meaning of authenticity has shifted to focus on highlighting the difference of Other; something that is (or someone who is) authentically Other upholds the difference between Han and non-Han. Whether or not someone objectively possesses the essential characteristics of a particular minority nationality does not matter, just as long as she is willing to enact an authentic role.

Ethnic tourism is the arena in which the Han tourist has the opportunity to see this image with his own eyes. He comes to his travels with an essentialized image of Tu (or any other minority nationality) culture and desires to see something that reinforces his imagination. He is looking for markers of “primitivity.” Tourism affirms the state’s modernizing discourse, confirming with documentary evidence what the tourist suspected all along. If he does not find what he’s looking for, there is disjuncture between the preconceived representation and his experience. The sign then does not work, and cannot testify to the nation-state’s self-representation as modern and developed. “To have ‘made it’ in the crazy world of China’s mixed economy may mean that one not only can carry a cellular phone or drink European wine, but that one also can consume the interior with abandon and unambiguous pleasure” (Schein 1997:479). But as standards of living change and educational opportunities grow, these markers of Tu culture are changing, and the distance between reality and representation is growing. In daily life, the Tu person now closely resembles any other citizen (Han and other minority nationalities) of the Chinese nation. Festivals as unmediated or iconic tourism still work as signs, because these performances of Tu culture confirm the image of untouched, premodern society. However, the greatest potential for disappointment exists at sites where ethnic minority culture itself is commodified. The Han tourist needs to see the imagined construct of happy, singing,
dancing females dressed in exotic costume enacted. If he meets, instead, a young female dressed in an Olympic t-shirt, talking to a friend on the cell phone in standard Putonghua, he confronts himself. Therein lies the problem with MacCannell’s theorizing about authenticity. In the case of ethnic tourism in China, there is not, in fact, the desire to experience stage six, the mystified back region. Demystification of the back stage and confrontation with the actors lounging without their make-up undermines the function of the relationship between Han majority culture and minority nationality culture. Seeing the Tu as they really live life is disconcerting. What is more important to authenticity is congruence between representation and the tourist experience. And consequently, ethnic tourism as symbolic is essential for the message conveyed by model minority villages and culture parks. The tourist comes to see something identifiably Other, not Self. Symbolic displays of culture work to display Other and accompanying messages about modernity by masking basic reality.

Once ethnic tourism becomes iconic or symbolic, it provides fertile ground for the assertion and manipulation of identity. Modality cues, which serve to confirm the reality of the sign, can be readily embraced when wanted, or discarded when thought unnecessary—very much like a mask. Pollock writes, “The mask works by concealing or modifying those signs of identity which conventionally display the actor, and by presenting new values that, again conventionally, represent the transformed person or an entirely new identity” (1995:584). The villagers in Huzhu can put on a Tu identity by slipping into traditional robes with the striped sleeves, picking up a needle and thread to do embroidery, singing hua’er, or speaking the Tu language. Alternatively, they can put on a Han identity by eliminating all of these cues. During Wutu and χeican, villagers in Nianduhu highlight their status as Other through dress and performance. But once again, these markers are easily removed. Just as a traditional masked ball is a ritual
occasion where we are called upon to disguise our identity, ethnic tourism serves as a ritualized event where the Tu, and other minority nationalities in China, are called upon to enact conventionalized displays of identity. These displays of identity would not be possible without the distance between representation and reality, however.

The problem of ethnic tourism, I have suggested, lies not just in the messages it communicates, but also in how these messages are communicated. Indeed, messages of authenticity, modernity and primitivity, and identity are not intrinsic to ethnic tourism itself, but are rather related to the degree that ethnic tourism is conventionalized. It is this semiotic function that gives the messages conveyed by ethnic tourism their potency and resulting fascination for anthropologists who study the minority nationality problem in China.
Chapter Five. Dressing Down: Concluding Remarks.

In the fall of 2004, shortly after I had arrived in Qinghai, I was introduced to a family who was seeking English conversation practice for their junior high-aged daughter. On a Saturday afternoon, I sat drinking *gaiwan* tea for the first time, savoring its sweetness with each sip. The family was Salar, and as I asked the daughter what she liked to do outside of school, her mother pointed to the corner of the living room. There sat a *guqin*, a seven-stringed instrument of the zither family. The daughter had been playing for a number of years, and was getting ready for a competition. She asked me if I wanted to see her performance clothes; when I answered yes, she disappeared down the hall and returned a moment later. In her hands she held a top and pants primarily in lilac satin. The filmy sleeves were striped in pastels (pink, green, yellow, and purple). I admired her clothing, and then we left for lunch.

