Ruling the Road: Transportation Mobilities
and the Struggle over Chinese Spaces

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation draws on a mixed methodology of archival work, textual analysis, and online ethnography to show how transportation mobilities become sites for the reproduction of wider social inequalities in Chinese society and, at the same time, for the enactment of citizenship and national identity. I delineate the regime of mobility embedded within China's transportation modernization project, a regime that advantages the mobility of particular segments of society, such as urban car drivers, yet constrains the mobility of other segments, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, and peasants. Additionally, travel and infrastructures of travel are shown to be important mediating factors in naturalizing the territorial control, cultural narratives, modernization ideology, and international position of the Chinese nation-state.

There has been a massive transformation in Chinese mobility in the past few decades. Once the exclusive privilege of Communist Party leaders, the automobile has become relatively democratized, with many Chinese now envisioning the good life as requiring a home and a car. Meanwhile, Chinese roads have also changed from a sea of bicycles to the domain of motorized vehicles, the mixed-use streets now featuring soaring expressways and grand tunnels. China now has the most miles of highways, the most extensive high-speed rail network, and consumes the second largest amount of gasoline in the world.

This dissertation explores how an authoritarian state, built on control of ideas and civil society, adapts to the relative freedom of movement enacted by these new modes of transportation. As I argue in this dissertation, decisions about mobility are decisions about immobility. Modernization has created favored forms of mobility, establishing spaces for middle-class adventure, ethnic commodification, artistic expression, migrant control, and tax assessment. The greater freedom of movement that the transportation network affords has forced the state to transform its approach to controlling populations and maintaining the safety of public spaces. I understand travel and transportation mobilities as key instruments in the constructivist process by which, through movement and production of space, national territories and narratives are forged.

In China, travel and transportation have played an integral role in relating circuits of power to geography. I see infrastructure and forms of transportation as contact sites between official state functioning and identity-formation, where territorialization and culturation meet more individualized projects of distinction and taste-making. I argue that if we want to understand political control, we must understand the cues, embodied practices, and emotional encounters associated with transportation.

Most broadly and metaphorically, what I argue is that our identities as political entities are partially determined by how we move. I shed light on how mobilities becomes instrumental to the very coherence of the nation-state itself. States are symbolic constructions that require constant cognitive and material affirmation, their "realness" and "naturalness" subject to open and covert contestation. The contingent processes of state-making and the perception of common-sensical, exclusive political units are tightly implicated in transportation and travel.

This dissertation traces the construction of political power through the material, kinetic, and symbolic dimensions of transportation mobilities—how the diverse circulations associated with modern mobilities re-define ways of being a part of the Chinese nation-state. Thus, a major theme of this work is that movement provides a steadying place in the world; mobility creates stable places, structured meanings used to establish public identifications. In this dissertation I address the following questions: How do practices of mobility contribute to the constitution of the nation-state? How are state infrastructures and circuits of movement (streets, highways, and traffic codes) symbolically incorporated into public identities, becoming means for defining self-worth and hierarchies of achievement? Relatedly, what forms of personhood and group identities are framed by different practices of movement? Finally, how does travel, domestic and international, build repertoires of citizenship, drawing boundaries of social privilege and exclusion?

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Introduction: Mobility and Political Ordering

Few countries are more concerned with mobilization—of its population, of its economy, of its culture, and of its urban space—than the People's Republic of China (PRC), which for the past forty years has courted improvement in transportation as partner in its epic quest for a renascence of the Chinese nation, a headlong race toward modernity and a place among the elite countries. With a massive system of national roadways, including 13 north-to-south trunk lines, and 15 east-to-west lines, and a total of over 140 million highway kilometers, China has completed the greatest road infrastructure project in history. Its train lines, given serene nicknames like Harmony, ascend the Himalayas and push through the Gobi Desert. In 2019, investment in inland transportation made up 5.5% of Gross Domestic Product—compared to 0.7% for other OECD countries (ITF 2021)—and is considered the spark that propels further economic growth. Many of these projects symbolize territorial ambition: the Beijing-Tibetan railway through the Himalayan permafrost, billed as the world's highest railway; the Zhuhai-Macao bridge, celebrated for its triangulation of two former colonies with the mainland; renovations to Beijing International Airport that will give it the largest terminal on the planet. The headlines swell with records: "10 new airports per year" (*The Economist*), "largest wind farm" (*New York Times*), "world's largest EV charging network" (*People's Daily*), "world's highest bridge" (BBC). The infrastructure proves to many foreign observers China's economic ambitions and its ability to get things done, regardless of cost.

Worldwide, China is providing highways in Thailand, airports in Ethiopia, railroads for metal extraction in South America, and satellite dishes for Chinese TV shows in Nairobi. The Belt and Road Initiative under President Xi Jinping (r. 2013-) has already invested hundreds of billions of dollars, mostly in energy and transport (Wang 2022), pulling much of Eurasia and Africa into a common economic orbit. As American and Japanese infrastructure projects lose out on contracts, China proceeds in setting up grand spaces for connectivity. But in its wake are many losers who find that the highways destroy housing, the airports bring epidemics, the railroads deliver produce that underprice local farmers, and the satellites send messages that conceal all of the above. Nonetheless, China's form of mobility—its ideals and structures—are likely to become influential abroad. Just as Western Europe after World War II invited American traffic engineers to help plan the street layouts of their cities, so will the landscapes of Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Africa bear the imprint of Chinese logics of spatial transformation.

Domestically, these logics of spatial transformation have gone hand-in-hand with social changes that have upended the very meaning of being Chinese. To transform itself into a modern, high-GDP economy, China has redefined the good life, creating preferred spaces and styles of living. The modern Chinese will be productive, secular, nationalistic but obedient to the Communist Party, urbanized, and driving a domestic automobile, preferably an electric. They will live in gated communities and travel into gated tourist areas and ticket-taking temples. They will find a platform to show their individual talents and serve the country but will always face the state and its laws as an individual, unmediated by their class, religion, ethnic heritage, or locality. They will dwell in a territory where every corner is sacred and equally integral to the Chinese nation, one navigable by road and rail, governed by common rules on right-of-way and accessible to capital, labor, tourists, and Party-approved ideas, and monitored 24-hour by security cameras. As a sign of their development, Chinese will frequent the Louvre, clutch Oxford diplomas, cut ribbons in Lusaka, exhibit Uyghur dances in the Middle East, and navigate

"rivers of iron," the railroads, in southeast Asia. The expectation is that the world take notice, recognizes and reveres. If not, then the punishment is denial of Chinese investment and removal of trade relations. The attitude is "we have arrived, so get used to it."

But with this mobility, with this platform, come limitations. With new meanings come new exclusions; new memberships bring new stigmas. According to Fotsch (2007), spatial designs are "a response to particular narrative constructions of the world, and their uneven or inconsistent implementation arises from struggles over these constructions" (192). Decisions about mobility are also decisions about immobility. Modernization processes have created favored forms of mobility, establishing spaces for middle-class adventure, ethnic commodification, artistic expression, labor regulation, migrant control, and tax assessment. Travel and transportation have played an integral role in relating circuits of power to geography. Thus, the Chinese modernization project envisions Uyghurs without Korans, Tibetans without the Dalai Lama, peasants without superstition—their severance pay not any form of direct political participation but a lift from poverty and a smiling face on the evening news.

This dissertation explores how an authoritarian state, built on control of ideas and civil society, adapts to the relative freedom of movement enacted by new modes of transportation. Long associated in the U.S. with independence and freedom from interference, the automobile and highway have been instrumental in extending and modulating state power in China. As transportation infrastructures have expanded throughout China, state institutions have set up traffic rules, big data policing, and propaganda that seek to assert social control and forge obedient, civilized bodies. In one region, Xinjiang, the Chinese government has built a total police state around new cybernetic and biological technologies that regulate movement for Islamic residents. In wealthy cities on the east coast, conversely, the street has become a site for fostering norms of cooperation and self-control through intense monitoring of crosswalks and streets spaces.

In other words, these shifts in travel have created new "constellations of mobility" (Cresswell 2010:17), specific practices and narratives of movement that have shaped constructions of identity and forms of state-making. What partially defines the Chinese dream and the good life are travel experiences and contacts with spaces of pleasure and otherness, spaces that stage national rejuvenation and project power, domestically and abroad. Thus, a major theme of this work is that movement provides a steadying place in the world; mobility creates stable places, structured meanings that are used to establish public identifications. Transportation is a medium that both structures society and provides a meaningful window into ongoing social change. In this dissertation, I will address the following questions: How do practices of mobility contribute to the constitution of the nation-state? How are state infrastructures and norms of movement (streets, highways, and traffic codes) symbolically incorporated into public identities, becoming means for defining self-worth and hierarchies of achievement? Relatedly, what forms of personhood and group identities are framed by different practices of movement? Finally, how does travel, domestic and international, build repertoires of citizenship, drawing boundaries of social privilege and exclusion?

In answering these questions, I set forth a few theoretical premises. First, travel is not a mere relay for more consequential forces. Nor is it strictly rational and utilitarian, lacking a psychological dimension (Möser 2003). As Hannam, Urry, and Shelley (2006) posit: "Travel has largely been for the social sciences a black box, a neutral set of technologies and processes predominantly permitting forms of economic, social and political life that are seen as explicable

in terms of other more casually powerful processes" (4). When sociologists look at travel and travel infrastructure, it is usually as a footnote to the pressing claims of class, race, or culture. For them the term "mobility" overwhelmingly implies social advancement, not movement (Sheller 2021).

This hesitancy to study travel sociologically is unfortunate given that travel and transportation have powerful impacts on many cornerstone topics in social science: on legality and criminality (Bloch 2020; Seo 2019), class formation (Heiman 2015; Zhang 2019), global inequality (Mau et al. 2015; Reyes 2013), and gender (Parkin 2017; Scharff 1991). Transportation is a key mediator in various social outcomes, including employment (Ong and Miller 2005), lifespan (Hoek et al. 2002), social capital (Appleyard 1980; Putnam 2000), healthcare access (Syed, Gerber, and Sharp 2013), epidemic spread (Li, Xiang, and He 2021), and economic growth (Pradhan and Bagchi 2013). When transportation factors are included in social science datasets, they are often found to be highly influential on social processes (Bailey et al. 2019; Chetty and Hendren 2015), sometimes exceeding commonly studied ones like income inequality and race. Thus, technologies of movement deserve further investigation as integral to social dynamics.

A second premise is that places are assemblages of technologies, cultures, and mobilities (Dovey 2010). Entities of "China" or "Tibet" or "Western," although often essentialized, are outcomes of construction processes and are subject to change and contestation. These struggles are actively shaped by mobility practices borne out of technological opportunities and constraints, which themselves become diacritics of cultural distinction. Moreover, travel and transportation scripts, because they are so publicly identifiable, serve as the basis for social facts and common sense. The context and language of public disputation is enrolled in debates over legitimate travel and passage. The central government of China, though authoritarian, has sought public comment on proposed rules in at least two unique domains: environmental laws and traffic laws. Discussion of traffic issues is a forum for public participation, and also structure how one feels about social change. When Chinese ethicists assess the overall moral status of Chinese people, they first think of a young girl run over and neglected on the streets of Foshan in Guangdong Province in 2011 (He 2015). When they need a metaphor for the gap between the haves and have-nots, they recall the statements of political invulnerability voiced by the son of a Party leader after his vehicle struck a pair of young females: "what need I fear, my dad is Li Gang?" If we think of the social imaginary, in the terms of Charles Taylor, as something that "enables, through making sense of, the practices of society" (2002:91), then we cannot omit our means of transit as windows and metaphors into how social worlds are delimited and evaluated.

Third, in accounting for the politics of mobility, I draw from Michael Mann's (2012) concept of infrastructural power. For Mann, "the power of the modern state principally concerns not 'state elites' exercising power over society but a tightening state-society relation, caging social relations over the national rather than the local-regional or transnational terrain, thus politicizing and geopoliticizing far more of social life than had earlier states" (61). The infrastructural power of the state is an indicator of the penetration of authority against the mobilizations of civil society. Activities get pulled into the orbit of the state vis-à-vis other collectives. Transportation, along with other physical media (electricity, telegraphs, etc.) have become indispensable in materializing territorial sovereignty and central control. This caging process does not confine itself to state elites but is a series of contingent practices that define individual and collective relationships with the nation-state. These practices can be formal or informal, effervescent or banal.

Through travel technologies, states govern through material things (Schwenkel 2018) that themselves become terrains for struggles over political power and construction of identifications. Historically, empires such as the Incas and Bourbon France developed extensive road building programs, a form of taxation that built up a centralized state and established a social structure of labor, but opened new arenas for local appropriation and resistance (Garrido 2016; Tocqueville 2011). No doubt, Chinese political leaders have used railways and roadways to link peripheral areas to central control, granting access for the military first and foremost, but also permitting more extensive commerce through trade and tourism. On Route 318 in Tibet, tourist caravans often make way for army convoys, and they must frequently make detours around armed roadblocks. The association of roadways and railways with modern ideas and modern ways of life means there are always civilizing overtones—each track is a step toward conversion and revising ultimate values. Nonetheless, inspired by work on infrastructure in anthropology (Anand 2018; Dalakoglou 2012; Larkin 2013), I want to accord this particular type of infrastructure more than material possibility, but treat it as generating cultural possibilities in aesthetizing and symbolizing state presence. As Harvey (2005) states for roads, they hold "together the imaginative and the concrete in a quite explicit way" (131). Infrastructures generate knowledge about the nation-state but also forestall alternative constructions of belongingness.

Finally, inequality and life chances are begotten through mobilities. We can see this in the very terminology we use to distinguish between different types of passage: the *mobile* versus the *migrant*, one who acts with global agency, the other who is driven by necessity—one for state agents to impress, the other for state agents to impede. One type of person, the one who uses a passport for travel, is cosmopolitan. Another with equal claim to movement is dodgy, a transient. Expatriates are friendly folk at coffeehouses, immigrants the kind of people who gather in hives and warrens. A Canadian backpacker is a drifter and nomad to Lonely Planet, an honest person searching for new vistas of experience, whereas actual nomads are pushed off their lands and settled into sedentary property regimes.

But beyond language, there is a form of mobility capital that translates access to space into social privileges. We can think of transportation technologies and cultures as establishing a regime of mobility, wherein a matrix of the legal apparatus, transportation experts, consumer organizations, media, lobbying groups, and planners organize around a hegemonic consensus of what is proper mobility and for whom. The result is that opportunities are apportioned in terms of capabilities in access to spaces, or mobility capital. Life chances are apportioned by the ability to access different global flows—to have access to velocities, resources, cultures, knowledges, and connections strewn across space—and to avoid the negative repercussions of an economy borne out of concentrated hydrocarbon use to navigate these spaces. Bauman (1998) has argued that mobility has climbed "to the rank of the uppermost among coveted values—and the freedom to move, perpetually a scarce and unequally distributed commodity, fast becomes the main stratifying factor of our late modern or postmodern time" (2). In many ways, China has cloned some of the aspects of an automobile-centric regime, yet it has also brought in alternative notions of ideal movement. Regardless, in the Chinese case mobility capital is unevenly distributed.

At the same time, regimes of mobility carry with them characteristic means of producing and reproducing inequality, discriminating against certain groups with a supporting ideology of legitimation (Davis 1993:245). Regimes of mobility produce differential forms of yielding. Different transportation systems produce different embodied performances, rituals, and interaction styles (Featherstone 2004). As can be seen from the Chinese case, there were entrenched hierarchies throughout the Maoist era that were constituted and sustained through

transportation and access to place. Many of these differences have continued, such as urban vs. rural mobility, but recent decades have given rise to a more fluid, class-based system of distinguishing proper and improper mobilities. Part of understanding the structure and operation of social mobilities in the world, especially in China, requires investigation of the problematics of transportation and different mobility regimes. Hence, it is important to view travel and transportation as constitutive social processes in both material and cultural forms, shaping how we define ourselves and what we perceive to be our political values.

The next section traces more carefully how scholars have unpacked the nation-state, giving us an opening to investigate it as a bundling of mobility practices. Before zeroing in on the China case, it is important to first review literature on the nation-state and literature on mobility. While these bodies of thought have traditionally had different points of emphases, they in fact have had congruent aims and converging paths of inquiry. Both are interested in debunking myths of solid, naturalized social forms and in tracing processes by which social architectures are constructed. Both are interested in looking at practices that, wrought over time and space, agglutinate into active, complex patterns that hold together and reshape collectivities. By drawing on the strength of both approaches, I can provide a theoretical scaffolding to link mobility to the nation-state, one that will ground the specific exploration of the contemporary Chinese case.

Problematizing the Nation-State: From Elite Projects to Everyday Nationhood

The nation-state has always been a bit of a conundrum to social theorists. Marxists have faced the intellectual labor of interpreting a passage in the Communist Manifesto that insinuates national submission to economic logics:

> *The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image* (Marx and Engels 2012:77–78).

Compounding this claim for the universality of capitalism was the simultaneous belief that revolutions upending bourgeoisie rule would unite a transnational working class. Out of the same railroads and telegraphs laid down for capitalist profit would spring the worldwide cries for socialist equality. Yet in general most of the great Communist movements of the twentieth century were entrenched in language of national sovereignty and independence—freedom from imperialist capitalism, yes, but not freedom toward a global socialist solidarity. It turned out that socialists were excellent wall-builders.

Dogmatic Marxism expected nations and nationalism to be dismounted by ascendant, ubiquitous capitalist systems. Nonetheless, some theorists were able to link capitalism to nationalism, but they had to take indirect routes. Himself a Marxist, Gellner traced nation-making to the educational requirements of an industrial economy; institutions of learning taught skills of production but also fostered cultural beliefs and groomed students in interaction norms for the competitive economy. A canon of high culture emerged that tendered a raw people and

dressed them in the components of an advanced, made-for-industry, nationalized population (Gellner 2008). Museums and art galleries, for example, became important national institutions of self-improvement.

Gellner's model was heavily criticized for its functionalism and actor-less treatment of history. Benedict Anderson (1996) judged his thesis as "nothing more (or less) than the necessary and thoroughly functional response to the Great Transformation from static agrarian society to the world of industry and mechanical communication" (10). Anderson himself found the germ of nationalism in print cultures, the creation of an elite, lettered group that responded to similar cultural rituals by imagining themselves as part of a "horizontal brotherhood." His was partially a cognitive theory, the indelible "community" having to be imagined through a perceptual process of groupness. His masterpiece, *Imagined Communities*, elegantly historicized the birth of nationalism among cultural elites but also considered how nation-building circulated as a flexible schematic. Seen from above, it appeared universal in its implementation, but seen from below, each form placed a claim on distinctiveness. And, in fact, different nationalisms pulled from a common toolkit their own mix of gadgetry in concocting common realities—be they language, arts, landscapes, religion, martyrs, indigenous peoples, flora and fauna, myths, cuisine, architecture, philosophies, and enemies. Anderson's take on nationalism stands as a watershed in laying down what are called constructivist stances to the nation, which assume that nations can be constituted into numerous forms based on different languages of group-ness (Mylonas and Tudor 2021), which themselves depend on different types of social interactions and contingent deployment of meanings (Goode and Stroup 2015). Stated differently, the nation does not exist as ready-made symbol and is thrust into a meta-category of action by constant, consistent application from various social forces.

If Marxists hesitated to recognize the nation-state, sociologists hesitated to reject the nation-state. The discipline was founded in part to solve problems of rising industrialization and the decline of traditional mores. This led to theorizing about the interruptions, necessary interruptions, of modernity. One of sociology's founders, Auguste Comte, held a belief in scientific progress that has yet to fade as professional doxa, categorizing societies into a progressive ranking system by their degree in eliminating superstition. Some of the early major theorists also believed in something like natural laws of transition: from mechanical to organic solidarity (from a moral order characterized by group honor to one of individual sacredness) in Emile Durkheim, from spontaneity and personality to techno-rational bureaucracy in Max Weber, from simple, monolithic systems of culture-society synthesis to overlapping systems of greater complexity in Talcott Parsons (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Even later theorists have found themselves decorating the tree of modernity with new ribbons of distinction, usually on the order of more complexity, individuality, choice, and rationality (e.g., Beck 1992; Giddens 1991).

Despite this preference for grand march theorizing, most of these theorists directed political responsibilities to their own battalion. Durkheim was very much interested in French solutions to French problems of anomie. So German-centric was Max Weber in his political orientation that he greeted guests in a Prussian military uniform in the late 1910s. Dedicated to solving problems of our times, "our" rarely extended outside of one's fellow citizens, and even more rarely incorporated problems of the so-regarded less civilized world. Furthermore, as the field professionalized, its ties with the state increased. Sociologists became technicians of social change, producing the statistics, datasets, narratives, and proposed solutions favored by national bureaucracies. The anthropologists could take the foreign, sociologists would take our own. As

universities deepened their dependency on state funding, their domain of inquiry came to reflect those of officialdom. While they could still uncover and introduce new social problems and lines of research, they became more hamstrung by income streams that reflected the visions of nation-bound stakeholders. Thus, universalistic, theoretical questions of the social—which could reasonably be expected to incorporate both historical investigations and geographic reach—were shrunk to the dimensions of the immediate national disciplinary context. Especially in the 1950s and 1960s, the sociology of the U.S. was made out to be everyone's sociology (Favell 2001); non-Americans were just off-beat replicas of the real thing or Americans-in-waiting. Nationalism was a sentiment associated with a different age, or in the case of the Western democracies, a temporary insurgency that reason would inevitably contain. Like religion, which was early on assigned by Comte a direct, ensured route to the mortuary by the movement of history, nationalism has been something other people do, which will be corrected when they become like us.

Obviously, this is ironic. While sociologists rarely profess sentimental loyalty to the nation openly, their practices affirm its very centrality and enact the chief feature of nationalism—that the preferred community of understanding and appeal to common responsibility extends only to the borders containing its own citizens. For many sociologists, including those from the Global South, their scientific conceptualizations have been calibrated and finely adjusted to the intellectual bandwidth of American practitioners. American sociologists may not idealize the nation explicitly, but their practices implicitly pledge allegiance to its privileged exclusivity as matter of concern and moral obligation, as the polestar of problematization.

What has often characterized approaches to the nation-state in other fields is "methodological nationalism," or a script that naturalizes the territorial integrity, distinctiveness, and incommensurability of nation-states. It is telling that the word referring to wide-ranging geography is "inter-national." Scholars have taken to task the word "global" as being too abstract and adulatory, but it is difficult to map the world without the codex provided by nation-state listings. Fields in which one would expect some friction with national idealism, like international relations and migration studies, have found themselves trapped by idioms of borders and national identities (Scheel and Tazzioli 2022; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Theoretical development of migration studies has long been plagued by the figuration of cross-national migrants as worthy of more scholarly concern than intra-national migrants—the former more acutely tapping into political debates (and funding sources). For the dominant realist school of international relations, the globe is composed of unitary nation-states, each competing in a Darwinian struggle for their own survival. What determines macro-political action is a game theoretic in which autonomous national agents try to optimize the wealth and security within their borders at the expense of other autonomous national agents (Legro and Moravcsik 2014; Sanders 1996). Non-national action is possible, but it warrants an asterisk.

But there have been breakaway movements in other fields that provide openings to unraveling the nation-state. In anthropology, a traditional ethos of analyzing closed, holistic cultural systems mirrored the philosophy of many nationalists—that peoples exist apart and as firmly grounded, culturally holistic entities. While not explicitly national in orientation, as much anthropology works with indigenous peoples who resist state encroachment, the reliance on metaphors of home and roots (Malkki 1992), and a presumption of a stable "field" site (Clifford 1997), have long clouded the critical lens by which anthropologists can unpack human groupings. However, due to severe critiques of imperialism and essentialism, especially during the 1990s, contemporary anthropologists have resisted evolutionary explanations of cultural

development and been more open to understanding the varied connections that go into composing a field site. Clifford lists many terms by which to reappraise ethnographic practice—travel, displacement, nomadism, pilgrimage, and migration—finally settling on travel as the most apt descriptor. Places are no longer just there for the ethnographer, they have to be made—and it is the foreign social scientist who often is the instigator of such notions as cultural boundedness and ownership (Picard 1997). Furthermore, it is not simply enough to see the state as vertically oriented but to understand it as a spatial entity composed of numerous disparate situations and practices (Alonso 1994; Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Anthropologists, while underrepresented in studies of the nation-state, have firmly moved to a what is called a constructivist stance, that is, eschewing the primordialism of the nation in favor of tracing its active, ongoing reproduction and maintenance.