It was not until later, when I was more familiar with Tu performance dress, that I processed this episode: this girl’s choice of clothing for her competition was in fact Tu dress. The paradoxes in this anecdote are many. The *guqin* is an ancient Chinese instrument, esteemed by scholars and literati for its subtlety and refinement. Chinese scholars were to master playing the *guqin* along with calligraphy, painting, and a form of chess. It was an art form solely for the pleasure of the elite; the public was reputedly barred from hearing it in performance. Myth has it that three famous figures in China’s pre-history, Fuxi, Shennong, and Huang Di (the Yellow Emperor) were involved in its creation. This instrument is mentioned in Chinese writings going back 3000 years, and has been found in tombs 2,500 years old. In 2003, *guqin* music was proclaimed as one of the Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. That this young Salar girl was being trained in an art traditionally reserved for the elite (and

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182 The Salar are one of China’s officially recognized minority nationalities. Their population numbers around 105,000 who live primarily in Qinghai Province. They speak a Turkish language, and legend has it that 700 years ago they followed a white camel from Samarkhan to the present-day Jiezhi Township.
largely Han) embodied the family’s (un)conscious positioning for status. Learning to play the
guqin erased her minority nationality status. While one aspect of the minority nationality
prototype in China is singing and dancing, it is not the elegant and understated tones of the guqin,
but is instead wild, religious, or sensual. This Salar family was reproducing the broader
conditions of the Han world of which they wanted to be a part (and from which they likely would
have been barred in the past). But just as one act embodied the erasure of ethnicity, so the other
signaled minority nationality status (albeit not Salar).\footnote{One could, however, make the argument that this further distances the young girl from minority nationality
identity. Other Western scholars have pointed out the significance of Han trying on ethnic costume, see for example Oakes 1998.} I have explicated in chapter two the
pervasiveness of Tu performance clothing. One wonders why this young Salar girl was
compelled to dress in Tu clothing for her competition. Perhaps it is because Qinghai, while not
an autonomous region, is known for its large population of minority nationalities (just under fifty
percent (Goodman 2004:381)). Minority nationalities benefit from preferential policies. Perhaps
the Salar girl’s family felt that her performance would seem that much more extraordinary
because a minority nationality had mastered this traditional (Han) music.

But why not choose Salar identity? Why the code-switching (to borrow a sociolinguistic
term)? I suggest two reasons. First, the Salar are not well-known for any distinctive dress, other
than the white hats worn by men and the head coverings worn by women. These features do not
mark particularly Salar identity, but rather Muslim identity. Time and time again respondents
told me that Muslims do not have any special clothing; if a Muslim decided to not wear his hat,
one would not know if he was Han or Hui.\footnote{In fact, throughout my time traveling back and forth between Xining and Tongren on the bus, I saw a handful of
men who pulled their hats out of their pockets to don them just before disembarking.} Young girls who have not yet married do not wear
the head covering, and so there was really no option of identifiably Salar dress. Second, the
history of Ma Bufang and his warlord years remains near in the minds of many living in Qinghai;

\footnote{One could, however, make the argument that this further distances the young girl from minority nationality
identity. Other Western scholars have pointed out the significance of Han trying on ethnic costume, see for example Oakes 1998.}
his ethnic-cleansing campaigns against Tibetan Buddhist minorities are remembered with bitterness. He relied on Hui and Salar officers to uphold his rule, recruiting primarily from Hualong and Xunhua (the Salar cultural homeland) (Goodman 2004:386). This, along with the Salar acumen for business, contributes to the feelings of mistrust towards the Salar by many in Qinghai. It probably would not have been in the young girl’s favor to identify as Salar.