Surmounting conventional assumptions of places and communities as grounded and fixed has been a long process in anthropology, but it dovetails with several developments in the field of geography. The gist of these shifts has been more of a focus on the active construction of social units through various instruments and practices. Like the anthropological reconsideration of the "field," scholars of geography and place have questioned the inherent "place-ness" of place. Each place, be it a city or nation-state, is shot through with different knowledges and spatial connections (Amin and Thrift 2002). It is incumbent on scholars to follow these "assemblages" (McFarlane 2011; Thrift 1996), or "orderings", and show their contingent configuration. While pledged to different schools of thought—postmodernism, actor-network theory, cultural studies, or mobilities studies—there is general agreement that circulations of texts, material things, bodies, technologies, and cultural practices create relationships that cannot be reduced to a combination of inherent properties (Anderson et al. 2012; Brenner 2000). As Murphy (2013) states, most political geography has shifted from "treating territories as a priori givens to focusing on how political-territorial structures, practices, and relationships come into being, what political-territorial arrangements mean or represent, and how they function in relation to other geographical processes and patterns" (23). Geographers have refuted the idea of an inherent nature of placehood and try to work it out as relational (Brenner 2000).

Although Benedict Anderson problematized the ethnic soul of nationalism and showed its creation among an educated elite, scholars from diverse fields have recently gone further to shift the nation away from the elite and political grandees toward everyday practices. In a pivotal book called *Banal Nationalism*, Billig (1995) recalibrated the study of nationalism away from "waved flags" to "unwaved flags", the subtle ways that people live and breathe the nation in non-emotive ways. Billig argued that nationalism in the United States was one of the more pervasive, all-embracing cases of nationalism because it was often unnoticed, reproduced unflinchingly. His work inspired a further change in thinking of the nation. Theorists working with the concept of banal nationalism consider the nation as commonsensical, performed, embodied—as a powerful, ingrained schema of action that persists most forcefully outside of full-throated pronouncements.

In lockstep were a pair of scholars pushing in a similar direction. Rogers Brubaker posed challenges to those who regarded nationalism as ethnicity with armies. Rather, in his work with Frederick Cooper, he urged consideration of nationality, ethnicity, and race not as 'categories of analysis' but as 'categories of practice' (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). The nation is an accomplishment, which shifts in both its meaning and salience depending on how it is performed, if it is performed at all. His ethnographic study of Transylvanian towns contended that nationhood does not attach to all social encounters and is in fact a situational idiom. Brubaker and his colleagues' modus operandi was to "examine ethnicity and nation-ness as they

are experienced and enacted—when they are experienced and enacted—in everyday life" (Brubaker et al. 2006:167). For his part, Ted Edensor, in *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (2002), rebuffed treatments of nationalism as elite invocation and dramatic tides of ebullition. Echoing Billig, he believed nationalism could persist just fine in the absence of militant mobilization or threat warnings. What sustained the national form and its coherence in people's sense of their identities were popular culture and mundane items. He would, for example, suggest that what comprised Indianness was partially the sounds and smells of traffic. People had a vast reservoir to tap into for their solidarities and could adapt their senses of the nation depending on their social connections and global experience.

We can call the works of Edensor and Billig exemplars of a quotidian tradition in the study of nationalism (Nieguth 2020). Follow-up empirical work has investigated the links between national identity and such things as food (DeSoucey 2010; Hiroko 2008; Ichijo and Ranta 2016), the arts (Adams 2010; Bechhofer et al. 1999; Kong 2007; Mason and Gainor 1999; Otmazgin and Suter 2016), primary schooling (Åkerblom and Harju 2021; Millei 2021; Zembylas 2022), and sports (Hargreaves 2000; Kusz 2019; Rowe 2003). In this approach, nationalism is regarded as intermittent and emergent (Merriman and Jones 2017), using methodologies that attempt to measure from the bottom-up.

Likewise, scholars of the state, began to launch studies less focused on state actors than on the processes that make the state itself real and an established entity. Starting with the maxim that states are fictions that must be continually updated in the minds of citizens (Migdal 2001; Strayer 2005), this research trajectory applies culturalist approaches to the state. It has tended to weigh the importance of cultural applications to politics and think through the building of consent through symbols and rituals (De Leon, Tuğal, and Desai 2015; Gramsci 1992; Steinmetz 1999). Like the nation, the state must be practiced. Hence, there are various symbolic battles for where the boundaries of the state's locus of control are, what set of activities pertain to official control and which pertain to private or civil entities.

As a last set of relevant scholarship, the proclivity to look away from top-down enforcement of political hegemony and generate society-centered research based in popular activities also applies to many scholars of geopolitics and international relations. This so-called practice turn has attempted to delineate the mindsets, texts, images, beliefs, ideologies, and intimate behaviors that shape interpretations of global phenomena and how the world works (Bueger and Gadinger 2018; Dittmer and Gray 2010; Dowler 2013; Sylvester 2015). Given a major boost by feminist scholars advocating for a treatment of foreign relations that moved beyond diplomats, functionaries, and international congresses (Enloe 2014), this position has attempted to demonstrate how people live geopolitical discourses and how popular culture mediates the production of the international field (Dittmer and Gray 2010).

In sum, recent turns in scholarship across numerous domains of inquiry have de-naturalized mythic entities like the nation and the state, recontextualized place away from a container to multiples of places, and redefined communities as communities of practice. There is now an expectation that social forms will be shown as constructions, as actively maintained and reproduced through various contingent mechanisms of everyday performance. For the most part, movement and mobility has been left out of these innovative examinations of how the nation-state is dynamically produced. A key uncovered questions is: how do performances of mobility contribute to constructing the nation-state? To answer this question, we must first understand the mobilities approach to social science.

Mobilities and Social Formations

I understand travel and transportation mobilities as key instruments in the constructivist process by which, through movement and production of space, national territories and narratives are forged. To make this point, I integrate the theoretical trends in understanding the construction of the nation-state with recent literature on mobilities, two literatures that have not previously been put into conversation. Literature on banal/everyday nationalism and culturalist approaches to statehood have considered many factors in determining and reproducing statehood but have for the most part neglected travel and mobilities. Since Karl Deutsch, media has been shown to be an integral factor in making self-aware political units, a point taken up by Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, However, transportation as media has rarely been so considered. Even though transportation is one of the original forms of communication, it has not been sufficiently treated as a type of media circuit and exchange of political information. To underpin the significance of transportation mobilities, I now turn to review promising scholarship on flows and movement.

Numerous authors have spoken of a recent "mobilities turn" in the social sciences (Cresswell 1997, 2006; Cunningham and Heyman 2004; Hannam et al. 2006; Sheller 2017; Sheller and Urry 2006, 2016; Urry 2000; Vannini et al. 2012). Like many theoretical developments, it begins with a trenchant critique. Its professed antimony is with sedentarist approaches to the social world that regard the most important units of analysis as bounded, fixed social units, which then determine the dynamics of individual action (Hannam et al. 2006; Recchi and Flipo 2019). In that regard, it has some affinity with constructivist stances toward the nation-state, which resist primordialism and investigate political order as an ongoing accomplishment. The mobilities paradigm considers many social units as outcomes of flows, the transposition of different material and nonmaterial items into semi-stable orderings, often labeled moorings (Hannam et al. 2006). Kindred spirits with the actor-network approach, which also considers social action as incorporating heterogeneous elements into new relations that don't necessarily form an essential being (Callon 1986; Latour 1992), mobilities researchers disavow inherent scaling of human action, and what scaling does happen tends to be a contingent process made out of intersecting clusters of practices. Emphasis is laid more on emergence than stability and the way that circulations of ideas and objects link up in unexpected ways that circumvent the domains laid out by traditional social science (Cohen and Cohen 2012).

Mobilities are considered one of the transformative forces of the contemporary world: "Social structures are no longer the a prior of social relations, but rather relations (re)shape social structures through the intensified mobility of actors" (Recchi and Flipo 2019:132). Deterred from the assumption of rigid boundaries between social elements, mobilities scholars favor metaphor for the social world like flows and networks (Urry 2000). They are also interested in the social meanings attributed to transport and how it incorporates itself into everyday life (Cidell 2012).

What is meant by mobilities? Urry (2007) laid out five types of mobilities for study: (1) corporeal, (2) movement of objects (3) imaginative travel, (4) virtual travel (using new media), and (5) communicative travel such as letters and texts. The interrelationships of these 5 types of mobilities figure prominently into analyses of complex systems and the patterning of moorings. By understanding their combinations and intensities, one can understand how systems of travel form immobile infrastructures and differential velocities (Sheller 2017). These forms of mobility are also used to problematize inequalities, calling to attention disparities in access to flows and favorable networkings, and how struggles are framed around these movements (Sheller and Urry

2006). What I draw most from is the understanding that societies are defined partly by their circulations (Jensen 2013). As an electron's cloud of traversal makes up atomic 'structure,' so does the crisscrossing nature of contemporary life form an architecture of flows that shapes possibilities of bonding and repulsion.

To study mobilities, it is also helpful to consider the 3 essential objects of investigation laid out by Cresswell's (2010): (1) **movement** (covering travel through space), (2) **representation** (its meaning among people), and (3) **practice** (experienced and embodied actions). When assessing how transportation systems shape outcomes, we must consider factors such as speed, why people move, how patterns align with each other, what frictions resist their movements, the symbolic forms and metaphors of motion, who controls access to mediums of movement, how agents traverse, who they traverse with, and how they react subjectively to their movements.

Part of the commitment to this approach is to treat things that appear essential (for which I include the nation-state) as a resultant of a series of practices and flows, showing how they are historically anchored in material infrastructures. In fact, the sheer volume and extensity of global flows in recent decades requires massive technological systems involving numerous materials, resources, norms, regulations, laws, techniques, habits, and ideas. For example, Urry (2004) argues that the automobile is a constant companion in everyday life, pulling people into different social orbits, shaping its own realm of time and space, organizing publics, and reworking the environment into a multiscalar constellation apparatus for energy creation and distribution. Such seemingly chaotic distributions systems as virtual media require massive server spaces and grounded electrical equipment (Molz and Paris 2015). The means of locomotion form "political machines", means of concentrating power (Barry 2001), which often disappear from public scrutiny once the network, and the many interests that uphold it, are stabilized (Callon 1986). In her investigation of infrastructure, Star (1999) quipped that we should study boring things like sewer lines and power systems; these offer a different perspective to show the reach, scale, distribution, and configuration of political systems.

However, mobilities research is still not well-developed outside of Western Europe. It has barely made a dent in North American social science and its studies of the Global South have for the most part been less in-depth than similar studies of Europe. This research orientation needs to be translated into new places, into new fields, into new type of mobilities, and among non-European populations. The current work takes mobilities research to a heretofore relatively neglected region—China.

What mobilities bring to the study of inequalities is worth considering. There is a refreshing attempt to understand the material context of life and place life within the energies and mechanical forces that shape access to spaces, a position it shares with actor-network theory. Unlike much social science, which ignores the practical means (the material objects) by which inequality really occurs, the goal is not to posit what "power" does, but explain where it comes from and how it operates in practice (Latour 2007). The cogito is not dictator over the world of body and sense. In the more macro-sense, the mobilities perspective considers how non-human objects and technological processes of resource extraction wend themselves into our thoughts and behaviors. Identities are not compact, bounded entities but stretched over vast spaces and in different trajectories via physical and virtual currents (Elliott and Urry 2010). To Cresswell (2010:20), the tourist, migrant worker, and airport worker all possess some mobility, but their geographic situations and relations to places embed and produce different matrices of mobilities.

In connecting physical mobility to collective sense-making, we must ask: what forms of personhood and self are constructed through different forms of movement? How does a

transportation regime shape our sociality, our mutual influences, and our understandings of intersubjective meanings? How do our feelings of class and being like-minded intersect with our apprehensions of our movements? Furthermore, when we consider memberships, it is important not just to show what we pledge to do, but what we pledge not to do, how we modify "consideration of alternative courses of action on the basis of the communal relations to which [we] belong" (Calhoun 1980:110). How do mobilities spur us to draw social, political, and moral boundaries?

Mobility and State Performance

Heretofore, I have pulled together scholarship on the nation as a constructed, practiced entity with scholarship on the importance of mobility for forging social structures and meanings. Because these literatures have generally remained on separate scholarly planes, I am going to try more directly to connect mobilities to the enaction of the nation-state.
It might be helpful here to define the nation-state as a concept. It has four main components:
1. It is coercive and relies on a monopoly of violence (Tilly 1985; Weber 1978).
2. It territorializes political authority, such that for every piece of territory there should ideally be a sovereign state to administer it (Brenner 2003).
3. It naturalizes a common peoplehood—with common history and destiny within its distinct territory and under its coercive authority (Smith 2010). In other words, it has a monopoly of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1994).
4. It is recognized by other nation-states and can act internationally within a diplomatic system of 'equals' (King and Galés 2012).

This definition draws from Weber's definition of the state, emphasizing that states require consent and recognition from their citizens and are identified with a defined territory. Additionally, it includes the ideal of the state-nation congruence, where political power is granted to a sovereign people with common cultural understandings (Gellner 2008). According to the principle of sovereignty that emerged after the Peace of Westphalia in Europe, each state, on its assigned territory, must be the final arbiter of collective action, especially violence, and should not be interfered with by outside powers (Krasner 1999). What distinguishes the nation-state model from previous historical organizations of political power is the appeal to a 'people,' the belief in contiguous borders, the disavowal of overlapping authorities, and the supposition of a duality of inside-outside.

Although managing violence is the inalienable duty of the nation-state, it might assume other duties, such as taxation, economic regulation, education, and welfare. Because nation-states usually profess to represent groups with special affinities and sentimental ties, they participate heavily in the cultural domain, winning over hearts and minds (Strayer 2005). These cultural techniques work on the area of defining the imagined community (the chosen ones) but also on the practical level of asserting the prerogatives of the state versus society (Migdal 2001; Mitchell 1991). Furthermore, this culture of state-making need not center around state elites; culture can be an independent variable in the enaction of the state as sovereign body governing exclusive territory (Xu and Gorski 2019). As will be shown, cultures of mobility are instrumental in highlighting perceived lines of ethnicity and thickening the grid of territorial control.

As active as processes of nationalism are, they are often precluded from overt criticism by their omni-presence. It is much easier to recognize and deplore others' nationalisms than one's own. Nationalism may be considered one of the most successful ideologies in history as it is

global in scope and comprehensively subsumes nearly all territory. The nation-state system "abhors a territorial vacuum; every space must be corralled behind official national boundaries" (Billig 1995:22). Simultaneously, it is possibly the most important predictor of a persons' social mobility and life chances, something typically unacknowledged. Although the traditional holy trinity of inequality research is race, class, and gender, a more important determinant for income is actually one's citizenship (Milanovic 2012).

Because of their seeming perduring, intransigent, and immutable nature, nation-states can be difficult to contextualize. Just as the most skeptical scholar of race works with the census categories, identification cards, tax forms, visual arts, and the common sense of a solidified idiom of differentially raced beings, so the scholar of nationalism rages against the shoreline only to retreat back into the same ocean with everyone else, again treating the nation as an ineffable category of analysis. Given this limitation, it is still necessary to attempt a break with views of the nation-state as inherently natural and rooted in logic; rather the goal is to show how it is rendered logical in practice. Borrowing from the quotidian tradition and insights from various disciplines outlined above, the aim is to demonstrate state construction outside of vertical imposition, coercive restraints, and formal ceremony. This process must begin, if possible, away the "Archimedean point" of state visualization (Gupta 1995), as if polities are fixed and can only be known from a high vantage point, and instead look at the situational knowledges and performances of the state that make it appear anchored, unitary, hierarchical, and coherent (Haraway 2020; Redfield 2002).

This requires less focus on the state actors and more on the practices, representations, and rituals that produce state effects. By state effects, I mean the cornerstone insight by Timothy Mitchell (1991) that states do not simply impose on society but are birthed through an ensemble of societal practices. A panoply of events and situations—spatial and temporal, practical and affective—subsume social interactions into a formal, recognizable locus of human agency designated as a state. There is still great value in studying state invention from the top down, on actual state processes like policing, taxation, war-making, legislation, and macroeconomic policies. But these must be complemented by an understanding of how communication and learning function from the bottom-up. Numerous habits and practices form instinctual webs of meaning, tight cages that synthesize various actions and actants into "state actors" and official idioms. Even if a nation-state is not truly primordial, it must still feel that way (Smith 1994), an inescapable reality and overarching institution that defuses alternative political visions. The perception of the state must also be accompanied by unearthing the ways it shapes thought and organizes interpretation of sensory experience (Brubaker 1996). I see infrastructure and forms of transportation as contact sites between official state functioning and identity-formation, where territorialization and culturation meet more individualized projects of distinction and taste-making.

Having shared bodily experiences is important for a sense of belonging (Durkheim 1995; Yarnal, Hutchinson, and Chow 2006) and the formation of cultural groups (Goffman 1963). As probably the largest meaningful group that many people will belong to (i.e., one they would die for), the nation consists of a vast series of repetitive bodily practices. These practices are applied unevenly, as some groups will affirm the nation more than others (Weber 1978). There are numerous examples of practice applied to nationhood in the academic literature. Mukerji (1997) traces ancient Roman-style theater performances in the gardens of Versailles to myth-making of the Bourbon court, placing the monarchs into a lineage of rightful imperial rule. Ariely (2014) delineates how participation in the Holocaust Day holiday influenced national identification

among Israelis. Using the Japanese tea ceremony, Surak (2011) demonstrates how states seize control of cultural rituals, expanding them beyond an insular cognoscenti. Finally, Paasi (2016) shows how political parties in Finland rally around independence celebrations, tapping into emotional attachments to the homeland. Still, most of these exemplify official nationalisms stirred by mostly elite organizations and so need to be complemented by popular nationalisms, which do not always accord with formally declared nationalisms (Eriksen 1993).

One absence from the studies of banal and everyday nationalism is a sophisticated appreciation of mobility. I argue that if we want to understand political control, we have to understand the cues, embodied practices, and emotional encounters associated with transportation. In thinking through political studies, analyzing transportation infrastructure can improve our understanding of how infrastructures, and state-building itself, have affective, representational, ritualistic, and symbolic mechanisms. It can also demonstrate how the nation as a culturally essentialized object becomes intertwined with the state authority over territory and security. Most broadly and metaphorically, what I argue is that our identities as political entities are partially determined by how we move. A contribution I hope to make is to shed light on how mobilities becomes instrumental to the very coherence of the nation-state itself. States are symbolic constructions that require constant cognitive and material affirmation, their "realness" and "naturalness" subject to open and covert contestation. The contingent processes of state-making and the perception of common-sensical, exclusive political units are implicated in transportation and travel.

For Anderson, nation-building occurred through the implied solidarity that accompanied the synchronous viewing of objects that invoked collective attitudes and one-ness of understanding. Positing that nationalism was not so much a product of political action as cultural visualization created by print media, museums, currency, and maps, Anderson showed how a solidified conception of "us" emerged through common rituals of reading and linguistic insinuations of belongingness. The means by which infrastructure and public rituals institutionalize these viewing habits are under-developed in his model, along with the ways that persons can perform nation-inflected activities through bodily engagement.

The expansion of the railroad and automobile opened new vistas for national visualization and have been instrumental in allowing affective ties to national iconography in more tangible ways. I argue that travel is a more embodied form of the ritualized newspaper and novel reading that Anderson held as cognitive mediators of national identity. Moving through symbol-laden spaces, diverse individuals enact, often on their own initiative, ceremonies of state-making. Mobilities, short-range and long-range, requires one to make sense out of landscapes, state infrastructure, and peoples with visceral learning and a full sensorium (de Souza Bispo 2016). With travel, the nation is performed and inserted into bodily disposition (Bourdieu 1990; Butler 2015; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Anderson's cognitive view of the nation rightfully emphasizes the importance of circulating media. In what follows, I emphasize the importance of circulating bodies.

Circling back to the definition of the nation-state, we must consider how mobilities build the nation-state as a territorially bounded, sovereign, exclusive, spatialized container for a particular people. Furthermore, we must look at how this people gain a sense of themselves—their past and future—through their experiences of movement in space. This includes a sense of normality and moral order that partitions groups by their relationships to these flows.

To better illustrate the connection of mobility to construction of the nation-state, we can investigate the linkages across 6 different domains of political formation. Mobility serves as a

form of people-making, territorialization, centralization, moral ordering, surveillance, and internationalization. I will treat each one in turn.

I. *Mobility as people-making*

Places are made by repeated spatial practices. From Heidegger's philosophy we know that routines of space allow for associations to be made, making of the senses a dwelling place for structured interactions (Glaeser 2000; Knox 2008). To belong to a large, heterogeneous body like the nation—and indeed to be willing to sacrifice one's life for it—requires numerous selective encounters and cognitive triggers. These cannot be limited to textual media, as Anderson argued, or by hortatory rhetoric by government bureaus, but need to be complemented by more complex processes involving bodily circulations and physical passages. In fact, Anderson was quite willing to consider travel as integral to pre-modern social formations, suggesting that pilgrimages were crucial interaction rituals for the religious solidarity of Christendom. Additionally, within his analysis of nationalism in colonial regimes of southeast Asia, what brought a sense of common Vietnamese-ishness, Indonesian-ishness, etc. were the circulatory routes of the indigenous colonial elites; their common life histories and passages to colonial capitals like Hanoi and Jakarta brought them into sympathetic alignment and soldered disparate territories into a figurative possibility. The import of transportation was never directly analyzed by Anderson but within his cognitive model there is a base for seeing solidarity effected through travel.

The value in studying transportation mobilities is that they highlight deep-seated historical and cultural scripts, offering affordances for meaningful social engagement. Some of these can be revolutionary. Simmel claimed that before the development of buses and trains in the nineteenth century, people had never been in a position of having to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another (cited in Pütz 2018). The problematics of regulating a society of strangers was hence interconnected with the issue of extensive movement through anonymous spaces. In a no less sweeping claim, Gorz (1973) stated that with automobility, for the first time in history, different social classes moved at relatively different paces, which meant that transportation became zero-sum—for some to move exponentially faster than others there would need to be a fundamental rearrangement of interactive spaces, so as to limit the agentic radius of others. Struggles over space have always occurred but current transportation institutions—the limited access highway, the airport—are truly secessionist and reserved for only certain person-types and their corresponding velocities. The freedom to move and seemingly boundless spatial possibilities require a massive political apparatus and the delimitation of user types.

Personal identifications and feelings of belongingness have depended, at least in part, on differential mobilities (Gogia 2006). For example, a feeling of home and homeliness is created by traveling. Mobilities contribute to forming the types of meanings and emotional attachments necessary to forge durable social networks, or to avoid bridging across social networks. In relation to the automobile, Katz believed driving was a form of "passing through society" (Katz 2001), a type of daily-affirmation ritual that assured one of social status and obligations. Through mobilities are enacted disciplining techniques that build expectations of specific, normalized forms of movement (Bonham 2006; Packer 2008). Not just the behavioral aspects but the sensory aspects of mobilities also invoke collective feelings. Spatial experiences, especially scenery and landscapes, are necessary for many forms of attachment (Jackson 1994), particularly

nationalism (Alonso 1994; Glaeser 2000). Successful narrations of the past require emblems carved into landscapes and architectures that bear witness to common origins and struggles (Boyarin 1994), that educate through the senses (Zubrzycki 2011). The built environment additionally cues an association between the aesthetics of different groups and their moral bearing as civilized or deviant (Ghertner 2015).

Nation-states have taken on varied materialities—assemblages of speech, bodies, buildings, signs, texts, sounds, and landscapes innovatively constructed to show a homogenous time-space progression. Travel circuits were integral to parceling experiences, on one end subsuming varieties of cultural production into an enduring national whole, and on the other demarcating incongruous elements, which have been derogated as extra-territorial (foreign) or extra-chronological (backward). Eugen Weber (1976) traces the importance of transportation connections in securing rural hearts and minds to the project of French nationalization, otherwise known as Parisification. Hom (2015), also concentrating on elite activities, finds the origin of an Italian national culture, romantic and scenic, in the eyes of visitors to the peninsula. The mediation of different transportation technologies has been instrumental in constructing visualizations of sacred lands. The railroad, and its grandiose chaining at Promontory the cross-continental route, stirred a sea-to-sea American imaginary. The motorcar and the southern highways of Brazil were incorporated into the technocratic vision of a modern, ordered countryside that hitched along the currents of history (Wolfe 2010).

Often inseparable from the construction of long-distance roads and railways is the ideological push for greater neighborliness and mutual understanding. Upon the completion of the M2 motorway in Pakistan, the Minister of Communications claimed it would both "speed up economic development" and "promote cultural integration within the country" [quoted in (Khan 2006)]. Chinese officials have explicitly equated transportation infrastructure with national security. The Chengdu-Lhasa railway, according to Xinhua, functions to "promote ethnic solidarity, safeguard national unity and consolidate the stability of the frontier, as well as bolstering Tibet's economic and social development" (Li 2018). Infrastructural accomplishments are thus wreathed in symbolic values that emphasize a broader, integrated population. While they may not actually improve interpersonal relationships, these touring links have propagandic values in envisioning the state as caged territorial entity.

The idea of what a public is also includes movements. Publics are not just meetings of minds, they are 'crossroads" (Sheller and Urry 2000); it is through flows of energy that social relations appear and are maintained (Mitchell 2013). Transportation is the oldest media, and is essential to creating the icons and symbols that govern shared use of space and territory (Sterne 2006). Looked at in a more objective sense, communicative ties are bundled with physical networks. Twitter ties can be predicted by the intensity of airport routes between the locations (Takhteyev, Gruzd, and Wellman 2012). Social capital is influenced by the type and length of one's daily commute between home and work. A study of Facebook found that what most predicted social groupings in New York City was not race, class, age, or ethnicity—it was what subway stop the person lived closest to (Bailey et al. 2019). Habermas, the chief scholar of the public sphere, believed that transportation could retract the free space for public contacts and communications necessary to form a public (Habermas 1991). Just as it brought people into contact, it could shield people from broader debates.

Mobility is a means for political socialization, intersubjectively learning common responses to spaces and places. Meanings of the nation-state, its journey from abstraction to a felt-concreteness, and its reproduction in everyday life through education, are tightly linked to

transportation mobilities. Since national identities are not innate, the creation and sustenance of common histories, practices, heroes, and landscapes are necessary to make the imagined community feel extensive over a defined territory (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000). Hence, mobile lifestyles are a form of political socialization, acquainting and deepening the bonds with the material culture and the narratives that posit a unique, inalienable homeland.

II. Mobility as territorialization

Imagined though they are, nation-states are also gated communities. With the institution of borders and passport regimes, the record-keeping that accompanies travel upholds the very nation-state apparatus—and in many cases, as with Soviet and Chinese passports, demarcates one's ethnic status within the national body. Mobilities flow into channels defined by borders and national institutions of territorial recognition (Favell 2001). One of the defining features of the nation-state is not just its monopoly on violence but its monopoly on legitimate movement, expropriating from other institutions the final authority over locomotion. The monopoly on legitimate movement allows nation-states great material and symbolic control over belongingness, engendering new systems of identifying bodies and tracking personal information across space (Torpey 1998). As Graham (2010) asserted, "states are becoming internationally organized systems geared toward trying to separate people in circulations deemed risky or malign from those deemed risk-free or worthy of protection" (89). Analyzing mobilities sheds light on how this sorting of circulations works in practice, as states angle themselves toward particular types of movements that protect their imagined territorial sovereignty and models of peoplehood. Mobilities act as technologies that tether people to territory and naturalize spatial privileges.

What distinguishes travel encounters from other means of triggering identifications is that spatial and territorial performances render both national units and state authority intelligible, coherent, and concrete—the physical encounters prompting collective representations of place and space that can be captured under existential political categories. As referenced earlier, Mann (2012) labels this constructivist process "caging", that is, how social relations become bounded into uniform territorial conceptions, usually privileging the state unit above other possible authorities. It is clear that such cagings can result from overt contacts between transportation mechanism and state paraphernalia such as borders, police, passports, traffic cameras, museums, highways, and monuments.

Nationalism is most effusive in spaces of contestation, and transportation infrastructures are especially influential in taming frontiers. Appadurai (1995) notes that the nation-state tries to create contiguous and homogeneous national spaces but that distinctions of the uncanny are also necessary for mobilization. These numinous spaces are authenticated through rituals (Werry 2011). For example, India's sovereign claims to Jammu and Kashmir depend on connecting the mountainous region by road and railway with New Delhi and promoting tourism into this enchanting, sublime region (Crowell 2018). Totems of a successful trip into Kashmir by the Indian middle class typically include photographs with Indian soldiers (Chhabra 2018). Railroads have always played a major role in Canadian statehood, especially in populating remote regions. The Department of Colonization and Agriculture cooperated with railroads to bring in immigrants and, in the early to mid-20th century, even explicitly released propaganda discouraging xenophobia (Cidell 2012). It was a publicist for the railroads who coined the term "Canadian Mosaic" for its ostensible hospitality toward diverse peoples (White 2017).

The linkage of peoples to territories is often an explicit state strategy. Featured in stamps and popular culture, the Malvinas Islands (also known as the Falkland Islands, contested between Argentina and Great Britain) have appeared on signage in various places across Argentina, from the public transportation of major cities of the north to Tierra del Fuego. Stein (2008) shows how the national intelligibility of the Israeli nation and its foreign relations after the Oslo Accords was significantly interpreted through the access of Jewish travelers to Palestinian spaces. In both cases, public and publicized mobilities are used as technologies of territorialization.

Nevertheless, national identification need not be so strategically manipulated; it can be an unintentional effect of material infrastructure and state pacification of space. Material things are not simply place holders for something else but are place makers, creating possibilities for shared experiences and collective feelings (Bartmanski and Woodward 2015). A simple provision of infrastructure can ignite calls for finding national selfhood. Domestic travel, particularly long-distance, end-to-end travel, is often framed as a quest for a collective identity. In the U.S., both the transcontinental railroad and sea-to-sea automotive routes, such as the Lincoln Highway, engaged travelers in a form of spatial detective-work (Shaffer 2001), where the scenery and customs provided clues to origins and destiny. One of the more famous cross-country trips, John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, assumes the true American experience is hidden and needs uncovering, that he "did not know [his] own country" and the solution lay in smelling "the grass and trees and sewage", to "try to discover this monster land." (Steinbeck 1980:3). Enhanced by numerous automobile advertisements, including the "See the USA in your Chevrolet" campaign of the 1950s, this sense of discovery of a "real" nation otherwise unavailable to daily life would supply motivations to various American travelers for decades. Similar motivations would appear in tours of Australian geography. The Aussie road trip culture of the twentieth century sought to recover the frontier mentality and masculinity, endeavoring to see the land as the pioneers saw it, namely, those White settlers who brushed off hardship to carve out spaces in the center of the continent (Kerr 2019). For the paragon Australian road trip, territorial completion meant a circle—circumnavigating the coast as one beltloop that encloses the interior.

Territorial performances may be even more potent when staged outside of national borders, as forms of victimization. Visitors to the coast of Chile from landlocked Bolivia scour the beaches for fragments of a lost Bolivian sovereignty, and fantasize counterfactuals of history:

> I imagined a glorious beach, the way everyone had told me it would be. But when I got there, the sand was much darker than I had expected." When it was Bolivian territory, surely the sand was much whiter, and only since turned its gray. "A Bolivian would take care of this place much better, if it were his territory (Murphy 2015:5).

In the case of Hungary, its former monarchical grandeur is resurrected, and its humiliation at the removal of formerly controlled lands in the Treaty of Trianon recalled, on visits to Romanian territories. Because these areas of Romania are often regarded as more authentically Magyar than spaces within Hungary itself, Hungarian politicians are often photographed in these sites (Feischmidt 2008). As another projection of historic visions onto foreign spaces, Turkey has greatly funded the rehabilitation of Ottoman sites in the Balkans, notably Kosovo, encouraging Turkish citizens to honor the imperial past but also trying to win over Kosovan elites (Hall and Brown 2017). From a nationalistic perspective, outbound travel might play a role in the politics of collective memory, particularly vis-a-vis maximal imperial control, and be incentivized by state and parastatal organizations.

III. *Mobility as centralization*

Techniques of governing may work through physical infrastructures. One way is through the extensivity of central-level control as mediated by transportation networks. The power of central authorities in African states is still related to the density of colonial roadways (Herbst 2000). While the Canadian constitution provides a measure of autonomy to First Nations, the central government retains final authority on road-building; through this state of exception both state power and contestation over land use occur (Rymhs 2018). The increasing federalization of aspects of American life, including standardized time zones and road designs, were solutions to problems involved in long-distance rail and automobility (Fein 2007). Some urban planners lament that uniform traffic codes have made it more difficult to build safer streets (Appleyard 1980; Kunstler 1993). Fearful of lawsuits and beholden to federal funds, few localities dare to go against national standards of roadbuilding (Bronin 2020), fixing urban spaces into forms defined from Washington, DC.

Domestic travel is a key node in linking micro- and macro-spaces, in tying territory to central control or engendering mental relationships among places. Social scientists have shown that in many monarchical systems, the regal tour was a means of connecting people to the royal body, a form of ritual that sacralized hierarchical ties to the throne (Bertelli 2001; Geertz 1980). In modern political systems of mass mobilization, spreading bodies across the landscape has a similar value, cognitively binding citizens to sacred spaces and palpably revealing geographic dimensions, a dispersed form of "caging" the state. Pretes (2003) likens tourists to lay archaeologists, dredging up the past and finding in their territorial experience specific ingredients to imagine the nation. Landscapes and the built environment become effective synecdoche, parts representing wholes and triggering schemas of a bounded cultural unit.

Whereas the conventional viewpoint nowadays is that roadways are responses to demand, many vast road networks, from the Autobahn in Germany to the Autostrada in Italy were built ahead of demand. In fact, when demand models were used, as they were in the Netherlands in the 1930s, they were used to oppose construction of roads (Seely 2007). Initial roadways rarely made consumer demand the deciding factor; rather the aims of imposing a modernity on the countryside, facilitating military access, enhancing emergency response, and improving administration of distant regions were decisive motivations. These are still preeminent discourses in the developing world.

The principal roadbuilders throughout history have been militaries. Behind the famed Appian Way were the logistics of supply between Capua and Rome during the first Samnite War (Berechman 2003). Modern techniques of civil engineering and the infrastructural state had their roots in the British army laying track in Scotland (Guldi 2012). When Dalakoglou (2012) spoke with Albanian military veterans, their memories were more of pick-axes than rifles. If not for its civil defense rationale, Eisenhower may not have approved the interstate highways; the final bill was entitled the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act. In China, the streets of Kashgar, Xinjiang, have been widened in recent years not to augment civilian traffic flow, but to allow the passage of tanks.

Through transportation, standardization and bureaucratic formalism penetrates space and yields a homogenous, regularized, and governable land mass. Williams and Smith (1983) artfully summarize this process through which "the historic territory is transformed by new cities, by a network of roads and railways, by dams and power stations, by making deserts bloom and tundra yield their riches, by multiplying factories and plants, by linking every corner to the political

center through a chain of communication media and every citizen through a uniform code of law and education system. It becomes a truly 'national' territory" (511).

IV. *Mobility as Surveillance and Discipline*

> "In making highways, for example, you don't enclose people but instead multiply the means of control. I am not saying that this is the highway's exclusive purpose, but that people can drive infinitely and 'freely' without being at all confined yet while still being perfectly controlled" (Deleuze 1998:18).

Early national highway systems were not just built for militarization, they were also built to engineer new people. The Italian Autostrada (1924-1926), for example, was built to technicize the landscape and the masses—a conveyor belt that took simple inputs and transformed them into complex beings ready for the modern world (Moraglio and O'Loughlin 2017). In the 1920s, German car tourists, and many officials in favor of national roadways, believed that part of the role of automobile touring was to foster better understandings of technology by the rural population, to alleviate their fears of the new and align them with current European thinking (Koshar 2004). The parkway movement in the United States, granting car owners access to parks and nature through such projects as the Long Island Parkway, rested on the assumption that such natural contact produced well-rounded democratic citizens (Zeller 2011).

Of course, it was always a presumed cultured class doing this civilizing. The mastermind behind the Long Island Parkway, Robert Moses, used low clearances to ensure the roads could not carry buses, effectively preventing working class and Black families from reaching the so-called democracy-inspiring public parks (Caro 1975). Mere exposure to the more modern, mobile class has been expected to raise the levels of others by a perceived cultural osmosis. Many government leaders in China have contended that tourism reverses the mindset of ethnic minorities, incorporating them into the modern world through cultural transformation (Oakes 1998). The former director of the China National Tourism Administration, Shao Qiwei, once posited that rural tourism not only creates markets and raises incomes, but also "benefits the raising of rural people's quality and countryside civilization" (quoted in Chio 2014, 94). These benefits included the spreading of new ideas, learning proper Mandarin and foreign languages, and becoming computer literate.

Because the contemporary metropolis requires dealing with strangers, we must constantly show evidence that we can be trusted. Perhaps the chief entrance into official records is through transportation usage. As mentioned earlier, the major forms of identification like the passport and driver's licenses—are linked to mobilities and can be likened to the 21st century's parish register. The driver's license in the U.S. and Canada are the principal means of proving identity. Driving without a license is the cause of one in ten incarcerations in France, an offense that is overwhelmingly used to arrest immigrants (Fassin 2017). Cities have used the technologies of monitoring movement for social control (Davis 2006). Police in Los Angeles admit to using jaywalking as a wedge offense that can be leveraged to investigate further the background of persons on the street (Brayne 2017). By requiring national ID's to purchase train tickets, Chinese cities are able to thwart the activities of protesters and potential petitioners in Beijing (Larson 2018).

Even tourists, supposedly escaping from quotidian strictures and inhibitions, use new media technologies to put themselves under the gaze of family and friends. By geocoding themselves,

they place their movements into datasets of tracking (Molz 2016). At the same time, securitization is densest where foreign eyeballs congregate. International tourist spaces are particularly apt to use panoptic surveillance measures such as closed-circuit television and big data policing to control movements (Minnaar 2007). State bordering practices have multiplied outside the immediate border context and penetrate into routines of employment and policing. Urban explorations pour information into databases, such that the right to the city is now locked in software code (Thrift and French 2002).

The rituals involved in transportation synchronize movements, engaging with social facts and disciplining our bodies. The affordances of physical infrastructure place our spatial acts within a standardized tempo and sequence of events. That we feel as part of one social unit owes much to recurrence of events and reflexive responses in a common environment (Jackson 1994). We move in shared spaces with shared rhythms (Edensor 2004). Our traffic codes, while seemingly about a sense of safety and rational planning, are discourses through which we embody feelings of solidarity and exclusion, where we produce hierarchies of legitimate, morally inflected movement. The diffuse powers that Foucault associates with contemporary life do not just repress bodies, they compel them to speak on topic and emit signs (Sassatelli 2012). Regularized movements proclaim our relationships to sources of power.

Frequently, to achieve the freedom and radical harmony insinuated by ideologies of connectedness has required obsequious trust in the engineer. Norman Geddes, the designer of Futurama, the exhibition of mesmerizing cities of highways during the 1939 World's Fair, asserted that autoways brought people together for harmonious ends:

> This freedom of movement, this opening up of what is congested, this discarding of what is obsolete all add up to one thing: interchange—interchange of people, places, ways of life, and therefore modes of thought. The American nation is not going to be able to solve the major problems facing it until its people of various classes and regions—the workers, the intellectuals, the farmers, business men—get to know each other better and to understand each other's problems (quoted in Fotsch 2007:87).

Geddes was a thorough technocrat, expecting the public to ride the rails set up by science-minded, independent experts. As Geddes admitted, "To achieve freedom, it must first be sacrificed" (quoted in Fotsch 2007:24). Or as a Dutch engineer advocated: "Keep politics away from road management!" (Seely 2007:22), meaning let the major decisions be made by technicians not the public. With the substance of everyday mobility transformed, a new human could be birthed. An early American automotive safety expert predicted that national and sectional differences would, with highways and better education, disappear; the driver of tomorrow "will be a far different creature from the driver of today; he will belong to a new race" (Packer 2008:6). The traveled society was the good society.

As another example, establishing the idea of traffic safety has required the establishment of "unsafe" groups that defy the principles of good mobility. Early automobile trainings in the United States and Australia used psychometrics to sort out normal drivers from those deemed to exhibit imbecility, inattention, bodily torpidity, psychological deficiency, and other forms of disability (Albert 1999; Bonham 2006). Packer (2008) has shown how regulation of driving in the U.S. has centered on managing so-called reckless populations, like motorcyclists, hitchhikers, and African Americans. Bringing in a Foucauldian lens, we can say that bodies in motion are caught in complexes of knowledge and power that define their normative position (Furness 2010). The relation of children to the street has changed from one of access and play to one of admonishment and discipline. Children's guides in both the U.S. and China establish asphalt as

the domain of automobiles, and the responsible child as one who looks both ways and yields to vehicles. This association of juveniles with avoidance of streets is far less prominent in Europe, where there are active sidewalk lobbies. In some car dominant spaces, walking itself is a subversive act (Martin 2002). In China, as we will see, many groups are problematized as upholding illegitimate mobilities—some of these stemming from state campaigns but others from the pushback of civil society.

V. Mobility as Inequalities and Differential Access to State Resources

Assuming the state is produced through objects that signify belongingness—street signage, gates, barricades, parking spaces, propaganda posters, cameras, architectures, and public squares—social participation is thus structured around travel and transportation. Implicitly, those writing about the importance of social infrastructure in the form of libraries, parks, and interactive spaces (Klinenberg 2018) seem to regard physical infrastructure as asocial or closed to symbolic exchange. But places of transit are imminently caught up in communication systems, often around dualities of order/disorder, moral/immoral, inside/outside, and progressive/regressive.

The translation of privileges of mobility into durable flows and hierarchies I call *mobile stratification*. Raymond Williams invented the concept of mobile privatization, which explored the paradox that a massive organizational apparatus and concentration of capital is required for a person to move and consume across vast distances, yet to the person driving a car or watching world events on a television, their actions seem a response to personal initiative and within individual domains of agency. There is a public goods leviathan enclosing these actions, yet they feel unbounded. As much as contemporary life stretched across the globe, the person experienced it through tight bubbles like the nuclear home and the automobile compartment. The person moved physically and virtually vast distances, but only in a pocketed capsule.

What I mean by mobile stratification has a similar duality of an individual sense of empowerment with an operationally constraining environment. In mobile stratification, the possibility of achievement seems fluid and self-directed but requires the active separation of different flows. A large concatenation of interests presents the connectivity of the world as a fait accompli, such that it is conceived as flat, a level playing field, an anyone-can-speak conversation. This technophilic truism propagates the self-serving ideology that the proliferation of contact sites between diverse peoples erases social boundaries and creates cosmopolitan, less chauvinist social relations. In the previous century, tycoons like Conrad Hilton regaled his audiences with platitudes of "Trade, Not Aid" and "Peace Through International Travel." In this century, there is a type of faith in internet connectivity that regards virtual spaces as populist and a triumph over the cultural marginalization associated with previous communication gatekeepers (Morozov 2013).

On the other end, borders are hardened and there are thick membranes of stratification. Predictions of a networked worldwide civil society, one where local geographies and borders receded in importance as new communities of mutualism developed (Cairncross 2001; Castells 2004), now appear quixotic. Moreover, much of the looseness and hybridity promised by postmodern theorists has been defeated by heightened attachment to primordial groups, particularly the nation (Luccarelli, Forlenza, and Colatrella 2020). As much as mobilities are felt as global exchange, these movements build exclusive national identities, naturalize systems of state coercive control of territory, accelerates the so-called civilizing process, and situates states

within global hierarchical processes. As much as infrastructure is used to establish the broad territoriality of the nation-state, it is also instrumental in separating people into spheres of proper activity (Graham and Marvin 2001). Thus, this mobile stratification creates divisions out of what is felt to be greater chains of intermixing.

For geographic mobility to happen, there must be corollary annexations of space. According to World Bank data, transportation is the second largest cause of development-induced displacement worldwide (the primary cause is construction of dams, canals, irrigation, and waterways) (Terminski 2015:37), so the very existence and character of communities depends on the presence of infrastructures of movement. In the U.S., urban transportation often accounts for between 30 to 60% of the city surface. More land is devoted to the use of automobiles than housing. Still, much depends on urban form. In Manhattan, about 45% of land is devoted to moving, servicing, and storing vehicles; in Los Angeles 60% (Martin 2002). In Western Europe, about 15-20% of the urban surface is dedicated to transportation (Rodrigue, Comtois, and Slack 2017). These land use patterns not only shape urban fabric; they also condition patterns of energy use and velocity. Pedestrians, who cannot as easily conquer expansive spaces of flow, are at heightened risk of being hit by a car. Living next to high-speed roadways, for instance, prevents social tie formation among neighbors (Mullan 2003; Tranter 2010). Meanwhile, having walkable neighborhoods or temporarily closing streets to automobile traffic promotes greater socializing (Kingham, Curl, and Banwell 2020; Leyden 2003). Given sprawling land use patterns, car ownership is one of the crucial factors determining if one is employed or not (Ong and Miller 2005), or whether a person is able to attend medical appointments (Silver, Blustein, and Weitzman 2012; Syed et al. 2013). Pedestrians rarely have the political mobilization and inbuilt alliances that the auto-oil-tire-bridge-and-asphalt industries maintain. Sidewalk lobbies hardly exist outside of parts of Western Europe (where they are quite powerful), so that most standards for laying surfaces revolve around what optimizes speed of automotive flow.

Financially, transportation systems stratify resources across social segments. A whole system of public supports and subsidies only accrued to those who choose the correct form of movement (Soron 2009). Aside from specific urban areas like Singapore, London, and Stockholm, there is a general principle that public transit (buses, trains, subways) will be funded by ticket sales while automobility will be subsidized out of general funds. While motorists are quick to claim they pay their own way in fuel taxes and tolls, this is not the case. Between 1921 and 1932, American governments spent $21 billion on streets and highways; only $5 billion was defrayed by motorists (Gutfreund 2004:29). A recent figure finds that about half of highway costs are drawn from general taxes and sales taxes (Dutzik, Weissman, and Baxandall 2015:1). When the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 charged the federal government with 90% of interstate highway funding, revenues were further directed to motorists and to rural states. Rather than pay-as-they-go, motorists have enjoyed an automotive welfare state. The many externalities of automobile use—pollution, congestion, injuries, noise—are not paid by those who create them, but by those who suffer from them. A study of California estimates that adding an additional motor vehicle imposes a yearly insurance cost of between $1,725–$3,239 to other drivers (Edlin and Karaca-Mandic 2006). Yet each mile of driving is subsidized at the federal level. As we shall see, China's roadbuilding is far less socialist than the United States.