But why Tu dress? Why not Tibetan? Tibetans, the most populous and culturally salient minority nationality in Qinghai, are perceived as recalcitrant, fierce, prone to fighting, and uninterested in assimilation. Further, there is extreme animosity between Tibetans and Muslims, as chapter two indicated. It is not likely a Salar girl would try to “pass” as Tibetan. In contrast, I suggest the Tu represent a colorful, harmless ethnic other, to borrow from Blum (2001:144-164). To dress as Tu, then, taps into positive views and feelings about minority nationalities, and keeps at bay more discomforting perceptions of minority nationality identity.

This anecdote encapsulates the themes of this dissertation. Its overarching goal has been to explore how identities are constructed and take on their particular cultural content, and then to understand how they are then made real and are embodied for those who live them. Seeking to place others into categories is the result of cognitive processing. However, people then work hard to infuse these categories with meaning. Formation of identity depends on the conceptualization of groups as somehow fundamentally different from each other, a reflection of a basic property of human categorization. This conceptualization in turn comes to create a local reality. Throughout China’s history, these categorization projects have most often been based on those features that appear “naturally” in the world. Despite the passage of time, these categories have been remarkably enduring. Gladney explains, “In dialectical theory, the cultural traits of an ethnic group, such as language, religion, dress, and location, may take on a primordial quality if
they become fundamental ‘markers’ or ‘charters’ of one’s shared descent” (Gladney 1991:77).

This is particularly true of clothing, which is emblematic of ethnic identity. Clothing is one of those social dimensions that cultural tradition has marked as salient for differentiation. Chapter two described this process for Tu dress, and then went on to describe a task meant to explore prototypical notions of dress and identity. Clothing is particularly interesting as a marker of ethnicity, because it can be easily donned and shed. This implies a certain amount of voluntary association with ethnic identity. Those who want to act out a particular role can dress the part, putting on an identity, so to speak. But these choices are constrained by historical and cultural exigencies. Because category labels were institutionalized and stamped on paperwork in the 1950s, boundaries have hardened in some respects. There are, however, limits to a name.

Chapter three traced the transformation of the social order of the Tongren Tu through the events of the last half century. Performance provides an arena in which these identity choices are enacted and embodied. Clothing becomes physical evidence of the performer’s personal subjectivity; it verifies the performer as an authentic Tu (or Tibetan or Salar or ____). People become signs of themselves, or more accurately, they become signs of what the tourist audience believes them to be. The kind of sign, though, varies with how these beliefs influence the nature of the performance. Chapter four analyzed how three different performances created various levels of realness or authenticity and how these live performances of real culture by real Tu or Tibetans reinforced identity and prototypes of identity.

I turn now to what this study of identity among the Tongren Tu contributes to the field of anthropology. As I mentioned in my introduction and referenced throughout the paper, much has been written by Western scholars about the PRC’s ethnic categorization project. This project is criticized for cobbling together groups of different histories, languages, and cultures under the
guise of academic research in order to further the aims of the state. And yet, in a phoenix-like way, these groups have seized this opportunity to strengthen their own sense of identity. This description is obviously caricatured, but I do so to make a point. While I certainly have my own opinions of the 1950s ethnic identification project, I ultimately find it to be simply an institutionalized instance of what we as humans all do as we move through the world. *All* categories of human kinds are artificial. Labels are assigned in response to those cues that are thought critical. What we as anthropologists do when we write an ethnography of a group similarly (might I add artificially?) labels them. Furthermore, a group’s own categorization of human kinds (including itself) is not necessarily more natural.