In China, the intersecting paths on the roadways are emblematic and partly constitutive of social inequalities. Numerous automotive guides and safety manuals acknowledge that the automobile is a tool of social emulation (panbi 攀比), to which anyone seeking face must attain. One telling safety billboard in Shenzhen extolls the virtues of riding with a motorcycle helmet:

"wear motorcycle helmets so BMW drivers can't see you." On a Chinese dating show, a female contestant, when asked by a relatively impecunious male if she would ride with him on his bicycle, rebuffed him with the rules of the game: "I would rather sit crying in a BMW!" (Kong 2013).

Transportation spaces become terrain for enacting political power. In China, operating a Black Audi and Volkswagen Santana have become signals of holding political or military office. Coveted license plates such as 00001 signal municipal or provincial leadership, while plates filled with the lucky number "8" signal strong ability to pay. Immune from traffic laws and tolls, vehicles with official and military plates riddle the roads with illegal turns, illegal parking, and speeding. There is a baseline understanding among the populace that it is best to retain some fear of such vehicles and keep an appropriate distance.

We should thus think of regimes of mobility "in the same way as racism and sexism: they are discriminatory against large groups and they carry ideology to support such discrimination" (Davis 1993:245). Mobility is all too easy to promote as special interconnectedness and equal access, yet it is highly uneven and crystallizes stratified patterns of yielding.

VI. *Mobility as Internationalism*

As the nation is rescaled and brought into countless internal and external flows, there is a dialectic of territorialization and deterritorialization (Appadurai 1990; Brenner 2004). Even though much early theorizing on globalization prophesied the death of the nation-state, later assessments began to understand it as transforming the nation-state, redistributing it into new shapes and new modes of operation (Edensor 2004; Held et al. 1999). Shapiro (1996) argued, "Despite [the state's] increasingly active competitors for identity and affiliation, it continues to dominate the determination of how things are valued, actions are interpreted, and persons are assigned identities" (16). The nation-state may not be able to containerize economic transactions and information exchange (if it ever could) (Beck 2000), but it remains a highly effective arbiter of meanings. Individual and collective meanings are still "caged" under the schema of a relevant nation-state (Mann 2012; Weiss 2006). Transportation mobilities work as part of this geopolitical sense-making, instructing in the dogma that "the world is (and should be) divided into identifiable nations, that each person should belong to a nation, that an individual's nationality has some influence on how they think and behave and also leads to certain responsibilities and entitlements" (Skey 2011:5). Part of state authority is the ability to authenticate (Gillen 2014), to make meaningful and desirable the touring of the grounds that correspond to national identifications and singular political control. By ordering and organizing spaces, transportation systems are instrumental in parsing the world into categories of us-and-them, here-and-there (Gillen and Mostafanezhad 2019; Hannam 2013).

To cage social meanings and reaffirm its own existence, the nation-state operates in transnational and diasporic spaces (Collyer and King 2013). In examining the foreign actions of the nation-state, what matters is the type of state involved and the adaptations made by the state to extend its political and cultural reach (Gonzalez-Vicente 2011; Pieterse 2019). Modern statehood requires a 'legible people' (Scott 1998), something that can be applied in different spaces and among different flows. This legibility is assisted by physical mobility. Part of the logic of national, clarifying identification cards is the need to allow people to travel, to coordinate and legalize passages with other states (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). This has the side

effect of substantiating state-backed ethnic categories, which are often included in travel documents (Torpey and Caplan 2001).

The state in some cases is transformed into a semiotics factory, producing films and media posts for prospective visitors. Typically, this requires self-Orientalization around established generalizations, publicizing exotica and axes of distinction that accord value to their cultural essence or to recognizable subpopulations. The cultural work here is linked with international competition over sovereign authority. The opening of Tai Empire sites by Thailand and the UN recognition of Cambodia's claim to Preah Vihear are part of an interpretive contest of historic narratives in southeast Asia, each country employing tourist mobilities instrumentally as claims signifiers (Silverman 2011). Since World War II, Poland has solicited its museums to emphasize the autochthonous nature of Polish settlement that antedate and counter rival Germanic claims (Mazan 2011). Incoming tourists are often considered levers for soft power, captive audiences to be persuaded of the good-natured, peaceable, cultured aspects of the nation (Ooi 2016). What comes to define the essence of the nation is refracted through representations of international media carried by tourists and other mobile persons.

Transportation mobilities are also important to mark time and comparative development achievement. A person in the United States can insult the backwardness of a place as a "one-stoplight town." A visiting Chinese emigrant might decipher the pace of change by noting what is different with each return to Beijing; for example, there is a new ring road (Landreth 2018). For many observers in Europe and North America, what determines whether Saudi Arabia has advanced past the primitive is whether women have driver's licenses. By the same underlying logic, American soldiers believed they were in the Middle East to put women behind steering wheels (Clifford 1997). Occasionally, forms of mobility enter into discussions of global ideologies, with the lack of freedom to travel internationally being, to its enemies, one of the defining features of the Soviet Union, and the liberties of travel being one of the worthy characteristics of the free world (Endy 2004).

Travel is important for global recognition as a nation-state. States produce knowledge not only to educate their citizens but also for foreign consumption (Light 2007; White 2017). The performative element of tourism implies a need for some standardization and adoption of global norms. As circuits of global imagery and prestige, tourist movements are accorded special sensory and physical cradling (Edensor 2007). Beyond tourism, international recognition is essential to marketing cultural products and receiving aid. In an interesting counterfactual, Lisle (Lisle 2016:2) suggested that if Rwanda had been a major tourist destination, there would have been more international concern with its 1994 genocide. Recognition is important for both domestic legitimacy and positioning within the larger body of states.

Mobilities are intimately tied to state symbolism and prestige. During the Cold War, the policy of the United States was to graft American values onto other societies, dissuading them away from the allure of socialism. According to the developmental logics of modernization theory, as exemplified in Rostow's five stages of growth (Rostow 1990), societies passed from a traditional stage through successive stages until they reached the stage of high mass consumption. While Rostow believed high mass consumption meant purchases of many durable goods, probably no item signaled the zenith of development more than the automobile, which Rostow called out for its ability, when linked to suburban one-family housing, to accelerate economic takeoff and stimulate extensive productivity. Indeed, for much of the 1950s and 1960s, developmental stagnation meant poor roadways, congestion on urban streets, and a small automobile fleet (Mom 2020). But even aside from Rostow's American-centric understanding of

the good (capitalist) life, modernity as a trope has always been synonymous with movement and forwardness, making it somewhat shameful for a people to remain firmly in place.

In addition to automobility, a political regime might earn international legitimacy for its dams, interstates, and having trains run on time. As we shall see, China especially has a symbolic comparative advantage from its mobilization of material spaces. In an amusing think piece for the *New York Times*, Tom Friedman played with this myth, envisioning great economic gains for the United States if it could simply trade places with China for a day. Ignoring all the special interests that dominate federal politics, the U.S. could rapidly ascend in production of electric cars, wind and solar power, batteries, and green technologies—to be infrastructurally great (Friedman 2009). As totems of modernity, transportation spaces are arranged for global visibility, making them uneven and hierarchical. While numerous roads sit in various states of repair, the airport access road, the first inspection area for international travelers and businesses, often uses state-of-the-art engineering and manicured greenscapes.

Highway construction does not merely solve internal problems of accessibility, it is other-directed architecture (Jackson 1997), situated in a field of global competition for façades of progress. A key cross-country highway may be inaugurated with a Presidential gala, politicians launching themselves into outlying villages to welcome them into the mainstream (Harvey 2005). Foreign organizations might be invited to tour new networks. For example, British motorist organizations were given sponsored tours of the Autobahn in 1937—with journalists, planners, landscape architects, and MPs visiting Oktoberfest, Leipzig Opera House, Heidelberg Castle and the Olympic Stadium in Berlin (Merriman 2007). Yet while some praised the Autobahn, others believed its style could not, and should not, be mirrored in the English landscape; its gargantuan scale and centralized planning smacked of non-democratic workings.

Roadscapes are invested with national-level meanings, especially through the mirror of foreign travel:

> *...distinctive roadside fixtures consolidate a national sense of being in place, including grids, fire hydrants, street lighting, guttering, telegraph poles, pylons, telephone booths, postboxes and garages, barely noticed features except when they disappear or are notably absent in an unfamiliar, foreign motorscape* (Edensor 2004:108).

Infrastructure and modes of transportation have deeply expressive aims. To borrow from Glaeser's (2000) critique of Goffman, the stage is not the site of performance but the performance itself (71). Infrastructure can be used to cultivate the worth of a people and define the sacred. When journalists sought Pablo Neruda's impressions of Armenian churches and monasteries, he retorted: "The church I like best is the hydroelectric plant, the temple beside the lake" (quoted in (Hollander 1998:137). Nehru cheered dams like the Bhakra Nangal dam in Punjab as "the temples of modern India" (Gupta 2018). On the negative end, backward transportation must be shielded from view. The Shah of Iran, ever keen to bolster his European credentials, banned photographs of camels (Bellaigue 2017), which seemed an embarrassment to the Persian state (or at least its leader). Because infrastructure enters a dense terrain of social relationships, creating prestigious spaces stakes a claim on a modernized civility before an international audience.

Exploring China's Transportation Mobilities

Of the 6 key domains that link mobility to the nation-state, none can be neglected for contemporary China. Mobility, itself astronomically important for China's economic rise, has

remapped the configuration of political space and reshaped the cultural sphere, domestically and internationally.

To start, there has been a massive transformation in Chinese mobility in the past few decades. Once the exclusive privilege of Communist Party leaders, the automobile has become relatively democratized, with many Chinese people now regarding the private car as necessity. A nationwide network of railways has been representative of the technological catch-up that has occurred in only a few decades, with China's technical skill in building express trains now rivalling Japan for worldwide supremacy (Lampton 2020). Chinese roads have also changed from a sea of bicycles to the domain of motorized vehicles, the mixed-use streets now featuring soaring expressways and grand tunnels. In its building up, China produced more cement than the United States in the whole 20th century (Pieterse 2019:281). The domestic tourism market has been an immense driving force for the economy, and various provinces and cities compete to advertise attractions and find a market niche. Connectedness is a buzzword in the development of western China, ensuring roads and television hookups for all villages (cuncun tong dianshi 村村通电视). With the proliferation of airports, roads, and stations, the travel radius of the average Chinese person has grown extensively in the past 40 years. A Beijing atheist can reach Mount Wutai, a Buddhist holy site, with an 8-hour express train. Some of the world's great water sources—the Yangtze, Yellow, Irtysh, Mekong, and Brahmaputra have headwaters flanked by highways, seen through the windows of Buicks.

Chinese infrastructures have become spaces of practice, a means to perform territorialization, centralization, and a common peoplehood. The diverse palette of instruments and destinations that decorate one's profile are often credits to a mobile nation— material affordances that also serve as cultural affordances (DeNora 2000). In the Chinese case, like many countries, infrastructures have deep-seated symbolism. These objects have "horizons of affect and meaning" (Alexander 2003) that structure our experiences and interpretations. Take the way a roadscape can be elevated to the sublime. An article gushing over the Duku Highway in Xinjiang connects workmanship, hardship, and global prestige:

> *Lying across mountain ranges, crossing deep valleys, connecting the residences of many ethnic minorities, shortening the route in Xinjiang in half, [the Duku Highway is] a monument to China's historic road building. In order to build the road, tens of thousands of soldiers sacrificed and 168 of them lost their lives…Before the Duku Highway, there was only one way through north-south Xinjiang…*
> *Most of its route is above 2000 meters and crosses 5 rivers, with the world's only snow-proof promenade…*(Sohu Travel 2017).

In passing through Xinjiang, the representation of a national heroic spirit finds enduring visual form in the highway. Because of the landscape of physical hardship—the desert, climate, sparse population, and storied fragments of glimpses of soldiers and explorers, the horizon of meaning extends to one of collective sacrifice. In the same utterance, the highway designates engineering pride and global imprint, a spirited performance of nationality.

Domestically, transportation infrastructure in China has a perceived disciplining function. The scholar Wang Lixiong argued in 1988 that roads were implements of stability. Most Tibetans, he declared, live in the high plateaus away from the positive influence of roads, but with ground connectivity, the state could send in administrators and soldiers—in other words, Han Chinese (Dreyer 2003:424). These Han Chinese, an ethnic designation composing about 92% of the Chinese population, would be expected to culture and modernize the hinterlands and the ethnic minorities. The highways thus carry goods for this stabilizing class. The completion of

the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao bridge, exalted in a speech by President Xi Jinping, became the topic of one of China's top 5 viral videos in 2018. To borrow from Merriman and Jones (2017), infrastructures are a mediating influence that renders a consistency out of heterogeneous national space.

Yet mobile stratification creates spatial inequalities at various scales. At the regional scale, arteries as a metaphor for roadways is apt given that transportation routings influence what regions get investment, which towns get tourists, and which resources get tapped. Cities in western China often mobilize to get highways nearby, NIMBY without the "N." Yet for ethnic minorities, it is understood that roadways, while providing some opportunities, will likely bring in Han migrants and lead to cultural depletion (Eimer 2014). Traversal for some groups has been juxtaposed to strong interdictions for others. Passport rates have skyrocketed for urban Chinese but lag behind for those in rural regions and for ethnic minorities. In the cities, migrants have longer commutes than permanent residents, given that those with rural documents have difficulty securing housing and privileges of automobile use (Zhao and Howden-Chapman 2010).

For its part, international mobility evinces an ascendant modernity. If, to borrow from Bourdieu, tastes "forge the unconscious unity of a class" (Bourdieu 2000:77), taste in travel forms something equally powerful for the nation and its sense of itself. To be in motion signifies a wider span of action and intercourse. Official language entrusts mobility with overcoming parochialism. For instance, an historical documentary released in China celebrates the mind-opening nature of the automobile, saying that with its appearance, "humankind's field of vision widened, its thinking freer, and a new page of history was turned" (Zhou 2011). Through its mobility, China has hitched up with the great passage of development and is even leading the charge. Like so many economies, tourism has increased faster than GDP growth (and correspondingly decreased more drastically when GDP fell in the pandemic). Chinese tourists are seen as a cash cow by many global actors, such that the Chinese state has used their purchasing power as leverage in foreign negotiations.

If Chinese travelers abroad sometimes act as if they bought the place, well, in fact, they kind of believe they did buy the place. With so much media in China celebrating the mammoth investment and windfalls granted for economic development abroad, there is a supposition that the nation-state has earned its place on the global stage. In 2018, a crowd in Tehran airport disgruntled by flight delays were filmed chanting "China" in Mandarin (Feng 2018). Somewhere in this chant is the presumption that China had offered so much assistance to developing countries like Iran that they were entitled to a better level of treatment. Chinese migrants are in the advanced guard of advancing modernity and expect emulation from lesser developed regions, what Nyíri (2006b) calls the Yellow Man's Burden. To the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), these mobilities connote achievement of better standards of living. The strength of the Chinese travel industry and its ability to participate on the world stage signal a trajectory toward greatness. Benevolence abroad and comfort at home—these are lynchpins of national pride.

The culture of mobility in China creates a feeling of what society is—fast, cutthroat, perfidious, and transient. As a Chinese bus tourist in Switzerland tells a journalist when a car driver stops for pedestrians: "Drivers at home think, 'I can't pause. Otherwise I'll never get anywhere'" (Osnos 2011). Here the social imaginary approaches a Hobbesian world of brutish aggression, more wolf than human. My point here is that various cities and regions build their identities out of their institutions and practices of mobility, with specific structures of sentiment. Rarely do these ideal types of mobility exist in pure form, but the road traffic culture of China indexes larger cultural values and expectations.

Thus, this dissertation will explore the way political orderings, collective feelings, representations of otherness, social distance, and international prestige emerge through regimes of mobilities. In the study of China, all too often laws and policies which ordinary Chinese people neither appraise nor much care about—death penalties or slander laws—become the barometer of progressiveness for foreign observers. As in other societies, though, a crucial link between the state and society, laws and citizens, police and the policed, are transportation regimes. A migrant worker in Changsha will not contact the Human Rights Convention yet will demand a right to cross the street; a mother faces less intimidation from Party Disciplinary Committees than from Black Audis, oblivious to her will. What riles urban Chinese more than anti-prostitution laws is a lack of parking spaces. The transportation system is an important site of political awareness, a creator of publics.

Interpreting politics in China through its mobility, and the infrastructure that makes it possible, offers a different lens for understanding the making of "Chineseness" and nationalism. So much scholarship on China focuses on the institutions of repression, charging it with merely being a top-down police state. With more subtlety, some scholars have shown how state institutions maintain state stability through both hard measures in the legal and penal system (Bakken 2005; Lee 2007) and softer measures that involve strategies like censorship (Link and Qiang 2013; Roberts 2018) and co-opting civil society organizations (Teets 2013). National unity is fostered with firewalls, propaganda, spectacle, censoring boards, detainment, and denunciation of alien ways.

Yet few analyses stress the everyday contacts between mobile persons and government organs that occur through transportation, where governing bodies producing rules and norms of behavior cross with individuals seeking self-preservation and social status. The material affordances laid down by the state in the form of mobility architecture become cultural affordances, ways of articulating identities, reflecting on collective morality, and defining the boundaries of legitimate nationhood. At best, many of these previous works tap into the coercive nature of political authority and the prevalent operation of legal and regulative apparatuses within the Communist Party. Sometimes the central operating force for social action is in fact compulsion. Yet at worst, these perspectives treat Chinese people as pawns, brainwashed, dependent, benighted, and servile. Every expression must begin and end with an affirmation of the Party. Every passion project operates as a mental conjugal visit with Xi Jinping. While I by no means presume highways, airports, and hotels are apolitical, they nevertheless are places of fun and social recognition, they allow expression of values long associated with other societies. They are indeed socio-political, but they also feature as sites of creativity, leisure, exploration, self-fashioning, and resistance. China is still a Leninist system with extraordinary cultural control located in the Party apparatus, but the gaits of demotic action in the twenty-first century are not nearly as circumscribed as 1979. The choreographies produced from these more diverse movements look and sound different, revealing new rhythms and formations.

Investigating the connection of mobility practices to the Chinese nation-state allows us to better understand how politics are constructed, and how the nation-state as sovereign, territorial, exclusive, globally accepted entity is maintained in an authoritarian context. Yet mobilities and infrastructure also shed light on how everyday citizens co-produce and edit national stories and institutions, and how different flows are linked to sentimental attachments and personal biography. This dissertation traces the construction of political power through the material, kinetic, and symbolic dimensions of transportation mobilities—how the diverse circulations associated with modern mobilities re-define ways of being a part of the Chinese nation-state.

Overview of this Dissertation

The plan for this dissertation is as follows.

To lay out important background information, Chapter 1 succinctly traces the social history of transportation in China from the late-Qing Dynasty until the present day. In broad strokes, it depicts the differing conceptions of the Chinese nation from the imperial period, to the socialist one, and finally to the more market-oriented society of the Reform and Opening Period. To illustrate how a transportation system imposes a new regime of power/space and anticipate the fault lines of the contemporary Chinese case, I briefly review the expansion of transportation technologies and the importance of movement to political and cultural life. Over the course of the past century plus, mobility transitions have created new opportunity structures for both individuals and political organizations. Compared to the Maoist period, in the Reform period (post-1977), both the action radius of Chinese citizens and the potential scope of state power have multiplied. Understanding this transformation provides a foundation for interpreting how the growing individualism changes the potential practices and interaction rituals that constitute the nation.

The central foci of Section I are three well-known traffic crashes in China. I use these episodes as prisms through which to understand the social problems connected with mobility in contemporary China. Drawing on a mixed methodology of archival work, textual analysis, and online ethnography, I use these cases to show how transportation mobilities become sites for the reproduction of wider social inequalities in Chinese society and, at the same time, for the enactment of citizenship and national identity. I delineate the regime of mobility embedded within China's transportation modernization project, a regime that advantages the mobility of particular segments of society, such as urban car drivers, yet constrains the mobility of other segments, including Tibetans and peasants. Borrowing from the mobilities literature, I consider how differential forms of movement are important in defining both personal and group identities.

Why study traffic crashes as a sociological phenomenon? First, as a matter of public health, they are important in their own right. According to the World Health Organization (2020), road injuries are estimated to be the 7th leading cause of death worldwide and the primary cause of death between the ages of 15-29. They place at greatest risk "vulnerable road users"— pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcyclists—who make up over half the deaths. Furthermore, over 90% of the deaths occur in low- to –middle-income nations. China faces traffic congestion and its correlates—pollution, crashes, and noise—as major social issues that have involved sundry solutions. Our understandings of how political power and institutions work in the Chinese context are enlarged by looking at organized responses to a major problem like road safety.

Second as a data source for sociological analysis, they are highly ignored. They are often described as "accidents," as exceptions from general patterns, random and uncontrollable. But as I hope to show, they are highly patterned and governed by active, assertive narratives of power. Every traffic crash is a result of a concatenation of social decisions, shaped by culture, institutions, legal frameworks, economic motivations, urban planning, interpersonal psychology, and international power relations. The various components that compose our networks are often only revealed when things break down (Dant 2004; Star 1999), those moments when objects are allowed to speak, as Latour (2007) would say. An investigation of how different social segments and forces collide during a traffic crash will bring to light both the bonds and conflicts within the country. It shows how routine movements, practices, and representations are assembled into sociopolitical norms that define relations of power.

Third, as a means to bridge the lived experience of Chinese people with larger macro-level forces, there are many advantages to focusing on expressions of mobility. For example, according to a series of interviews conducted with 3,649 Chinese, the five biggest problems in the country were corruption, air pollution, water pollution, the gap between rich and poor, and crime (Wike and Parker 2015). There are many useful ways to study these issues, including anti-corruption campaigns, emission-control policies, environmental practice, housing segregation, labor laws, real estate deals, imprisonment rates, and arrests. But to those curious about legal reform and the emergence of an independent judiciary, to those fascinated by the market economy of winners and losers, and to those interested in the police state, automobile driving, and its attendant crashes, can serve as broad prism to illuminate such aspects of contemporary Chinese life. The tensions of the Jettas and BMWs, the scooters and the limos, the farmer and the tourist, the resident and the migrant, the cash-strapped police and the hapless motorist, the free-market consumer and the ardent nationalist—all of these can be brought together by studying mobility in contemporary China.

In this section, I explain and interpret the public narratives of traffic crashes, but also the hidden narratives, specifically how the arrangement of space creates boundaries of inside-outside, included and excluded. The goal of any sociological analysis should be to show the influence of social forces and currents of power on activities that appear rational, legitimate, or common-sensical. It should always work upstream. Thus, making transportation the primary subject of analysis, I hope to map this under-surveyed region of social life and demonstrate how it links up with the major themes of social science such as class, ethnicity, norms, discourses, and political beliefs.

By and large, I build off the approach exemplified by Klinenberg's (2003) method of "social autopsy", the study of a disaster event not for its immediate medical causes but its social causes. The traffic crash is treated as more than driver error, rather the sum of various choices and forces, mobilities and immobilities. Both the physical and symbolic infrastructure frame each of these traffic crashes. Though official sources provide much information to explore China's transformation system, there is a need to go beyond these explanations and situate each crash in its context—locally, nationally, and globally. By employing what Latour called a "sociology of associations" (Latour 2007), I attempt to uncover the hidden regime of mobility, that is, the varied social inequalities that intersected at each crash site. For a more thorough discussion of the methodology in Section I, see Appendix A.

Chapter 2 focuses on the centralization of the Chinese state and the making of people through infrastructural and spatial arrangements. It centers on a tourist bus crash in August 2014 and how the possibilities for the crash were socially produced. I build up from individual travel diaries in Tibet to show the formation of a leisure society, particularly the way cultural tourism constructs a dichotomy of primitive and modern, spiritual and profane. I illustrate the formation of state territorial power through the construction of highways like Route 318 and architectures that stress ethnic visibility. Here the state produces signage, bounded scenic areas, tourist plazas, and other infrastructure that provides means of economic development for Tibet but also arranges encounters of locals and tourists that generate ethnic meanings, and an ideal of the Tibetan picturesque. Tibetan roadside tourism is a way to create both desire for capitalist consumption and state stability through a particular configuration of imagined space.

Chapter 3 looks to the role of urban mobilities in producing class inequalities and differential treatment of street movement. It dissects the Yao Jiaxin case from 2010, where a music student in Xi'an struck a peasant riding a scooter with his sedan then proceeded to stab her when she

began recording his license plate number. Within the context of this traffic crash turned murder, I discuss the shifting meanings of peasants over the course of the past 50 years and how the Chinese regime of mobility discriminates against peasant mobility by means of strict documentary surveillance, police violence, and cultural resentment. I also lay out the various legal rationales that govern the adjudication of traffic crashes, and in this case homicide, and show how bottom-up public pressure during the legal process both stood for justice but also worked against it.

Chapter 4 posits a connection between surveillance of traffic and China's growing internationalism. It examines the Xiao Yueyue case, in which a young girl in Guangdong province was run over and eighteen persons passed by on the street without offering aid. I use this controversial case as a lens to investigate state efforts to create a modern, civic-minded Chinese subject through street discipline, in demanding that Chinese drivers give way to pedestrians at zebra-crossings, surrender emergency lanes to ambulances, and provide on-site rescue to victims of car crashes. Additionally, the street becomes a staging ground for performing China's international soft power, which requires the latest in technological surveillance, such as facial-scanning software, to enforce norms of civility. I find that street regulation is more than just a matter of protecting lives; through the state-sponsored project of creating civilized road users, it is increasingly an integral part of nation-building.

Section II of the dissertation focuses on nation-building through travel. It is an examination how geographic mobilities engage with territorial and cognitive categories of the nation-state, orienting citizens to government and shaping political consciousness. I illustrate the construction of middle-class sensibilities around both domestic and foreign travel, particularly how practices and rituals of mobility instill collective representations of both the national community and romanticized Others. Domestic travel in particular provides an embodied sense of geographic continuity, where maps, street markers, and landscapes form a symbolic sphere that naturalizes territorial scale, wholeness, and international boundaries. Similarly, outgoing travel is a means to expand Chinese soft power, deter foreign criticism, and sustain a developmental mentality that tasks China with a global civilizing mission.

Where the first section looked at collisions as a lens to understand social dynamics, this section looks more at expansion and the building of a national and global worldview. It explores how commonalities and norms are brought about by tourist mobilities and a national ordering is constructed out of spatial experiences. The three chapters in this section are built around analysis of 152 travelogues written by Chinese travelers from 2006-2020. These travel diaries help to connect various practices and performances of mobility with political sense-making. They chart a line between individual pleasure and political models of territory and solidarity set forth by embodied experiences of place. It should be noted that throughout the dissertation, to maintain anonymity, I cite the travelogues by referencing their main destination (if not implied in the text) and year of travel. The full list of travelogues can be found in Appendix B.

Chapter 5 explicitly engages with tourism as a technology of territorialization. It shows how domestic tourism in China naturalizes official histories and the territorial dimensions of the Chinese state. I challenge models of the nation as "imagined" (Anderson 2006), demonstrating how embodied experiences of national iconography more directly connect individuals to larger collective bodies. Media long studied by scholars of nationalism, such as currency and flags, do not remain abstract or stationary but are carried great distances and woven into the mobile experiences of the landscape. The inculcation of historic continuity, the content of tourist sites

and the routes of movement make heritage easy to consume as a series of scenes chained together in meaningful ways, a playful mimesis of national narratives of a continuous, unified Chinese civilization. In other words, tourist practices serve to naturalize and confirm existing knowledge and classifications about the nation-state, making abstract political conceptions into experiential realities.

Chapter 6 focuses more specifically on domestic tourism to Xinjiang, taking ethnic encounters as windows into how mobile stratification works through micro-practices. Government officials view tourism to Xinjiang as a source of both economic capital and social stability, presenting a normalcy that makes it attractive for investment. I look at how narrated tourist experiences of Xinjiang justify policing, how ethnic boundaries are reinforced by practices in both transportation and personal interaction, and how state policies influence Chinese travelers' views on the authenticity of their experience. In particular, I compare ethnic experiences in Xinjiang to those in Tibetan regions, to show differences in cultural exchange. Even though tourists express assurances of safety, interactions with Uyghurs are characterized by great apprehension, visions of violence, and distance. Tourists in Xinjiang, especially south Xinjiang, consider the local people to not look Chinese, to not be safe to ride with, and as prone to sudden bursts of violence. These affective responses struggle to draw an inclusionary circle around Uyghurs based on anything other than their residence in Chinese-designated territory.

Finally, looking at tourism as part of international relations and a formative element in Chinese identifications, Chapter 7 interrogates how travel experiences align with or dissent from official messaging. Analyzing outbound travel, particularly to developing economies in Asia and Africa. I trace how the contact that Chinese visitors have with Chinese investment and infrastructures serve a legitimizing function, naturalizing the expansion of Chinese developmental expertise and its dominant spatial formations. I find that extraterritorial experiences support the developmental temporalization that characterizes official discourses, along with support for China's role in accelerating this process. However, other discourses, like the language of suzhi (moral quality), do not match and even contradict developmental logics. Hence, while representations of globality take a strong cue from official binaries of modern-backward, some geopolitical tropes are sharply refuted, even positioning the tourist as independent fact-checkers who move beyond conventional understandings. In this way, foreign travel sets up an element of distinction based on transcending official rhetoric, not checking boxes but crossing out falsehoods.

I conclude by reviewing how everyday mobilities and encounters with material infrastructures have produced the Chinese nation-state. I suggest that technologies meant to facilitate movement and global access are ironically integral to managing and controlling populations. Whereas the cultural media accompanying transportation mobilities for much of the 20th century were the radio, the cinema, and television, for the 21st century, travel is tightly linked to social media, the internet, and mobile phones. Sold as promoting seamless social contact, these networked technologies allow unimpeded political contact, providing the beacons and data points that have allowed for far-reaching state control of movements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Once thought of as weakening authoritarian rule, the internet and its mobile tracking device are now cornerstones in the state's embrace of its citizens.

Chapter 1

A Social History of Transportation Mobilities in China

"Traveling is so exhausting and vexing; it's apt to show a person's true self. People who go through a long hard journey together without incurring each other's dislike can become good friends"—Qian Zhongshu, *Fortress Besieged* (2004:190)

As Qian Zhongshu states in his 1947 novel, you can learn a lot about a person from traveling with them. Yet you can also a lot about a people or region by its own patterns of travel and movement. Who is allowed to travel? Who is denied the opportunity to travel? To what places do they travel? Are their movements motivated by a desire for experience and social status or by necessity? Are these movements ephemeral or permanent? How do travelers interact with other persons during their trips? Do they form new communities through travel? Or do they instead draw new boundary lines between themselves and others? How do their vehicles of travel reveal underlying social dynamics? How are places created and sold as travel-worthy?

Tracing the social history of transportation and travel discloses some of the shifting values and opportunity structures of life in China. But it also gives insight into continuities in how spatial access demarcates social positioning. This chapter will trace in broad strokes Chinese physical mobility since the turn of the 20th century, starting with the Qing and Republican eras (up until 1949), then proceeding to Mao Zedong's time as leader (1949-1976), and finally outlining some of the important trends of the contemporary era (post-1977)

In writing any recent history of China, it becomes difficult to stay within the lines of fact and outside the lines of arresting dogma. For if the author makes too much of social change, and the figurative power of mobility, one has merely transcribed the successes of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) into new metaphorical terms, or at least established a linear plot without its usual loops and pullbacks. Yet if the author accedes to flatten any trajectory and show only symmetries—of emperors then and little emperors with wristwatches now, of women walking too little and now walking too much, of peasants besieged with new and self-same tactics—there is no need for any analysis at all. And often the mode of inquiry that passes as analysis of China has been much too timid to do anything but imagine the new boss is the same as the old, or what could be deemed progress, or gain, has nothing to recommend it other than its clever disguising of preexisting relations of power. Whatever occurs in economic or social domains, many observers seem to say, the politics stay the same. However, the politics cannot remain stationary with changing mobility patterns and an increasing action radius. Techniques of nation-state making must ipso facto adjust and produce new social relations stemming from heightened mobility and a different social imaginary. Thus, when a young Chinese woman takes her grandparents to Brazil, or when students from Changsha clutch British diplomas, when the oceans and skies, deserts and oases, skyscrapers and subways, are available to rice farmers of Yunnan, nationalism must interact with this ambition and movement capability if it is to remain relevant. The historical bend from 1968 to 2008 is too sharp to assume political lineages stay intact; how the nation-state in practiced and how space interacts with belongingness have changed. Even asserting the importance of mobility for social control, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the object of this control is not so narrowly isolated anymore, nor as concerned with

basic needs. Techniques of control must work more through desire and identifications, the rumblings of the mind more than the belly.

Late-Qing and Republican Era Mobilities

To provide a brief overview of transportation mobilities, we can begin with the late imperial period, when China was transitioning from rule by Manchus based on Confucian worldviews to one marked by new political technologies and ideas. Around 1900, the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) had been struggling to adapt to challenges of Western colonization, internal rebellion, surging nationalism, changes in warfare, and the rise of Japanese power. The Qing's dominance of China was in part a product of their own mobility and cultural adjustment to the diverse regions they occupied. Their ruling style was centered on placing each political bloc within delimited spheres of action, granting rights and responsibilities to key ethnic groups based on a strict hierarchical pattern. They had mastered the art of moving people around, sorting loyalists and rebels, skilled and unskilled, Manchu from non-Manchu. They were accomplished deporters, executioners, and settlers (Perdue 2005:333). They created a highly stratified ethnic society, dispersing privileges and social participation according to cultural allianceship with the Manchu.

Most of the Manchu's martial power stemmed from dominance on horseback without the aid of steam power. One of the more powerful ministries was the Ministry of Imperial Stables. Horseback riding was not only used for trade and warfare but was critical to many political rituals such as archery contests, hunts, and imperial tours of the realm (Aricanli 2018). Integral to maintaining the "Manchu Way", and its supremacy at court, was a series of ethnicized practices, supposedly rooted in an idealized nomadic steppe lifestyle, that set them apart as natural rulers (Elliott 2001; Sen 2002). Nonetheless, by the late Qing era, Manchu rulers had come to realize that their legitimacy depended partially on mastering a new canon, one associated with the many foreign powers and their technologies of modernization (Barish 2022).

The collapse of the Qing intensified already simmering nationalist discourses. For so many of the influential literati of the late Qing and Nationalist Period, the nation had become a collective historical subject who would do something great in the future. In successive translations numerous heralds of a global contest had arrived from abroad. The philosopher Herbert Spencer brought the struggle of the fittest to high politics; his *The Study of Sociology* was translated into Chinese by Yan Fu in 1903. To Spencer, humankind was like animals in an evolutionary race. They were subject to iron laws of change, specifically laws that demanded constant improvements to further social change and produce fitness in the competition for survival. Thomas Huxley, a rival of Spencer, was another central figure whose exposition of Darwinian struggle fostered anxieties about being left behind. Huxley, however, offered more hope that kindred affections and ethics could exempt humankind from the misery and neglect that accompanied biological evolution (Xu 2012). Portions of *The Communist Manifesto* were published in Chinese in 1906 (Keay 2009) and a full translation was printed in Shanghai in 1920, adding more momentum to the belief that the old order must soon give way. Through such currents of thought, a language characterizing stasis, backwardness, and historical movement emerged in Chinese. Intellectuals had to scrabble with new terminology like "feudalism", "superstition", and "revolution" (Duara 1996:5). For political elites and thinkers, transitioning society along an upward trajectory became a bare necessity.

Worldwide, during the first decades of the 20th century, a paradigmatic metaphor of the nation was of an organic body. Ideally, all the parts would function together, and any cures

would be administered by the intelligentsia, who had the theoretical tools to envision the optimal social forms. For many thinkers across the world at the time, the head of the national body, often a dynastic leader, was either just one part among many, or the root of the corruption of the whole flesh. The state and the ruling class were no longer seen as synonymous. Theoretically, the idea of the nation made everyone in the territory important, and the government was supposed to represent all of them (Popescu 2011). To extend the bodily metaphor further, there was deep-seated concern with the cellular level, that the masses had some form of stake and participation in the health of the organism. Imagineers of the nation like the Darwinian Qasim Amin (1863-1908) of Egypt believed that women, as half the population, should not be scanted a role in contributing to progress. Others, like Lenin, visualized a frustrated working class ready to take arms and rally against enemies.

Empires like the Ottomans and the Qing had granted minorities separate legal status, but the modern nation-state required all-embracing codes, leading to controversies of incorporation of diverse peoples. Many Chinese nationalists embraced racialized understandings of popular sovereignty, believing that Manchu rule was a fundamental perversion of China's imperial legacy. They expected a more homogeneous national body, with dominance by Han Chinese.

Amidst this growing nationalism, the education system became a tool for instilling national pride, providing standardized narratives, and training for bureaucratic careers. Figures like Mazzini in Italy and Gandhi in India hoped to awaken somnolent masses and provide them with an impetus toward common duties. There was a continuum of how much freedom was envisioned with this education, with many calling for individual initiative and creativity as the wellspring of national rejuvenation and others calling for disciplinary alignment with well-supervised projects of collective action. For China, the solution was usually closer to the latter. Yet the problem of finding the right form of collectivity and its degree of participation has hovered over Chinese history for the last hundred years.

Regimenting Chinese society was a constant ambition of intellectuals and political leaders during the Republican Period (1912-1949). Inspired by Japan's rapid transition to economic and military power, scholars such as Liang Qichao and Lin Yutang reproved the national character for being too heterogeneous, too individualistic. An essay by Lin (1934) begins bluntly: "The Chinese are a nation of individualists. They are family-minded and not social-minded, and the family mind is only a form of magnified selfishness" (717). Criticizing Confucius, who never specified ideal relationships between strangers, he laments that Chinese people have just discovered ideas like civic consciousness and practices like team sports. Indeed, Lin would have some grounds for his assessment, as many of the terms associated with sociology and social engineering were imports from Japanese, including "culture (wenhua 文化)," "civilization (wenming 文明)," and "system (zhidu 制度)." Shaping an autonomous national character was fundamental to the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Responding to the humiliation of the Japanese annexation of Qingdao after the First World War, it sought to find a concoction of science, democracy, and nationalism to wrest China from imperialism. Not much united these intellectuals ideologically, but they shared the concept of a coherent nation that must radically improve its culture and social system to compete in the Darwinian game (Wu 2008).

For some, this amelioration would begin with public goods such as streets. Arriving in the late Qing Dynasty, missionaries and early anthropologists were startled by the condition of Chinese roadways, which for them bore no marks of order or consistent application of collective will. Roadway repair was completely neglected, the idea that a road could belong to the "public" was alien, every commons subject to tragedy. Farmers felt that roads intruded on their lands, so

they neglected them and even built ditches to deter traffic; they lacked the concept of "right of way" (Smith 2012[1894]). Skipping ahead in time a little, Kulp described in the 1920s the poor condition of the roadways of the city of Chaochao, with shopkeepers encroaching upon it by installing posts to block the sunlight, with people seeming to prefer the coolness rather than clear passage. The main road used a pattern imported from Shanghai, in turn imported from the West, which drained from the center (Chinese roads traditionally being crowned). Yet, according to Kulp, it was too wide for the uses put to it (Kulp 1925).

At the same time, Chinese intellectuals also saw their streets as chaotic and inefficient. Mai Menghua (1874-1915), in his critique of the impotence of the Chinese government, praised the effective operation of the body politic in Western nations. In the West, the state enforced education, kept records of property transactions and births/deaths, printed one currency, passed building codes, operated a national postal system, and punished those who violated common property. He lavished particular praise on the regulation of traffic:

> *In western countries, roads and highways must be broad and spacious, neat and clean. There are legal penalties for discarding trash [on the roads]. Broad roads in Chinese cities are swamped in urine and litter, filled with beggars and corpses, and the state is unable to clean them up* (quoted in Ebrey 2005:229).

Fulfilling Mai's dream of reconstituting the streetscapes into a coherent, non-stigmatized one-ness is an issue that has long garnered political attention. The road could not remain parochial (or feudal some would say); it had to be accepted by all as a common good, governed by codes that applied to everyone's personal behavior. Mai's vision would find echoes in both Chiang Kai Shek's New Life Movement (1934), which targeted spitting and littering among other discourtesies, and Beijing's instructional campaign prior to the 2008 Olympics, which sought to curtail jaywalking, spitting, and cutting in line for the arrival of foreign visitors (Ford 2014).

Political leaders had also come to view the Chinese people as clay to be shaped. Individualism was tolerated as a means to stimulate individual creativity and productivity, but too much of it militated against the perceived needs of the nation (Scwartz 1964). The Nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen (in power from 1919-1925), in a famous metaphor still applied by reformers today, called the Chinese people "a sheet of loose sand", unable to form continuous bonds. His solution was to prioritize the collective, his political philosophy summed up in the line: "The individual should not have too much liberty, but the nation should have complete liberty." Under the Nationalists (also known as the Guomindang Party), Sun and Chiang Kai-shek (himself in power from 1925-1949) would seek to tame this complete liberty with periodic calls for better hygiene and habits. The rampant individualist spit too much, chewed too loudly, cut in line, and was rude. A new nation must act like one. With the trimming of vice and application of the right virtues, the nation would be productive and able to defend itself. However, the efforts by this "pedagogical state" (Fitzgerald 1996) to instill new customs were hampered by a general lack of enforcement power under the Nationalists, in addition to a Japanese invasion. The Communists would subsequently build a political education system with more permeation to the local level.

Transportation connections had slowly increased prior to 1949, making a territorial body somewhat more apparent. Steamships greatly reduced the travel time between port cities along rivers, allowing some exploration of the interior. Nevertheless, routes were often not what we could consider direct connections across sovereign territory. For example, to get from Shanghai to Kunming in the southwest, the typical route was to take a steamship to British-ruled Hong

Kong, continue from there to Haiphong in French colonial territory, and then ride a French railway to Kunming (Mo and Zuelow 2021:9).

In 1876, the first railway, of 14.5 kilometers, was opened from Shanghai to Wusong. In 1902, China imported its first automobile. In 1913, the Chang-Tan Military Highway in Hunan was constructed, the first paved highway in the mainland. By 1936, there were 95,000 kilometers of paved highways. However, much of this was destroyed or left to deteriorate during the war years beginning in the late 1930s. Even so most of the early twentieth century was a time of division, of clashing warlords and save-your-skin attitudes. For the most part, major transportation links were limited to economically productive regions and probably served to connect China to worldwide markets rather than to other locations within China itself. The state had yet to consolidate a monopoly of violence over its territory, and most technological development was limited to a few Eastern cities. Shanghai itself possessed electric trams, luxury automobiles, railway connections, and skilled transportation engineering, but it was an outlier. The two decades beginning in 1931 were mainly one of military campaiging for one political head or another. Little was accomplished in the way of sanctifying a national territory or forming coherent peoples with these technologies.

The Maoist Years (1949-1976)

After decades of nearly continuous civil war and war with Japan, when the Communists took power under Mao in 1949, they borrowed many of the ideas of mobility from the Soviet Union, from whom they received massive technical and logistics support during their campaign against Chiang Kai-shek. As the Nationalists, businesspeople, missionaries, and journalists fled the country, the Chinese Communist Party began planning an economy modeled on Stalin's USSR. This vision entailed what the Soviets did best: a headlong rush toward modernization with "technology, electrification, and state-run big-push schemes" to forge a new form of person (Unger 2022:10), adhering to principles of national self-reliance and minimal engagement with capitalist systems, and bulldozing anything that got in the way. Using state management instead of price signals, consumption was suppressed in order to make a great leap out of the developmental traps that had plagued other developing nations (Naughton 2018). What foreign trade existed was mainly with the Soviet bloc.

Mao and the Communists would make collective action the centerpiece of the new China they were creating. They still saw the world as a Darwinian competition for dominance, but they believed there should be bonding and cooperation within history's rightful classes (Jin 2022). The people were yoked into new collectivities—the commune applied in the villages, the danwei (work group) in the cities, the Leninist Party for the bureaucracy, and the study group for everyone. There was extensive movement, but much was coerced or associated with militarization. As Li Zhang (2010) concluded: "Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, a multitiered system of collectivization—the collective, the commune, the household registration system, the family planning program, the Women's Federation, and the work unit (danwei)— shaped a resolutely public way of life that outlawed all forms of privatization, including private initiative and even the pursuit of private dreams" (6). For it was not merely enemies of the state who traveled abroad or were captivated by foreign things, but every person had a devilish proclivity to thwart the revolution with the wrong ideological alignment. They could cross over to the West, the Right, the old, the Left, the bourgeoisie with a mere thought or whisper. Limited as they were in action, they could still be accused of having drifted too far from the Party line. If

the work units set outer walls of action, the relentless class critiques and self-examination required an inner wall to repel accusations of political unreliability.

The ultimate reality offered the people fused a Marxist vision of constant material progression and a Maoist one of standing up to the foreign imperialists. Therefore, small groups (xiaozu 小组) were formed within work units, schools, and the military that monitored and criticized each other, to ensure no spies existed in their midst and everyone was held to ideological conformity (Whyte 1974). The family, which Lin thought too powerful, would often collapse, ideally in order to form broader comradeships with strangers but often simply as the byproduct of the frazzling of all relations of trust. In the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) all things "old" were denounced by Red Guards (young Mao loyalists). The teachers and the temples, so long venerated, would be attacked and any customary loyalties became suspicious. A position popular one day would be heresy the next, so people would avoid taking any position at all. Friendship networks contracted in this climate of ubiquitous suspicion. Worked into new materials, these sheets of loose sand soon poured like glass, and much that had held society together—its relationships, faiths, and common decency—were ripped apart.

During a period identified by Wang et al (2020) as seeing "both international and domestic mobilities under extreme restrictions" (1078), there were elaborate systems of geographic control under Mao. Those who wanted to visit a different city or province would need approvals from their work unit (danwei) and a relevant official at the destination. For the majority, the collectives (communes in the countryside, danwei in the cities) would determine their geographic range. Xu (2011, cited in Ta et al. 2017) estimated the average distance between work and housing in the danwei as less than 3 kilometers. Michael Dunne recalls that in Chongqing he was curious about the arrival of a Shanghai Santana sedan to the university, its first ever car. When he asked the President of the University whose car it was, the response was "all of ours" (Murphey 2016). In other words, it belonged to the danwei. Furthermore, elements of distinction and competition were expressed through the work unit, in surpassing adjacent production units or achieving quotas. It was tight knit in both the positive way of increasing solidarity and in the negative way of snipping off loose ends.

Mobility Inequities under Mao

Fissiparous as society was, there were a few meridian lines that nearly completely defined one's horizons. One was place. Article 90 of the 1954 Constitution provided for a "freedom of residence and the freedom to change [one's] residence" (Torpey 1997). This freedom was relative, though, and sharply betrayed in practice. The socialist system involved tight monitoring of various activities. People needed permission for travel, marriage, and to have children; their sexual lives and menstrual cycles were tracked (Fish 2019). Those with rural status were initially allowed to enter urban areas for jobs, but over time the movement of peasants into cities became a matter of grave concern. In the mid-1950s public security organs began enforcing an internal passport system. This hardened into a dual-track system of documents called hukou. Begun in 1958 and loosely modeled after the Soviet internal passport system, the hukou system slotted all citizens into either urban or rural statuses, which determined the place of legal residence and level of social benefits one was eligible for. Having a rural hukou especially impeded travel to cities. Certainly, many sidestepped the laws, but the cities became separated from the countryside (Cheng and Selden 1994). While urban residents were granted food tickets, farmers were compelled to grow Party-dictated crops and yet be self-sufficient in their own diet. Those

characterized as urban were rarely starved as peasants were, had some access to different foodstuffs, and could gain access to means of locomotion.