What is more productive, I hope, is how this study has suggested the role of hegemony involved in definition, the power of categorization. Foucault showed how power is implicated in where the line is drawn between what is considered acceptable and what is considered legally dangerous (1977). Although people’s classifications are arbitrary, they are still powerful. Labels are associated with privileges and disadvantages. In Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, for example, many “goodies” are associated with being Tibetan. Tibetan has always been privileged as a sacred language. What has changed in recent years is its elevation as a lingua franca needed for all official transactions and used in the school system. A vibrant press and regional Amdo Tibetan television and radio stations strengthen the place of Tibetan. Speaking Tibetan grants one access to this imagined community, enabling one to partake in these privileges; to *be* Tibetan is yet better, legitimating one’s linguistic ability for matters like jobs. Tibetan culture is also privileged. Many NGOs work in Huangnan with specific aims to help impoverished Tibetan communities. While their mission is certainly admirable, their focus is to support the continuity of Tibetan culture and language and to strengthen individuals in
communities to meet their own needs. This development work translates into money being
brought into specifically Tibetan communities. Selling thangka is another arena influenced by
the label Tibetan. As painters in Nianduhu pointed out, people are eager to buy Tibetan thangka,
not Tu thangka. The category of Tibetan is also increasingly associated with prestige. Although
international news in China is officially censored, there is growing awareness in this remote river
valley of the importance of the Tibetan cause internationally. Between people making
pilgrimages to India and Nepal, students studying abroad in America, Western Buddhists
working in Qinghai, and the internet, Tibetans in Huangnan (and elsewhere in Qinghai)
increasingly know about and consider themselves part of the transnational, globalized
community of Tibetans. These are just some of the ways that the category of Tibetan has been
invested with power. For the Tongren Tu to extend the notion of maŋə (“This is us”) to include
not just chize (“the four villages”), but also woldə (“Tibetan”) is meaningful in terms of
symbolic capital. It is an effort to access the “goodies,” so to speak.

This is not to say that other scholars who have written about the ethnic classification
project do not realize the hegemony of definition. They do; they have described how this
peripheral category of minority nationalities has been variously pictured as sexualized women,
educable children, and primitive ancients. These descriptions all stand in contrast to the Han,
who make up the majority of the nation-state. In order to promote the fiction of unity, the ethnic
minorities inhabiting marginal borderlands became a backdrop against which the communists
reconstituted a fractured self; the portrayal of an internal other served to sharpen and make more
conscious a cohesive Han group. The objectification of minorities provides the state with
important symbolic capital in the homogenization of the majority. However, these scholars tend
to look only at the power differential between the Han and the minority nationalities conceived
as one cohesive category; this is the opposition. This study of the Tongren Tu explores the hegemony of definition within the boundaries of a category and between the categories. To put this in a slightly different way, other scholars assume a relationship between one center and its periphery. This overlooks the possibility of other centers. To focus solely on the Han-minority opposition overlooks how power is distributed throughout the entire system. Certain groups within a particular category may be privileged (and some work in ethnic tourism in China has shown how villages invested with official status as model minority villages get to take home the “goodies”). And like the situation in the Longwu river valley, certain labels may have more symbolic capital than others.

The situation of the Tongren Tu also adds a cautionary note to the conceptualization by scholars of the emergence of a united ethnic identity since the classification project of the 1950s. Many underline how linguistically varied and geographically separated the populations that make up today’s political categories of minority nationalities are. They also point to how these populations have surprisingly employed these labels as an assertion of unified ethnic identity. Gladney writes, “In each of these cases the label the state has assigned, no matter how ill-suited, has led to the crystallization and expression of identities within the designated group along pan-ethnic lines” (Gladney 1998:162). While there may be acknowledgement in local discourse about a continued sense of variation, most seem willing to go along with the classification provided by the state. There are, of course, some exceptions. There are some groups who continue to petition for reconsideration of their classification by the state; most notable are the Mosuo of Yunnan who are officially recognized as Naxi (Walsh 2001). This study of the Tongren Tu complicates the picture. On the one hand, it shows that, “there are important cognitive categories already in existence that have a ponderousness of their own” (Blum
The formation of ethnic identity does not take place in a vacuum. As Strauss and Quinn point out, “Some beliefs, values, and other cultural understandings that people have stay with them a long time, sometimes their whole lives” (1997:89). For the Tongren Tu, classification as Tu has not resulted in the expression of Tu identity across pan-ethnic lines, as has been shown to occur with other minority nationalities. The category of Tu, which was initially an empty token, has come to take on meaning. However, this meaning is foreign to those Tu living in the Longwu river valley. The notion of being a little different, but somehow still very much like the surrounding Tibetan population, remains most central to the imagination of the Tongren Tu. I have argued that this is demonstrated by looking at how the pronoun maŋə can be extended. This tie is imbued with a sense of naturalness, since it draws on those cues that individuals have been taught are most critical. Because they are perceptually alike, the assumption is made that they somehow share deeper similarities. The Tongren Tu show that when categories are reified, some amount of meaning must reside in that category in order for it to be adopted. On the other hand, the Tongren Tu are not lobbying for reclassification as a group despite their dissatisfaction with the label of Tu. Rather, they are quietly and individually ignoring and resisting the label of Tu and identifying with the label Tibetan. These individual changes seem to be allowable within the current political climate of Huangnan Autonomous Prefecture, and the result seems to be in effect achieving reclassification.