The other meridian line concerned Party membership. Though not an automatic protection from leveling, purging, and debasement, having Party status or high-level connections brought access to better lifestyle options. What consumer goods did exist went first to Party members; they arrived scented with cigarette smoke and diesel fumes.

The socialist system was in general one of transportation equality. The principal transportation investment was in railways, which carried the coal and pig iron that fired the furnaces of industry so regaled by central planners. Road transport was intended to serve the railways, to be the intermediary between tracks and the final carrier to end destinations. Therefore, the densest network of railways and roadways were in the northeast, where the major factories were. Cities like Changchun were intended to be models of both heavy industry and distribution (Mom 2020).

Feet were the principal instruments of locomotion and the mass of people had little disposable income to convert into alternative, fossil-fueled forms of motility. Most disposable capital belonged to work units, so all vehicles were technically owned by them. Nevertheless, beyond the masses, there were signifiers of rank. As Orwell wrote in *1984*, when there is general scarcity, small distinctions become magnified. The sorting that had occurred after the "bad classes" were eliminated involved such things as the cut of clothing, owning wheeled vehicles, and use of tobacco. Simon Leys noted that class distinctions became more textured:

In trains, for instance, first, second, and third classes have disappeared in name, but you have now "sitting hard" (ying zuo), "sleeping hard" (ying wo), and "sleeping soft" (ruan wo), which are exactly the same classes as before and with the fares, as before, ranging from single to triple prices. External insignia have nearly completely disappeared in the army; they have been replaced by a loose jacket with four pockets for officers, two pockets for privates. In this way, a colonel traveling first-class on the railway is now merely a four-pocket military man "sleeping soft" - with a two-pocket man respectfully carrying his suitcase. In cities one can still distinguish between four-pocket men in jeeps, four-pocket men in black limousines with curtains, and four-pocket men who have black limousines with curtains and a jeep in front (Leys 1977:117).

Geremier Barmé delineated the specific hierarchy for motor vehicles:

Only the highest-level cadres in the party, army, and state bureaucracy could travel by the new Chinese-made limousine, the Red Flag, for example. The Soviet 'Gim' was reserved for ministers and provincial leaders, the 'Volga' was assigned to bureau chiefs and divisional commanders, and the Polish 'Warsaw' was left for the common riffraff, known derisively as 'cigarette, oil, sugar and bean' cadres (quoted in Zhang 2010:180).

For military vehicles, high generals got their jeeps in gray, while lower generals rode in black ones. Belonging to a military family or having connections to military leaders was one of the determinants of ability to visit different areas of China (Wang et al. 2020). An interesting anecdote from the 1960s showed the instant application of cars to rank. When Mao sent a car to pick up the former Chairman of the PRC, Liu Shaoqi, Liu realized his fall from favor by the type of vehicle—instead of the Hongqi 红旗 assigned to top Party leaders, his driver arrived in a Warsaw (Huasha 华沙), equating him with the "common riff-raff" (Ji 2013) .

After Liberation, Mao himself was gifted by Stalin with an armored ZIS (Jisi 吉斯) model, which became Mao's favorite for decades. Signaling his country's growing independence from the USSR, Mao switched to the domestically produced Hongqi Sedan in the late 1960s. Mao had

his own railroad cars, and entire lines were shut down to expedite his passage. In some of his villas, he had an underground tunnel expediting passage to military airports; when in the air, all flights in China were suspended (Chang 2005).

With taxi services closing down and buses and rickshaws declining, nightlife disappeared. Many foreign visitors in the 1960s and 1970s summarized the streets as dark (Goodstadt 2012), scarce in lighting, filled with pedal-powered carts and draft animals (Davin 2012), traversed by uniformly colored outfits (Vogel 2012), and generally absent of motorized vehicles. As fuel was diverted to heavy industry, operating vehicles was expensive and generally limited to officials (Dikotter 2013). Most automobiles were driven by chauffeurs attached to work units. In the cities, to uphold egalitarian principles, rickshaw passengers had to pedal.

Infrastructure and Urban Spaces

But the scarcity of automobiles was somewhat attributable to a lack of state effort. The Soviet Union, another dictatorship of the proletariat, tried multiple times to establish a manufacturing base for passenger cars (Siegelbaum 2008). (Somewhat forgotten is that a major paragon for Lenin in building socialism was the American Henry Ford and his model of labor productivity.) Mao, however, seemed relatively indifferent to passenger cars. First Auto Works, the flagship automaker in Beijing, made only one consumer model, a limousine, one of which became part of Mao's retinue. Like much heavy industry, automobile production was concentrated in the northeast, building off the manufacturing base laid down by the Japanese. In 1963, China produced 11 cars; twenty years later it still only produced 10,000 passenger cars (Gallagher 2006:31). In contrast, using Soviet technology, trucks were produced in great abundance, with plants at Changchun in the northeast producing the iconic Jiefang (解放, Liberation) trucks, similar to the Soviet ZIS 150 model (Gallagher 2006:35). These four-ton trucks would become a defining symbol of the militarization of everyday life, appearing on the 1-yuan note in 1953 and later depicted in numerous pieces of popular culture.

Trucks, in grayed-out greens and running on barely siphoned fuels, became the traffic mainstays. While styles of Detroit at the time offered spirited angles and edges to caress, gave a cornucopia of color options and customization, and essentially threatened one with social expulsion for falling behind, the Soviet-inspired vehicles that carried armaments and hustled to fill inventories of quota-swamped factories could only persist, famished and beaten. They had all the decoration of oxen. This is not to discount the experience of driving trucks. Taking care of employer vehicles, having a charge that distanced one from the work unit, that offered some independence and pride of technical achievement, made truck driving a coveted occupation. Some women, probably 20% of the truck drivers, had the double boost of freedom, given responsibility matters outside their workplace and their family.[1] In their recollection, truck drivers journeyed with a sense of common mission. To qualify, they had to have good eyesight, an acceptable class background, and political reliability. One former driver recounts being arbitrarily stopped at an intersection in Shanghai by a police officer; she reproves him for his incompetence, telling him he must serve the people and that she is carrying goods for the country that would perish if he does not let her through. She owns that her time as a truck driver was the most popular she had been her whole life (Ye 2017:360).

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[1] Currently, only 4.2% of truck drivers in China are women (Transfar Public Interest Research Institute 2018), a statistic mirrored in much of the world.

While roadways were not the centerpiece of socialist modernity, they nevertheless grew in absolute length. Some statistics show that there were 80,000 kilometers of roads at the beginning of the People's Republic, which increased to 650,000 by 1970 (Mom 2020:403). Even so, many of these were local, county-level roads, built primarily by peasants, and which were intermittently maintained.

Long-Distance Travel and Tourism

From the 1950s to the 1970s, tourism was a word few had heard of. It was expensive to travel and hotels were rare (Wang et al. 2020). Having foreign connections was a crime in itself (Ching 2012), discouraging in-depth interactions between locals and visitors. During much of the Maoist period, incoming visitors were prohibited from reading Chinese newspapers like *Liberation Daily* (Kamm 2012). Chinese hosts would stick to unwavering scripts and would be greatly distressed by the unplanned wandering of foreign guests.

What foreign tourism occurred was of the Potemkin kind. Mao had already had great success handling the American Communist Edgar Snow, unspooling a series of vague aphorisms that Snow assembled into historical greatness. It was a public relations move that set up a reputational stature that took decades to erode, and which was carefully manicured by consistent mobility controls on future incoming travelers. On her visit in 1972, Tuchman explained how the tourist-as-dignitary system worked:

> *Foreigners feel themselves surrounded by the trappings of an elite. They stay in separate hotels, dine in separate dining rooms—or screened off from the Chinese travel in separate compartments on trains, wait in separate waiting rooms at the station, are cared for on a separate floor of the hospital…In museums our guides push aside Chinese visitors from the exhibit cases to give us unnecessary room; on the bridge at Wuhan traffic is stopped so that we may cross over to view the river…at a park our car drives through a pedestrian entrance where the Chinese walk* (quoted in Hollander 1998:359).

She notes how the driver is always available and a car takes you everywhere. Even today the gift of a driver is both a convenience and an instrument of surveillance.

Two important long-distance mobility condensations occurred as part of the Cultural Revolution. As part of the decentralization of Party power, Red Guards, began criticizing so-called reactionaries like teachers and elders. Part of the euphoria was taken up in mass pilgrimages and meetings. Allowed free passage on train lines, Red Guards covered distances usually reserved for high-ranking party members or criminals. The former Red Guard, Liang Heng, provides a window into some of the transformations. Called to support Mao in all places and moments, comrades of different regions competed to make pilgrimages, to honor founding CCP members, to retrace the Long March, or set up camps where victorious battles against the Guomindang took place. Yan'an, Beijing, Jinggang, Ruijing—these became sites to witness, to be seen witnessing, and to take up a bodily struggle. This travel-travail was dedicated to embodied remembrance: "We would try to suffer like they did; we learned about folding our stuff into a tight bundle and wearing straw sandals. We wore red armbands, took first-aid kits, maps, and canteens. We Red Guards proudly wore Mao buttons on our jackets" (Liang and Shapiro 1983:102–3).

Ken Ling's memoire also explores the expropriation of transportation by these Red Guards. "Borrowing" vehicles from denounced Party members, they stuffed them with loot such as furniture and books and rode through towns without any regard for consequences. Broadcasting

Party slogans through loudspeakers and ignoring traffic rules, they riled the ultimately helpless police, who could not openly oppose them (Mom 2020:411).

Another exceptional pattern occurred during the late 1960s—city youth were sent to the countryside to learn from the peasants. Given that the university system had been shut down, Mao recommended that farmland be the classroom and recruited millions of youths, often enthusiastic, to build up the marginal areas of the northwest, northeast, and other regions. Liang Heng (Liang and Shapiro 1983:146) mentions the decorations on the trucks that carried them from the city. Festooned with flowers, the banners proclaimed, "The Farther from Home, the Nearer to Chairman Mao" and "The Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants Are Closer Relatives than Mother and Father." Part of the mythology of Xi Jinping was his selfless work for the villagers during his time in Liangjiahe (梁家河), Shaanxi, depicted in the bestselling book *Seven Years as an Educated Youth*.

Other than this period of student/soldier circulation, long-distance travels meant a few things prior to 1977. You were being transferred to the northeast to work in heavy industry, the factories through which China would surpass Great Britain in production. You were a soldier or prisoner being sent to the northwest to turn desert into gardens, to work on projects of building the frontier in the form of roads, dams, oil wells, and housing. Or you were sent to the interior, part of a vast self-defense program to combat attacks by Taiwan and its allies. Infrequently were rural people permanently deployed to urban areas, a far cry from traditional means of economic growth, where people flee outlying areas for the efficiencies and economies of scale that urban production affords. Remarkably, the urban population during 1959-1978 went down from 18.4% to 17.9% (Nyíri 2011:12).

Post Reform and Opening

After the death of Mao, Premier Hua Guofeng (r. 1976-1980) and Deng Xiaoping (de facto leader from 1977-1997) reframed the raison d'etre of the CCP from class antagonism and conflict to economic growth. More concerned with modernization through international contact than internal struggle, they sent officials abroad to learn about technology and set up experimental zones with special economic regulations (Vogel 2013). Although Hua was a pivotal figure in the turn away from ideology it was Deng who carried the reform torch for the next two decades. His permissiveness toward mobility (e.g., in encouraging research trips abroad) was not without risk; he made a bet on nationalism and Party legitimacy—that seeing the relative backwardness of China, the departing engineers and students would be motivated to return to China and build it back up, and build it to the credit of the Communist Party.

With the push for economic take-off there was more place experimentation. Officials, once rewarded for meeting quotas of liquidating bad political elements, were expected to meet quotas of GDP. They saw the shortest route to modernity through infrastructures like roads and electrical systems (Tilt 2009). Guangdong Province, once suspect for its nearness to the capitalist Hong Kong, was the exemplar of things to come. Great sums were allocated toward great projects; investment flooded into the country, especially from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Rural migration, completely anathema to the Maoist system, was widely tolerated as a necessary evil. Directives of the national leadership were still firm, but the tools of their implementation became more variable and there was more policy divergence.

The very operation of physical mobility was revolutionized. Streets slowly became portages for new fashions and personal styles. A visitor to Beijing in the late 1970s would find blue and

gray clothes. In a decade there were itinerant trends: 1986 was for yellow dresses, 1987 for military-style coats, and 1988 for black trousers (Clark 2012). But what probably most struck visitors to major cities during the 1980s were the bicycles. Michael Dunne described Chengdu in 1986 as a flood of bicycles, with an occasional First Auto Works or Second Auto Works Truck, and rarely a black sedan (Murphey 2016). With the market driven economy, the assessment of place in part revolved around quality of transportation. Yu Hua recounts that when his mother went to Haiyan for the first time, she knew it was backwards because she did not see a single bicycle (Yu 2011:207). Dowries began to reflect the consumer mentality and mobility. Under Mao the bride's family would typically offer grain, but in the 1980s there were "three rounds and a sound" (a bicycle, a wristwatch, a sewing machine, and a radio) (Osnos 2015:56).

When China became more receptive to the outside world after Deng took power, hopes of a new city life proliferated. Using the culturalist language characteristic of intellectuals, many thought China's cities would not sell out to automobile traffic. Peter Worsley proclaimed:

> *The Chinese…do not wish to create a consumer society. They have not tried to produce cars, television, or phones on a mass scale, since they do not wish to. Hopefully the boulevards of Peking will never be choked with thousands of private cars…Instead, the two million bicycles, the modern, cheap buses and the new Underground will keep the traffic moving*
> (quoted in Hollander 1998:319).

The renowned Harvard scholar John Fairbank was even more confident that "China will not copy the American automobile civilization but will create a new balance of man and machine in her own way" (quoted in Hollander:318). Within China, there was intellectual debate about what an automotive future entailed. In the mid-1990s, one camp thought that cars promoted growth and equality, granting long-denied opportunities to get around like Party leaders did. Others thought the congestion and environmental harm that resulted from automobilization would outrank the economic benefits (Zhang 2019).

But the economic potential of automotive technologies far outweighed possible costs. In 1986 the 7th Five Year Plan made automobile manufacturing a pillar industry (zhizhu hangye 支柱行业), which led to increases in production and new supply lines. This initial production was mainly limited to vehicles for agriculture, industry, and the military (Zhang 2019). When Jeep/Chrysler began producing cars in China in 1984, there was no private car market. In the joint-venture negotiation, the Chinese wanted Jeep to develop a new model, to transfer the technology to build the model, and to export some vehicles abroad to earn foreign exchange (Chin 2010). Over time, through technological transfer and deepening local investment, automobile manufacturing boomed and came to encompass multiple classes, sizes, price ranges, and energy sources.

Between 1994 and 2003, foreign firms invested approximately $12 billion in China for automobile production; by 2005 this total reached $20 billion (Chin 2010:4). The Automotive Industrial Policy (AIP) policy of 1994 became the major regulation, placing a cap of 50% on foreign ownership and excluding foreign firms from distribution and sales. After China's entrance to the World Trade Organization, the market liberalized further, greatly reducing tariffs and removing import quotas (Zhang 2019). In addition, Chinese brands have become more popular. With much technology getting transferred, firms like Chery, Great Wall, Haval, and Think have grabbed market share. With explicit governmental encouragement of the automobile manufacturing sector, both for vehicles and parts, China became the second biggest producer of motor vehicles in the world.

Cities and the Rise of the Middle Class

Cities soon bore the marks of transportation expansion. Between 1990 and 2003, the length of the urban roadway network doubled (Pucher et al. 2007) and reached 365,000 km in 2015 according to the National Bureau of Statistics (Chen and Klaiber 2020). Planners in China view urban density, which may reach 15,000-40,000 person/km2, in a negative light. Like early twentieth century American planners, depopulating core cities has become a central concern (Foster 1979; Liu and Guan 2005). Compared to Western standards, traditional Chinese cities have been highly congested, densely-built, with mixed uses, narrow streets, and little segregation by income or wealth (Wang and Chai 2009). With the extension of road networks, decentralization and homogeneity in land use have increased. With landed property being marketized, many residents seek the low rents of suburban housing complexes and relocate to outlying suburbs (Kwan, Chai, and Tana 2014). At the same time, historic city centers once housing many working-class families have been gobbled up by the government and developers, making way for office, retail, and administrative buildings. The result is more spread-out cities with a greater job- housing imbalance (Ta et al. 2017). In Shanghai, average trip length rose from 4.5 kilometers in 1994 to 6.2 in 1999, and then to 6.5 in 2009 (Zhao, Zhao, and Shen 2013:86). Average commute time in Beijing increased from 38 minutes in 2005 to 43.6 minutes in 2010 (Kwan et al. 2014:185). Because of the congestion and expansion of cities, traffic and parking have become major public grievances.

So enchanting was grandiose infrastructure that there was little self-consciousness about the purposes of building. An architect claimed that building a train station would not impress Chinese officials; better to call it an airport for trains (Meyer 2017). The rapid stamping of megaprojects on the landscape would come to be derided as 'tofu' towers. Pursuing the metrics of square footage, kilometers, kilowatts, and output led to a rush of building but also a standardization that disturbed preservationists. Beijing lost its traditional hutong alleyways, Shanghai its Shikumen lane houses. Official media from 2017 cautioned to "Avoid a thousand pieces of the same tune, a thousand cities with the same face" (Blanchard 2017). Instead, they argue, Chinese cities should focus on their unique histories and emphasize culture in city planning, such as more sculpture and parks in public spaces. Like many localities competing to become "creative cities" (Florida 2005), municipal leaders have in fact begun to emphasize culture, particularly the cool, fashionable aesthetics that attract innovative talent, flipping the development script from industrial output to information technologies.

Demoted during the Maoist era, when buildings for art and social life were left to rot and crumble, cities once again became cultural and communication centers that espoused the end values of society. After what many Chinese consider the unnatural, perverse phase of Maoism, China has invited in the huge army of the world's desires, the meaning of life anchored in habits of conspicuous consumption and material abundance (Rofel 2007). Unlike the period of planned economy, society has been allowed to be amorphous. It could grow limbs without the approval of its trunk. Whereas before identity depended on class background—peasant, landlord, worker, intellectual, etc.—social achievement after 1977 has greatly depended on the most fluid of things, money. Socialistic sayings have been twisted to reflect the changing of values, e.g., changing "serve the people" to "serve the money" (*wei renmin fuwu* 为人民服务 to *wei renminbi fuwu* 为人民币服务) (Tilt 2009).

Although China is now one of the most unequal nations in the world, with more billionaires than any other, it is also experiencing a dramatic increase in the size of its middle class, which is

greatly changing the values of the country. This middle class is particularly difficult to define by occupation, such that probably the best definition of what the Chinese call the middle strata (zhongchan jieceng 中产阶层) are those who own houses and cars. In other words, unlike the classic Marxist definition of class, in which class is defined by one's relations to production, the Chinese middle class is bounded by its relative consumption (Zhang 2010). This consumption ties into one of the core slogans of Xi Jinping's Presidency, the Chinese Dream (Zhongguo Meng 中国梦). Previous Party leaders stressed the delivery of freedom from want and moderate comfort (what is typically called xiaokang 小康 in economic planning). Xi's phrase represents an escalation, a jump up Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs from material satisfaction to desire satisfaction, self-actualization through material success and providing a better life for the next generation. Part of the Party's legitimacy, especially with the sizable middle-class, is sustaining an ever-promising belief about continued prosperity and self-achievement.

This middle class typically resides in major cities, and like all urban classes, its members strongly feel the tension between individual self-expression and meeting the minimum requirements for inclusion in their group. Because of the heterogeneity of city life, visual recognition is essential (Simmel 1971). There is a need to categorize others: to instantly, by mental shortcuts, separate those who are in versus those who are out. In this spirit of "competition, aggrandizement, and mutual exploitation," symbols such as the automobile, which rely less on facial or emotional recognition than surface assignment become paramount (Wirth 1938:15). Urbanites acknowledge that for many purposes, an electric scooter is sufficiently practical, but when face (mianzi 面子) is at stake, such as for business meetings or shopping, cars are preferable (Zuev 2018). To be counted worthy in a sea of pretenders, to affirm legitimate membership in your class, you must live in the correct neighborhood and drive the proper automobile. Having a mobile lifestyle, with car and leisure travel, are signifiers of class status that expedite social acceptance and approval.

But a car is neither just a convenience, nor a supererogatory accessory to a good life. It is a baseline to enjoying the privileges of urban citizenship. Men frequently mention that they cannot find good marriage partners without a house and car; dating sites include recognizable shorthand terms for "have house and car" (beichefang 被车房) to inform potential partners that they have crossed a crucial bar in the import of their lives. Like in Maoist days, automobiles also reveal political connections. Whereas simply riding in a motor vehicle was significant during the socialist era, in the contemporary era, it is the type of vehicle—e.g., a Black Audi—and its license plate number (digits "0000" and several "8"s signal local elite) that announce power. Military plates are prefixed with the character *jun* (军) denoting PLA membership, liberating one from complying with traffic rules. At some city plate auctions, "lucky" plates with "8", "9" or "6" can sell for up to $14,000 (The Economist 2018). The political elite do not monopolize the cars and cigarettes anymore, but they do have better versions.

Outside the cities, major construction projects have increased transportation possibilities throughout the national territory. Roadbuilding has become a government pastime. By 2011, China had roughly the same length of highways as the United States (C. Yan 2011). For the most part, roadways are no longer built by soldiers, conscripts, peasants, and forced labor. Rather construction companies, many of them massive conglomerates, use free labor and capitalized assets. When Guangdong created a toll bridge near Foshan, it was criticized for the capitalist practice of issuing bonds to be repaid by tolls—but this soon became standard nationwide practice. The province later commercialized taxi services, placing drivers outside work units;

soon this too became common outside of Guangdong (Vogel 1990:422). The weight of competition, and its psychological pressure, shifted out of work units and onto individual entrepreneurs.

Infrastructural Growth and Expanding Action Radius

Not only have roadways been integral to economic development in major urban centers, but they have also been employed by the Chinese government in domesticating and bringing Han culture (Han Chinese constitute 92% of the PRC's population according to census figures) into putatively backwards parts of the nation. In Tibet, there were only 5 kilometers of highway in 1959; this grew to 22,000 km by 1979; by 2018, there were 116,700 km (Xinhua 2021). Han Settlers in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia often followed the construction of new expressways. The scholar Wang Lixong argued that roads in Tibet were not intended for economic development but for stabilization. With them, the state could send in administrators and soldiers, the asphalt also carrying goods for this stabilizing class. A Xinjiang official, Lai Xin, believed transportation connections assisted ethnic groups in becoming "open and modern." He elaborated: "As long as modern things enter Xinjiang, it will affect people's way of living and production, and will change their way of thinking. We have to do something. We can't leave them alone just because their way of thinking is backwards" (Denyer 2014).

With train rides being rare experiences in themselves, there was little thought of tourism per se under Mao. Ideas of leisure travel were so sparse that the Communist Party rarely went on record with a denunciation. Soon after Reform and Opening, travel opportunities did improve but were mainly reserved for official business. These trips had a reputation for raucousness and moral looseness—carousing and gambling that defied Party discipline (Nyíri 2011). Not simply its connection with capitalism, but tourism's lineage of debauchery possibly made many high-level organs suspicious of the benefits of domestic touring for longer than it otherwise would have been.

After cadres, the other major travelers during the early days of reform were students; after universities reopened in the late 1970s (after over a decade of closure), moving for study was a treasured mobility. Liang Heng's first time in a passenger car was in 1978, when he went to college. Not just in China but also abroad, study fever emerged. The 1980s were a time of relative openness, when cultural criticism and even some political dilettantism was possible. Learning from their travels that the rest of the world was not as debilitated as party propaganda had suggested, debates ensued on appropriate means of developing China. There was an overt attempt in this atmosphere of "cultural fever" (wenhua re 文化热) to ascertain what being Chinese meant in a more globally oriented, commercialized world (Zhao 1997). During the first few decades of Reform and Opening, those who studied abroad were unlikely to return. However, when foreign students showed fierce support for the protesters of Tiananmen, Deng's government began to rework its international outreach, inserting patriotism into its foreign affairs and promoting student organizations through embassies (To 2014). Although travelers and students would still be a constant source of cultural criticism of China, more and more of the cross-national discourse would be filtered and sustained through official channels. Partly through such skillful management, added to China's economic growth, since 2013, about 80% of foreign students return to China after finishing their studies, according to the Ministry of Education (Economist 2021). It appears that Deng's gamble paid off.

Expansion of Domestic Touring Possibilities

With infrastructure permitting long-distance travel, the Party shifted from neglect of mass tourism to fervent support. The first national conference on domestic tourism was held in Tianjin in 1987, and tourism became recognized as an industry in the 8th 5-year plan (Chio 2014:80). Over the past few years, the Communist Party has stressed building a wider base for domestic consumption, including the advent of new goods and services suitable to what they see as a maturing economy (Xie 2012). Government officials and intellectuals view favorably the expansion of the hotel sector, the establishment of service stations across the road network, and the sale of travel gear and supplies (e.g., Ma, 2014).

Socioeconomically, many factors have promoted domestic and foreign tourism. Tourism demand has been stimulated by rising incomes, fixed holidays and vacation days, and proliferation of advertising copy. As a status-conferring consumer item, tourism situates one in a fluctuating class hierarchy (Urry 2002). The popular travel website Mafengwo 马蜂窝, for example, has on many personal profiles a world map, the areas visited by the account-holder shaded in. Who you are depends on where you have been, making it deviant for the urban middle-class to not have traveled extensively. Meanwhile, tourism supply has been enhanced by improved domestic travel infrastructure, expanded international airline connections, and the opening of various national attractions.

Additionally, whereas under Mao, cultural heritage was regarded with suspicion, as feudal and retrograde, the Party has shown much more tolerance for the manifestation of local cultural content. Almost all dynasties and the three big religious philosophies (Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) have been rehabilitated as exhibitors of national-level character; local cadres are quick to connect their communities to memorable events and characters. In the past 20 years, China has led the world in the establishment of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and now rivals Italy for the top spot.

As far as incoming travel, China has excelled at showcase tourism and Potemkin tourism. These are interwoven in such mega-events as the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the 2014 APEC meeting in Beijing, and the 2012 Shanghai World Expo. Like many hosts, the Chinese state (mainly through local governments) took each of these gatherings as opportunities to discipline its people, training taxi drivers in polite English, regulating the behavior of airport workers, editing Chinglish from road signs, and issuing propaganda about proper street habits (Broudehoux 2007; Dynon 2011; Zhang 2021).

Whereas the foreign visitor now has many more liberties in mobility in China than 30 or 40 years ago, there are still areas that fit the model of Potemkin tourism. Regulations prevent foreign tourists from freely traveling through the Tibetan Autonomous Region, consigning them to tour groups centered around Lhasa. While foreign tourists are allowed de jure to visit Xinjiang, in reality few risk visiting the police state. Most of the tourists are controlled delegations given constant monitoring and prohibited from exploring outside of the watchful eyes of local officials. Journalists, many of them Muslims from developing countries; receive fully subsidized junkets to tour Xinjiang. According to a report by the International Federation of Journalists most seem to report enjoying their stays (Lim and Bergin 2020). A journalistic tour of the region proffers an aura of normalcy and progress, guiding persons and cameras toward thriving markets, dance displays, and renovated tourist zones (Ingram 2019). Thus, image control and the preservation of symbolic capital are essential elements in tourism through ethnic minority regions.

Mobility and Internationalism

Meanwhile, the travel radius abroad has also expanded, from initial forays to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, and the Philippines into a global phenomenon, with Chinese tourism growing into a coveted market niche. This extended action radius through travel has greatly affected the "spatial, social, political, and economic order throughout the wider region, reconfiguring leisure spaces and economies, transportation infrastructure, popular political discourse, and geopolitical imaginaries" (Rowen 2016:386). Additionally, Chinese citizens have greater access to information about the rest of the world than ever before. Both printed and online guides exist for numerous domestic and foreign places, normalizing and conditioning circuits of travel. This is aided by the expanding Chinese diaspora, including expatriate workers and college students, who themselves provide key institutional and cultural linkages that foreground future travel patterns (Guo, Seongseop Kim, and Timothy 2007). There is a notion that outbound tourism is the initial beachhead making further economic operations possible; as Chinese tourists arrive in numbers, land prices rise, which incentivize more intense investment (Lampton 2020:62).

Transportation industries have brought about deeper international connections. Proud of its train transportation technologies, Chinese entities have made sizable agreements to build express trains in Laos, Thailand, Mexico, etc. Track technologies in Southeast Asia now bear the imprint of Chinese influence, and its engineering standards compete with European and American standards (Seavey 2022). The bulk of Belt and Road funding has gone to two sectors: energy and transport (Wang 2022), centering the facilities around ports, harbors, power plants, and railways. For automobiles, China lags behind in influence. A minor player in auto production outside of China, China's brands are not held in high esteem. Consumers within China, though no doubt hoping for a better presence on the world market, still much prefer Japanese and especially German cars as bearers of excellent quality. The electric vehicle, like artificial intelligence, is one technology that China has invested in heavily in hopes of becoming the frontrunner.

The push for infrastructural exports and outgoing tourism converges with a broader emphasis in state discourse on soft power—first appearing in a 2007 speech by President Hu Jintao (r. 2002-2012)—that entails building narratives of friendship through various cultural and artistic exchanges. The goals of soft power are to use forms of suasion built on having institutional legitimacy and a positive ex ante reputation that allows problems to be framed favorably to your side (Leonard 2008; Nye 1990). Xi expounded on this approach in 2013: "We must improve our right to speak internationally (nuli tigao guoji huayuquan 努力提高国际话语权). We must tell Chinese stories well (jianghao zhongguo gushi 讲好中国故事), spread good messages of China, and expound clearly on Chinese characteristics" (Xinhua 2013). In this prescription, cultural strength is linked to comprehensive national power (Mayer 2018).

International mobilities have played a further role in asserting soft power. China has sponsored numerous exhibitions abroad as part of its charm offensive (Kurlantzick 2007). Some administrators of Belt and Road projects do not contend that they are profitable in raw business terms but believe such investments have long-run value in portraying China as a responsible partner (Lampton 2020:69–71). For its part, the Civilization Office and the China National Tourism Administration have both attempted to encourage better ambassadorial skills in regular Chinese tourists, putting out rules for etiquette and pressuring for better standards of tour agencies (Xu, Wang, and Song 2020). Compared to its Maoist past, there is general endorsement of outbound leisure travel as recognition of personal success and as a symbol of China's participation on the geopolitical stage.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have traced the changing transportation modalities of China over the past 120 years. Although brief, it links changing political landscapes to large-scale changes in mobility. Following Kotef (2015), we should consider that ways of ordering movement have always been "central to the ways in which subject-positions are formed and by which different regimes establish and shape their particular political orders" (37). To summarize the recent transition of political orders, we can identify four major changes in China's transportation mobilities since Reform and Opening.

First, there is greater range of potential mobilities, encompassing more of the national territory and more of the seven continents. Pre-1977, ideas of mobility were more chronological—moving society forward in developmental history—rather than spreading society outward into new areas. In recent decades, while not diminishing the temporal dimension of mobility, the geographic dimension of mobility has become more prominent, as political, economic, and cultural forces have distributed spatial opportunities beyond the previous scope. Up until 1949, it can be propounded that most infrastructural connections involved wealthy Eastern cities and linked them more closely with the global economy than with inland areas of China itself. It can be argued that Eastern China was one of the most globalized areas of the world in the early 20th century. From 1949-1978, infrastructure did indeed extend more fully throughout the country, particularly in Western regions, but this was construction was more ad hoc and not fully maintained. The densest concentration of transportation infrastructure was in regions like the northeast, where the heaviest industries were located. But after 1978, there came a standardized, high-quality system of moving goods and people that tied together the vast distances of the Chinese state. Moreover, Chinese citizens became more mobile abroad, and China instigated a more interconnected world with its investments in the transport sector.

Secondly, mobility has become more affiliated with the practices and belief-systems of the middle-class. During parts of the Cultural Revolution, many youths tasted railway travel, but for most of the Maoist period long-range travel was reserved for official business and was the preserve of the politically connected. There was relative equality of movement, with stark differences between the masses and Party members, and between rural and urban residents. In the more capitalistic economy after Mao, things like cars are no longer doled out or assigned by fiat but are treated as rewards for success and proof of one's competence (Zhang 2019). The modernization project over the past few decades has placed more emphasis on the styles of life associated with urban sophistication—including fashion, automobility, exclusive housing complexes, and cosmopolitan vacationing. As cities compete for global visibility and high-tech industries, they have placed more emphasis on the premium spaces that attract the talented, educated classes. Gone are the days when, at least in words, peasants were to be admired and learned from. Cities, particularly first-tier cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, are now the sources of enlightened ideas.

Third, there is a wider diversity of transportation speeds. Most travel was by foot, cart, or bicycle prior to Deng Xiaoping's control of the Party. While train travel became a mainstay of the Maoist economy, it was overwhelmingly centered on hauling freight not persons. In recent years, however, express trains in China reach speeds of 350 km/hr. (and are expected to increase even further with technological development), making a Beijing-Shanghai trip between 4 and 5 hours. For automobiles, a national speed limit on expressways was set by law at 120 km/hr. To borrow from Sennett (2002:14), urban spaces have been increasingly treated as "derivative from

motion", the quality of life measured by rapid, uninterrupted passage through streets. But while hundreds of millions of people can access these speeds who could not before, there is greater mobile stratification. More so than under Mao, economic resources and cultural capital determine how people around, setting up a hierarchy of movements that normalize and stigmatize particular flows and spatial configurations.

Finally, mobility is more divergent in its motivations. In the Maoist system, travel meant a program—a scripted performance to bring about socialist subjecthood. Since Reform and Opening, movements are still performances, but they are more multi-purpose. They might enact irrefragable personhood, or class identity, or a national essence. They are more guided by fluctuating standards of taste. This is not to say individuality was completely thwarted in the sojourns of Red Guards or in the rural labor in the countryside, but the legitimacy of movement involved a tighter fusion of Party-level goals and personal artistry.

Opening up, or bringing forth through self-fashioning, has been a crucial political technology since at least the Mao era. Those with the wrong class backgrounds or who had committed errors, were called to self-reflect (fanxing 反省) and condemn elements deemed Leftist, Rightist, bourgeois, capitalist, Nationalist, and feudal. But what was to appear out of self-reflection was ordained as either good or bad; there were no elements that would avert or transcend this Manichean politics. Your inspired brushstroke was in the end either socialist or anti-socialist.[2]

However, with the demise of the planned economy and economic liberalization, a new sense of the inner self emerged. For the most part, this has allowed for a degree of self-fashioning, with personhood not inherently of a quality; rather they are begotten through a customized scope of action contingently determined through experiences or as a result of one's innermost self brought into the open. Mobilities no longer demand prepared justifications. The rituals of mobility still allow people to "embody assumptions about their place in the larger order of things" (Bell 1997:xi) but they appear (and to my eyes, are) more freely selected.

Moreover, the psychology of travel is no longer restrained by fear of negative identification but is part of inventing a positive identity. This is a stark shift when compared with the Maoist era, when as Cheo asserted,

> We became suspicious of strangers and each other, so that it was no longer comfortable to see each other, because it would mean a long report back on what we talked about and why. One became insular and only stayed within one's own place of work, lived among one's own fellow workers, shared the same dormitories, ate in the same canteens (quoted in Dikotter 2013:102).

Insularity would now be considered a defect, a lack of mobility signaling small-mindedness and a lack of ambition. Fluency with travel has become a characteristic of high status.

The next section will use a few major traffic crashes as prisms for understanding how national inclusions and exclusions have been mediated by changing transportation mobilities. The chapters it contains will expand on the tensions laid out in this chapter between a growing individualism and demand for personal narratives through travel and the requirements of social order that attempt to place practices of mobilities under national narratives that sustain dominant political orientations. Each of the three chapters looks to a key facet of the post-Reform mobility transformation of China—the use of infrastructure to define national territory and centralize authority (Chapter 2), the importance of transportation mobilities in defining the relative class

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[2] In the film *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*, when a main character at a re-education camp plays Mozart on the violin, he is quick to re-title it "Mozart is Thinking of Chairman Mao", to the approval of the head cadre.

positions of modern Chinese people, particularly of urban vs. rural statuses (Chapter 3), and the alignment of street habits with the national project of creating civilized, global-worthy citizens characterized by norms of altruism and responsibility (Chapter 4).

Section I: Collisions

Chapter 2

Tibet August 9, 2014: The Road to Paradise and the Road to Tragedy

The Traffic Crash

A tour bus carrying 50 passengers traveling east on China Route 318 in Nyemo County, Tibet Autonomous Region, was involved in a collision with a sport utility vehicle and a pick-up truck in the late afternoon on August 9, 2014, resulting in the bus careening down a 30-foot mountain embankment, killing 42. Two passengers in the SUV also died. Photos released showed an overturned bus trapped on a riverbank, a diverse assortment of luggage beached to the side (see Figure 1.1). There were 11 nonfatal injuries and property damage in excess of 39,000,000 RMB (about $6.5 million).[3]

That is how *Xinhua*, the chief Chinese news bureau, reported the August 9 crash. In contrast to many crashes in China, this one was not captured on video, so media outlets had to show simulated renderings of how the crash occurred. International media provided their own bit of context: "Fatal road accidents are a serious problem in China, particularly involving the country's over-crowded long distance buses" (*Al-Jazeera*)(Anon 2014b). "China has spent heavily to develop tourism in Tibet, arguing that economic development will help stem local Tibetan opposition to Beijing's hardline policies in the region" (*New York Times*)(Levin 2014). Given that foreign journalists cannot freely travel in Tibet they were beholden to Xinhua for the limited facts on the case, which partly explains why foreign media provided no follow-up coverage of the event.

In response to the incident, and no doubt influenced by the recurring cases of bus crashes that had recently occupied the news cycle, the State Council (Guowuyuan 国务院) commissioned a follow-up investigation. Among others, the investigation's goals were to use on-scene investigation and evidence to "ascertain the circumstances and causes of the accident, how injury and property damage occurred, the nature of and responsibility for the crash, and to recommend both punitive actions and future preventative measures" (State Council of China 2014). The committee consisted of members of the PRC Supreme People's Procuratorate (Zuigao Renmin Jianchayuan 最高人民检察院) along with experts on car technology, road engineering, public safety, and accident investigation. Released in late November of 2014, this report will serve as the template for this chapter, detailing the facts of the crash but also serving as a window to show how various forces merged and collided to produce the crash.

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[3] The exchange rate between Chinese RMB and US dollars was a little over 6:1 for most of the 2010s.
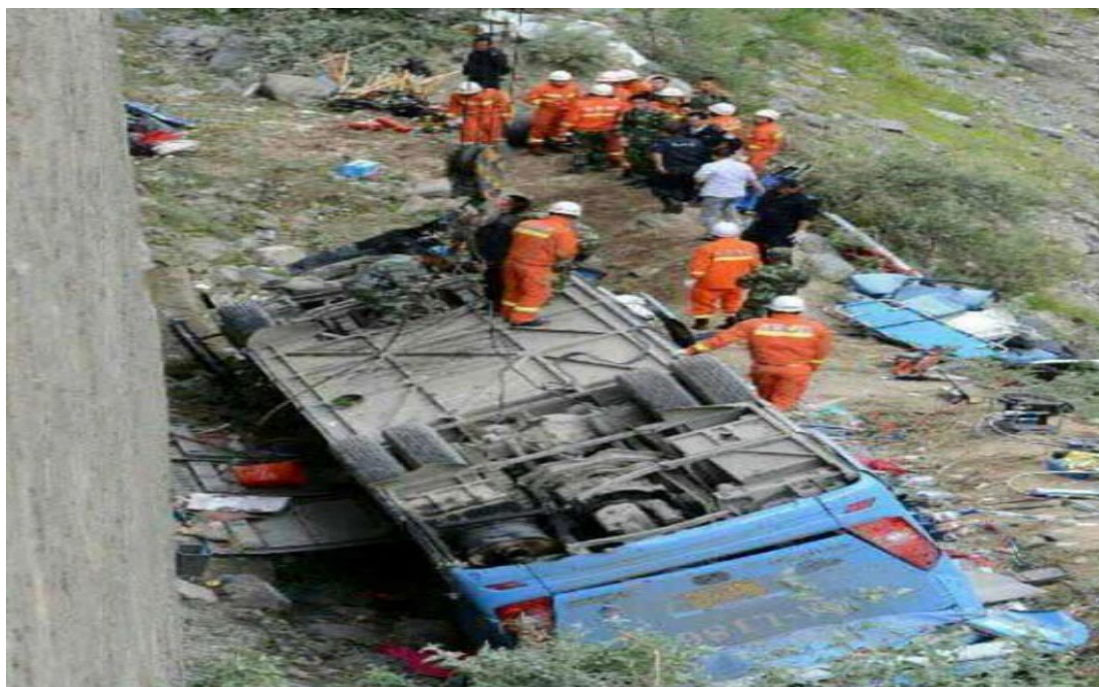
Figure 1.1: Picture released of the August 9 crash scene

The scene

The report specifies the location as Tibet Autonomous Region, on National Route 318 between Shigatse (Rikaze 日喀则) and Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. The incident occurred at kilometer marker 4740. A culvert lay on one side of the road, and a guardrail on the other, protecting a surface that curved sharply at a 5.7% grade. The roadway was up to code. The weather was partly cloudy.

Chinese National Highway 318 connects a fishing village turned megacity with a mountain sanctuary turned tourist attraction. From the port of Shanghai to some 5,700 meters of altitude on the Nepal-Tibet border, it spans 5,476 kilometers, the longest road in China. The stretch from Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, to the Nepal border is named "Friendship Highway."

Route 318 is now considered by many Chinese travel guides as a site to behold before you die, particularly the segment between Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, and Lhasa, which combines both awesome scenery with thrilling (jianxian 惊险) ascents, descents, and curves. Pictures taken by Chinese tourists abound in yak herds, Lombard Street-like turns (the famed 72 turns [Nujiang qishier guai 怒江七十二拐]), gushing rivers, steep cliffs, and cavernous mudholes. During the rainy season, drivers will find the road nearly unpassable, and many require the aid of other drivers or nearby soldiers to pull their vehicles out of mud-logged terrain. Some drivers pack oxygen tanks to deal with altitude sickness, and many hotels and hostels include medical treatments for those suffering from it. Travelers often use imagery and phrases associated with struggle and conquest to describe their interactions with Route 318. For auto enthusiasts, it is considered a trial of their bodily fitness and vehicle handling skills.

Unlike many of the highways built in the past couple of decades, most of the route follows and improves the surface of preexisting roads. The segment between Sichuan and Lhasa was actually constructed during the early days of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the first

vehicles securing passage in 1954 after nearly four years of construction (Chen 2015). Just as Route 66 in the U.S. represents the Californian dream of freedom and plenty, so does Route 318 represent the fight for a Chinese national ideal—completeness, or *wanzheng* (完整), that is, integrating the far-flung regions into the whole, against the fierce resistance of nature. Key mountain passes between Chengdu and Lhasa were built by the 18th Army of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) without heavy machinery using hand chisels and shovels, under threat of rock falls and earthquakes. One former soldier-builder recalled: "We were bringing the 5-pointed star to the roof of the world; glory and happiness would be brought to Tibet" (Chen 2015). Their sacrifices are honored in gravestones near Erlang Mountain adjacent to Route 318.

Although it may be tempting to view a road as a banal state project, as charming as hauling mail, Route 318 is embedded in a distinct form of social relations—between ethnic Han and Tibetans. Roadways into and through Tibet have carried special imaginative significance since at least the Communist Era. After exercising relative political autonomy for over three decades, Tibet, and its temporal head, the Dalai Lama, were promised autonomous control under the new socialist state in 1948. At this time, Lhasa was relatively cut off from the rest of the world, only having a radio transmitter and little in the way of foreign policy. When the Communists first took over, they carefully established administrative control and improved communications with China proper but left most of the social system intact (Van Schaik 2011). The first PRC road, which would become Route 318, reached Lhasa in 1954. Propaganda from 1959 champions the power of highway-building in the region: "Since then, the areas on the plateau within its reach have awakened from age-old slumber," implying that now they have entered modern, socialist world (Peking, NCNA, Radioteletype 1959). It goes on: "There was hardly a tent there when the road builders first arrived. Now the city has a big automobile repair and assembly plant employing 600 workers and a number of smaller factories."

The roads helped change the balance of weaponry. While at first, administration was loose, it gradually became tighter with better territorial access. Requisitions for food and vilification of religion intensified (Chang 2005). PLA soldiers came in, while local weapons were confiscated. In the region of Kham, where an honor culture made armaments sacred to households, the seizures led to fierce resistance. To make social control easier, Tibetan nomads were commanded to live in designated zones. The arrival of many Han Chinese immigrants, who began to control local commerce, further exacerbated tensions. A rebellion against PRC rule was firmly quashed in 1959, with the 14th Dalai Lama fleeing for India.

After 1959, the policy of gradual introduction of socialism was cast aside. Re-mapping the Tibet Autonomous Region as national space became a cornerstone ambition. Although the region was promised self-government by the Communists, Tibetans were forced to participate in both the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Deemed feudal, they were pushed to give up tokens of superstition and accept the currents of socialist modernity. Monasteries, as centers of power and wealth, were stripped of their status. Nyemo County, the site of the August 9 crash, was in fact the site of a major rebellion in 1969. Led by a nun claiming to channel a warrior god, the rebellion attacked CCP members for both excessive taxation and persecution of religion (Goldstein, Jiao, and Lhundrup 2009).

Under Reform and Opening, the region has received unprecedented central-level support. Highways in Tibet more than tripled from 21,611 kilometers in 1984 to 70,591 in 2013 (Liu 2017). These highways have been key passageways for the expanding military presence. Across much of route 318's winding path, traffic is frequently stopped to make way for military vehicles

and equipment. Visitors frequently must reroute themselves to avoid military checkpoints and operations, leading to major traffic jams.

In contemporary China, there is a greater mobilization of capital in road construction than in the Maoist era. Although highways like Route 318 are reviewed and approved at the national level, they are financed and constructed at the provincial level. Unlike the United States, where between 2005-2014, about 40% of highway funding derived from federal outlays (Krol 2017), less than 15% of the funding in China comes from the central government (Lin 2018; Qin 2016). While many outsiders assume the Chinese central government, being Communist and authoritarian, would dominate both the economy and the administration, this is an overstatement. According to the World Bank, tax revenues as a percentage of GDP have hovered between 8-10% for China in the past decade, less than the U.S. (~11%) and the world average (~14%). Funding mechanisms for roads are intensely capitalist and include bank loans and repayment with tolls, bonds, public-private partnerships, and direct expenditure out of general revenues. Of the highways built between 2010-2015, about 67% were debt-financed (Lin 2018).

This shift from public to private infrastructure was not uncontested. Soon after Reform and Opening, toll roads appeared in Guangdong Province. They were lambasted for capitalist influence, critics charging that roads should be open to the public. But it was so successful that the province soon had 12 toll bridges Gone were the days of heroic soldiers conquering nature to bring socialism to backward provinces; the animus would now come from private capital, banks, and construction conglomerates who often filled the pockets of local Party officials to win building or operational rights.