This study of the Tongren Tu is also meant to contribute to the field of cognitive anthropology. While the original agenda of pioneers in cognitive anthropology was to study culture as a cognitive phenomenon, the field slowly became conceived as a search for cognitive universals. Kinship systems, ethnobotany, and color—all aspects of cultural knowledge—were studied. However, the field was criticized in the 1970s for its assumption that culture consisted
of mental phenomena; Geertz most notably argued that cultural meaning is public. After this, cognitive anthropology became more and more a study of cognition from an anthropological perspective, with an interest primarily in mental processes such as reasoning, metaphor, and memory. At the same time, the broader currents of anthropological thinking stressed embodiment, practice, and action. These two agendas seemed divorced from one another. What I have attempted to do in this study is mediate between these two streams, to have one foot squarely on each side. This study of Tu identity is intended to show how prototypes are related to action. By wedding together prototype theory to Bourdieu’s conception of habitus which mediates between structure and agency, I have proposed a mechanism that allows for the interference, in a manner of speaking, of external forces on mental processes. This study has not just established what categories of ethnic identity are and how they are conceived, but also their relationship to outside influences. I show how these internal categories are lived, enacted, and breathed. These internal categories in turn play a role in transforming the external world. Thus, the influence between internal categories and the external world is reciprocal. An understanding of the political and historical context in which matters of identity are shaped is required. But the cognitive, cultural context also shapes the political and historical forces. These two streams cannot be divorced.
## Appendix One. Glossary of Chinese Terms

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<th>Translation</th>
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<td>中华民族园</td>
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<td>Zhoushang</td>
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Appendix Two: Stimulus Kit Photographs Referenced in Chapter Two.

Task One: Picture Four (photograph taken by author, March 11, 2005).
Task One: Picture Nine (Also Task Two: Picture u) (photograph from Bao Guangyuan 2001).
Task One: Picture Fifteen (photograph taken by author, September 9, 2005).
Task One: Picture Sixteen (photograph taken by author, April 11, 2006).
Task One: Picture Twenty-four (photograph taken by Rick Waggoner, June 14, 2004).
Task One:  Picture Twenty-five (Also Task Two:  Picture s) (photograph from Yang Zhanwang 2001).
Task One: Picture Thirty-three (photograph from back cover of Zhongguo tuzu 2004(23)).
Task One: Picture Forty-four (also Task Two: Picture c) (photograph taken by author, March 11, 2005).
Task One: Picture Forty-seven (picture from Renshi minzu 2004).
Task One: Picture Fifty-two (photograph taken by author, July 14, 2003).
Task Two: Picture a (photograph from Xin Yuanrong and Cai Weiguo 2004).
Task Two: Picture b (photograph from Schram 1954:122).
Task Two: Picture e (photograph taken by author, December 4, 2005).
Task Two:  Picture h (photograph from Schram 1954:123).
Task Two: Picture k (photograph taken by author, March 11, 2005).
Task Two: Picture o (photograph taken by author, March 11, 2005).
Task Two: Picture q (‘‘Wutu’’ tiaoguo cunxiang’’(‘Wutu’ dance through the village) from Ma Chengjun 2003:front matter).
Task Two: Picture t (photograph from Schram 1954:124).
Task Two: Picture ee (photograph taken by author, July 14, 2003).
Task Two: Picture rr (“Niandu hu tuzu liuyue hui—chakou qian” (The sixth lunar month festival among the Tu from Nianduhu—face piercing) from Ma Chengjun 2003: front matter).
Task Two: Picture uu (photograph taken by author, September 10, 2005).
Task Two: Picture ww (photograph from Yang Zhanwang 2001).
Task Two: Picture xx (photograph taken by author, December 4, 2005).
Task Two: Picture yy (photograph from Xin Yuanrong and Cao Weiguo 2004).
Task Two: Picture bbb (photograph taken by author, September 10, 2005).
Task Two: Picture eee (photograph taken by author, April 11, 2006).
Task Two: Picture ggg (photograph from Xin Yuanrong and Cao Weiguo 2004).
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