Eastern portions of Route 318 are frequently managed by private companies, who "bid" for the rights to operate (not necessarily construct) the roadway, providing needed revenue for provincial governments, who in turn might use these moneys to build another road and then hand them over to private interests—an effective treadmill of road building. Some suspect these open bids, required by law, are nothing less than preexisting agreements built around *guanxi* ("network") relationships, with no real competition and economism involved (Zuo 2005). One company, Shandong Expressway, which as of 2015 operated 9 roads and 4 bridges in Shandong Province reportedly had earned tens of billions of yuan (Yin 2015). With close connection to provincial and local Party members, these companies also benefit from lucrative real estate deals.

A large body of victims of the August 9 crash were riding in a coach bus. One of the benefits of travel by bus and van is the sharing of road toll costs, which can be burdensome. From Beijing to Ningxia, for example, one driver paid 688 yuan (about $110) in tolls over 2 days (to Xinjiang 2012). And these are likely legal stops. Local law enforcement has considerable leverage in controlling roadway access, and the reason for stoppage and fines is not always apparent to the drivers. Near the town of Hami in Xinjiang, there was a sign near the gas station, insisting the police better police themselves. It reads "Clamp Down on the Three Randoms," which are apparently:

1. Do not randomly collect fees
2. Do not randomly place guards
3. Do not randomly assess fines (Gifford 2008:233)

Automobile travelers often describe these checkpoints and the gates that surround scenic areas as "separatism" (geju 割据), no doubt gathering meaning from both the late Han Dynasty and pre-Republican Era, when local warlords ruled their regions and fought against a united China. Nonetheless, not all "fee collection sites" are organized by the state. On some of the back roads

of Tibet, locals might stop vehicles and demand some payment, an extortion that deeply irks Han travelers and challenges their stereotypes of Tibetan simplicity (to Lhasa-Yongbulakang 2016).

Travelers heading west on Route 318 from Chengdu pay their final toll at Yan'an, Sichuan, along the banks of the Yangtze River. Tibet itself is uniquely free from tolls. This is because nearly all highway funding in Tibet comes from the central government, which manages the roads itself. Given the low density of people and traffic, tolls are also deemed relatively unprofitable (Nima 2017). This investment has skyrocketed in recent years. Difficult to build because of steep slopes and earthquake risk, the engineering of Tibetan roads is a symbol of national rejuvenation. They also provide ample proof of what the government is doing for the non-Han. When the last county of China, Motuo (墨脱) in the mountainous southeast of Tibet, was connected to the country's road network in late 2013, it made national news, with a ceremony of Han, Tibetans, Menba (门巴), and Lhoba (Luoba 珞巴) ethnicities celebrating the opening of the frontiers and cheering the arrival of automobiles, namely a white Toyota SUV (Lhasa Wanbao 2013). Online commenters lauded the sacrifices of the construction crew, going months without electricity and cellular signals, all to improve the life prospects of mostly poor ethnic minorities. China's most isolated and backward region was now open to tour buses. Given that control of Tibet rests on an ideology of perceived local appreciation for outside-imposed progress (Yeh 2013), it is unsurprising that there needed to be a multicultural, camera-worthy staging that expressed sentiments of gratitude for the introduction of the automobile, a potent totem of modernity.

In official discourses, the avenues of operation for Tibetans due to this investment have expanded into new spaces of material abundance, as one news article from *People's Daily* idealizes:

> *Tibetan houses in picturesque disorder (cuoluo you zhi 错落有致), a broad, perfectly straight village road, with telephones, television, and computers filling the houses. Today all of Tibet is quickly realizing a livelihood where the old have care, the sick treatment, the poor relief, the doors residents, and the students education. Unity brings stability and development and allows all ethnic groups in Tibet to be happy* (Chen and Han 2015).

Coming across the built environment and considering the vast money spent on the region, many Chinese people feel there is much to be proud of and much for Tibetans to be happy about. They see the investments as generous gifts (Tuttle 2015; Yeh 2013).

The recipients of this beneficence of course may not see it that way. In addition to the type of road tourists involved in the August 9 crash, these roads bring resource extraction industries, which rely on highway access to markets for profitability. One Tibetan in Litang (an autonomous area in Sichuan) along Route 318 was annoyed by the newly paved roads from Chengdu to Tibet. Before it was rutted and hard to pass; now, he complains, it will bring in Chinese companies and their mining operations (Eimer 2014). According to some sources, the construction of route 318 south of Chengdu was targeted by sabotage during the Kham resistance of the 1950s (Norbu 1979). These industries deliver jobs for Han workers but rarely for Tibetans themselves. This is evidenced ironically when mine disasters occur. The victim's list from a March 2013 mine collapse near Lhasa shows the varied backgrounds of the workers: Jilin Province (27 workers), Shaanxi (26), Guizhou (13), Sichuan (6), Liaoning (3), Chongqing City (2), Hebei (1), Henan (1), Shandong (1), Heilongjiang (1). Only two of the workers were Tibetan (CCTV 2013). Even so, the sightseers into Tibet *do* create jobs for local Tibetans, particularly as the region subsists as the epitome of "cultural tourism" (Bunten 2008), with strong emphasis on performances of cultural distinctiveness by accredited natives (Denyer and Zhang 2016).

Additionally, local Tibetans might not appreciate even the marketized gains. With rising incomes and escape from poverty come rising expectations and concern with cultural attrition. Some resent tourism for twisting meanings, where "everything has turned into products for sale. [Tibetans] think they should do everything for money" (Murphy 2017). Culture becomes more for show, for deployment, than for grounding life. One documentary depicts a traditional Tibetan horse race in Qinghai Province held to great fanfare; the first prize is a motorcycle (Chenaktsang 2009).

It is likely both the bus riders and the those in the SUV involved in the crash stopped in Lhasa, as it has become for many the launching point or final destination for Tibetan sojourns. Lhasa is both the transportation hub and the lynchpin of territorial stabilization. With a population now exceeding 25% Han Chinese, compared to 12% for the entire Tibetan Autonomous Region (Fischer 2021), the city has recently been a laboratory for controlling movements. Under chief administrator Chen Quanguo, Lhasa was drawn into a grid of control, and into its pressure points were inserted a dense set of "convenience stations," miniaturized police stations spaced 500 meters apart making almost any line-of-site open to surveillance. In this 'grid-style social management,' the city was covered in security cameras, and data analytics mustered to observe patterns. The number of policing positions increased exponentially, including the hiring of thousands of Tibetans (Zenz and Leibold 2017). Throughout the region, Chen urged Party officials to move in with villagers and into temples (Anon 2018d). As measured by major incidents and self-immolation cases, during his years of leadership, Tibet became more quiescent and less fringe. Chen's model of policing, and Chen himself, then moved to the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in 2017. Chen also moved up to the Politburo in 2019.

The Tourists

Of the tourists riding in tourist bus AL1869, the vast majority came from Sichuan. They were part of a massive annual migration to Tibet, according to government statistics, some 9.25 million visiting Lhasa itself in 2014 (Xinhua 2015a).

Besides its expanding road and railway network, at least two other factors explain the rise of tourism in Tibet. First, is a massive increase in government support for tourist infrastructure. Second is the diffusion of romantic notions of Tibet as a mystical, placid escape from the mundane.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a massive reorganization of space in Tibet, with the goals of providing social stability, transportation infrastructure, economic growth, and tourist facilities. These are interrelated. For example, the Chinese leadership believes that increased tourism will lead to more ethnic unity, and have done much to promote travel into the restive regions of Xinjiang and Tibet (The Economist 2017a). Additionally, economic development for many towns in western China means giving up their land or herds, moving to cities and travel zones, and exhibiting their cultural distinctiveness (tese 特色) to highway visitors. This government strategy is so well executed that the United Nations World Tourism Organization has credited China with lifting many out of poverty through such means as opening hotels and restaurants in the countryside. The entertainment and leisure industry, of which tourism is a significant portion, is now the largest industry worldwide, so it is unsurprising that a rapidly developing country like China, with a rising middle class, would need outlets for this disposable income.

Tourism is a key plank in the Party's political legitimacy, both internally as displaying economic progress and multicultural opportunities and externally in showing ethnic preservation and stability. President Xi Jinping has stated that he would like Tibet to become an international tourist destination. Currently, strong limitations are placed on foreign travelers, who must apply for special permits to enter Tibet. They can only explore certain regions of the Tibet Autonomous Region, and then only in tour groups, putatively in the name of "safety." Foreign delegations and journalists given invitations to the region follow tight schedules and usually do not venture much outside of Lhasa (Makinen 2015).[4]

But for Han Chinese travelers, there is plenty to explore. Tibet boasts 8 AAAA tourist sites: the Potala Palace (Budala Gong 布达拉宫), Jokhang Temple (Dazhao Si 大昭寺), the Tibetan Museum in Lhasa, Norbulingka Palace (Luobulinka 罗布林卡), Tashi Lhunpo Monastery (Zhashilunbu Si 扎什伦布寺), Pagsum Lake (Basongcuo 巴松措), Mount Everest (Zhufeng 珠峰), and Samye Temple (Sangye Si 桑耶寺). (AAAA is one possible score that tourist sites can receive from the national Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which assigns 5 ranks similar to hotel ratings.) As of 2014, Tibet has 1700 temples, 5 airports, an expanding toll-free highway network, and soon a highway and cable car access running to Mount Kailash, a holy site revered by both Buddhists and Hindus (Su et al. 2014; Tibet Watch 2014).

If the infrastructure is the amphitheater, then the towns and cities are the stage design. In the creation of tourist facades, places legible to travelers and pleasingly encoded with meaning, China has shown a consistent pattern of commodifying culture: seize on a unique aspect of the culture or its history, re-inventing it if necessary, purchase property (farmland or housing) from the residents at favorable prices, re-make the area into a more distilled version of its imagined (and marketable) cultural essence, improve accessibility, set up gate fees, and turn those very displaced residents into part of the entertainment. Put in charge of this operation is a "tourist management company," which siphons off the vast majority of the profits, and then sluices those profits to the correct officials.

Gansu Province's Liqian (骊靬) found its cultural essence in a dubious Roman past. Supposedly composed of the descendants of ancient Roman settlers, the town sponsored academic research to prove its version of history, then erected statues of Roman soldiers in full battle regalia, seized farmland from residents (this time without payment) to build a tourist center, and summoned the whole village to take a group photo in togas and sandals. At the nearby Buddhist temple, they erected a fence to control access, and, to the local's frustration, to isolate residents from the everyday practice of worship. Villagers have found new job opportunities as Praetorian Guards or servers in pizza and pasta eateries (Mi 2017).

At Kokonor, a lake in a Tibetan administrative region of Qinghai, the tourist company has marked off zones of cultural contact. Near the ticket office, parents sell off their children's visage for 1 RMB (less than $.20) per photograph. "I'm dressing her like a real Tibetan," says one parent-agent. In 2007, the tour company made 20 million RMB, while the local nomads earned 2-3% of that (Chenaktsang 2009). One contradiction with this model of designated contact is that tourist zones are marked by extensive fencing, limiting the range for grazing animals. Although as an industry tourism is much for profitable than herding, and a reason so many Tibetans willingly relinquish the nomadic lifestyle, it is also a top-line predator of the living spaces that make other economies possible.

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[4] In 2019, the CCP secretary for Tibet said that foreign access to Tibet was restricted due to visitors getting altitude sickness (Zheng 2019). If this were truly a risk, then domestic visitors would also be restricted because of the sheer number who report symptoms of nausea while traveling to the region.

Along the same corridor where the tourist bus crashed on Route 318, visitors will find conveniently situated to the roadside a well-decorated Tibetan village. A tour bus passenger narrates their encounter thus:

"Our tour guide mentioned that on the side of Route 318 there was a pretty Tibetan village built with government help, [because] Tibetans don't have a way to get rich. In order to change their backward aspects (luohou mianmao 落后面貌), [President] Xi Jinping directed the beginning of Jiale Lvyou (家乐旅游) to help them escape poverty. Those tour groups that pass along the route typically pay the 120 yuan per person to help support the Tibetans' income" (2015).[5]

When they went inside, they were greeted by a multi-colored bull skull hung on the wall and draped with the hada (a white piece of silk). In the dining area they took in butter tea, barley liquor, potatoes, and dried lamb. Beneath photographs on the wall of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Jiang Zemin a pair of Tibetan women performed "The Gold Mountain of Beijing (Beijing de Jinshan Shang) 北京的金山上," a classic socialist folk song featuring such lyrics as "Chairman Mao is the Golden Sun." After the meal, these bus tourists donned Tibetan clothes and danced the Guozhuangwu (锅庄舞, a folk dance) together in the courtyard.

Constructed by Chinese real estate companies, other "folk villages" feature luxury hotels and replicas of Tibetan villages (Denyer 2016). The Jiale Lvyou is a central government initiative to boost tourism in Tibet through transforming the economies from animal husbandry to service, specifically combining lodging, food, wi-fi access, and ample parking into all-for-one ventures. According to *Xinhua* (Xinhua 2015b), Linzhi prefecture in Tibet has opened 316 hotels since 2003, and 80% of the area's income comes from tourism. In the tourism economy, inner life and spirit submit to the visible. The government has preferred, for example, that monasteries spend less money on scholarship and more on architecture and temple maintenance (Ford 2018). Spiritual preservation has value insofar as it fits a model of the picturesque.

Han Chinese travelers carry an image of culture amalgamated from a Marxist view—societies pass through stages, from slavery to serfdom to capitalism to communism—and a social Darwinist evolutionary view—societies pass from animal to human to civilized human. Mere contact with the superior stage, e.g., of which Han culture represents, will exert positive influence on those still caught in a more feudal, untamed state. Both Hessler (2011) and Werbel (2013) found Chinese students to have similar opinions when writing essays about white American interactions with Native Americans. Although able to sympathize with the plight of Native Americans like the Navajo, they saw as paramount the unmovable weight of history:

"...the Navajo tribe, I assume, is still largely uncivilized. If we consider the whole human history as a process of progressing from nature to culture, the Navajos have forwarded but a few steps. Therefore, they are somehow closer and more exposed to nature ... For another, I think this has something to do with their historical background. When the US takes over their territory, the Navajos, as a relatively backward tribe, supposedly will identify the US army as human civilization or culture" (Werbel 2013:986).

The perceived closeness to nature of many ethnic minorities in China is evinced in the relatively fixed word bank Han travelers use to describe them, among them the adjectives *chunpu* 纯朴 (simple and honest,) or *haofang* 豪放 (unconstrained and vigorous). In describing an Yugu (an ethnic group of Gansu Province) woman, one female traveler describes her as pretty and cute, warmly welcoming guests, bold and unconstrained (haofang), and living a simple (chunpu)

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[5] Throughout this dissertation, I denote referenced travelogues by their destination (if not implied in the text) and year of travel.

lifestyle. In just a few words, the traveler equates the Yugu with noble savages, who, though uncivilized, still drip with the blessings of nature—poise and energy, without a hint of mechanization.

In Tibet especially, c*hunpu* is frequently accompanied by an assumption about their subjective state, namely that through their simplicity they are amicable and happy. Waving at oncoming vehicles, undercharging for tourist services, or frequently smiling can earn the designation of *chunpu*. Some travelers point out a distinctive, revelatory expression on Tibetan faces. One traveler elaborates:

> *The smiles of Tibetans are very special. When they smile, they will grin from the corners of their mouths to the base of their ears, revealing the entire row of teeth, and they will not hide them because of missing front teeth, irregular teeth, or insufficient whitening. Everyone laughed so sincerely and unabashedly. Many close-ups of Tibetans are of this kind of smile, which is not only beautiful but very infectious* (Lhasa 2014).

In 2016, Lhasa was voted the happiest city in China in the annual "China Economic Life Survey" sponsored by China Central Television 2 (CCTV 2). Its strengths as a city were (1) its public security, (2) its public services, and (3) its healthiness. The methodology of the survey is secretive, and it is unlikely Tibetans were proportionally represented in the survey, but state media has used this index to gainsay foreign suspicions of Tibet's situation. As of 2016, Lhasa had won the happiest city contest in more than half the years it was conducted (Koetse 2017).

The civilizing mission of Han Chinese is strengthened by their travel experiences, which confirm the successes of the government's economic development plan. Besides the daring highways, Han tourists find the spaces and the material objects that fill them part of a progressive story of triumph. One traveler sums up the dream conferred:

> *"I got a lot out of this trip. The thing I was most thankful for is that there have been a lot of changes in Tibet; the country's support for Tibet is immense; outside of the houses of the herders are pick-up trucks and motorcycles. Production of cauliflower is abundant; the barley is growing. The prostrations and worship of the faithful toward Buddhism is really moving"* (Tibet 2016).

Motorcycles and prostrations, mobility and immobility, economic modernity with intense cultural tradition, this visitor reflects the romanticism and best-of-all-possible worlds idealism of Tibet, a rising GDP powered by burning joss sticks.

Although the aim is to convert the Tibetan homeland into an integral, prosperous, internationally alluring, and socially stable region, this often conflicts with the ideal of cultural preservation, or maintaining enough of a non-commercial identity for commercial distinction. The bus and SUV travelers were not there to mirror their experiences in crowded, polluted, competitive, fast-paced cities. The same imagery of a transcendently awakened landscape that appeared in James Hilton's *Lost Horizons* (which actually sells better in China than any other country), and shaped the Western idealization of the Tibetan plateau, also form the reveries of Han Chinese—saffron robes, prayer flags, heavenly mountains, melodic chants, majestic yaks, frolicsome antelope, and beautiful coarse faces. Western travelers see them as ever-pacific, Chinese as ever-happy.

In fact, Chinese travelers commonly contrast the equipoise of the Tibetans to their own discontented kind. One traveler to Kumbum (Taer Si 塔尔寺), a Tibetan monastery in Qinghai, recounts how a fellow traveler dropped a cup of water only to be loudly scolded by his wife. Their Tibetan tour guide, a dignified young woman, muttered: "he just dropped a cup of water, does that really have to spoil your mood?" Inspired by her insights, the traveler mused that the

tour guide must be a dedicated Buddhist, and that, even though we laity cannot comprehend the essence of detachment like monks, we still need to clean our spirits, and do not excessively worry about small stuff (Dunhuang 2013). Against the ultra-competitive nature of China's marketplace, visitors find lingering spiritual values in Tibetan bodies. In the same way, Tibet serves as a two-way mirror, revealing crucial cultural aspects typically invisible to Han Chinese people and allowing the observation of a population set apart, with incomparable traditions and a vibrant pulse untuned to the frenetic beat of modernization.

This glorification of primitive lifestyles in China probably began in the 1980s. The return to folk, roots, and soil, and the wild life in a state of nature is one theme of the famous Zhang Yimou movie *Red Sorghum* (Hong Gaoliang 红高粱). Even though pre-dating much of China's rapid economic growth, its exaltation of fleshy, sun-marked life echoes the thrill travelers find in Tibet. It showed half-naked men, free from any forms of control or –isms, unconstrained in their bearing, given to drinking and sexing and common labor. Zhang's films appealed to youth, who were looking for more life and exuberance, but it also appeals to those seeking the pleasure of nostalgia. Zhang even admitted: "Chinese should live more cheerfully. Our ancestors were once vivid and dramatic, living freely, dying without regret. But for the past several centuries we've been suffering. Today we should assert ourselves (qiangqilai 强起来)" (quoted in Clark 2012, 65).

One way in which urban Chinese people have begun asserting themselves is through ethnic capitalism, particularly with Tibetan spirituality. Books such as the *Tibetan Book of the Living Dead* and *The Tibet Code* have sold well (Gao 2013), and Tibetan lamas are paid large sums to enlighten young CEOs, bless businesses, and otherwise provide spiritual counseling to the new middle class. Precisely because Tibet is seen to arise from a pure land, untainted by both industrialization and the Cultural Revolution (the "isms"), their school of Buddhism is regarded as more authentic, more powerful, and more numinous (A. D. Jones 2011).

A conversion experience, therapy and awakening, are the proffered psychological rewards of a Tibetan trip. The audience at the water show in the Potala Palace (the former residence of the Dalai Lama) in Lhasa is treated to music meant to evoke their reward for an arduous journey, i.e., the ability to lose oneself in a new land:

> *How tall are the mountains, how long are the waters?*
> *The road to paradise is difficult…*
> *Going to look at the mystical Potala*
> *Going to look at the gorgeous Gesang flowers…*
> *Drinking the fragrant barley wine*
> *Getting drunk in paradise*

Here are a people that revel in tradition and represent the heroic, good-natured Chinese past, uncorrupted by greed. A travel guide published in China notes that you will see peaceful happiness on all the pilgrims and residents in Lhasa (Cai et al. 2015). The transportation system itself often forms the prism for these moral assessments. A tourist in Lhasa interprets the hailing of cars as uncanny: "Here the hitching of rides is not disrupted by the hype of negative news reporting; people have mutual trust, offer mutual assistance. I heard that hitching rides is pretty common here" (Tibet 2014). There is indeed nostalgia here, for a rural way of life that is cooperative, full of mirth and genuine piety.

Although some travelers can sort their impressions of Tibet into a fully positive story, others cannot overcome the dissonance of material lows and spiritual highs. A striking ambivalence accompanies the scenery of Tibet. On one hand there is backwardness, what Teng (2004) calls

the rhetoric of privation, a system of unproductive habits and destitute lifestyles that perforce must join with the tracks of progress. On the other hand, there is the rhetoric of primitivism, romanticizing these cultures as lacking all the sins of progress. One determining factor for which rhetoric prevails is the terrain of social relations. Examining travel, we can see that ethnicity has a strong spatial component, as if Tibetan-ness has a terroir that loses its winsome qualities outside of it. While Tibetans in Beijing are reviled for being languid, odorous, and uncultivated (Dreyer 2003), those in Tibet are accorded all kinds of virtues. In the factories and businesses of Eastern cities, they are discriminated against in employment and make around a quarter less than Han workers for the same job (Hasmath and Ho 2015; Zhou and Wong 2019). In the hotels and Airbnb's of Shenzhen (Rollet 2019), they will encounter postings that explicitly mention they are not wanted. Considered lazy wherever they are, nonetheless in Tibet itself this is coronated with an aura of carefree, natural living—the lifestyle exalted in Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum*. Perhaps considered malodorous all-around, in Tibet they at least have a picturesque visuality and colorful bearing. In Tibet itself, a Tibetan will make more money than a Han ferrying travelers. Whereas remaking a Han identification into a Tibetan one would be ludicrous in much of China, Han entrepreneurs in Tibetan regions will try often to mimic the hippie lifestyle by associating their persona with a local Tibetan (Zhang and Xiao 2021).

Yet the travelers through Tibet who were on the bus were not just seeking internal inspiration but also external validation. Identity is not just embedded in material objects, it is also stretched and solidified by experiences of space and time, and one of the most prestigious adventure narratives in China, and the world for that matter, is the trek into Tibet. Just as an upper-class American youth in the time of Henry James would gild their education with a European visit, the so-called Grand Tour, so must a self-respecting middle-class Chinese fill in the gaps of their class credentials with photographs next to the Potala Palace, the former home of the Dalai Lama, or next to Mount Everest base camp.

Economic capital becomes cultural capital not just in artistic taste, literacy, or leisure alone but also in ostentatious displays of freedom of mobility, both *freedom to* (access new areas, annex cultural traditions) and *freedom from* (timetables, crowds). Thus, the bus travelers were performing less well than the SUV travelers struck by the bus, who in theory could go where they wanted to go when they wanted to go. The pair in the SUV had rented a car from Lhasa and headed west. They were emblematic of a pivot in Chinese travel trends, from arranged group tours to self-managed trips, usually by car. In just three years the number of Chinese who participated in tour group travel declined from 7.2% in 2009 to 4.5% in 2012, despite increasing overall travel (Ma 2014:46). A pair of Chinese scholars cite multiple reasons for the popularity of road trips, among them, convenience and quietude (which trains cannot provide), concern with the process more than the outcome, better fit for taking the whole family, individuation, and the ability to show off status and position (Fan and Li 2006). Both the distinction element (freedom from) and the individuation are revealed in advertisements for car rental services. A poster on the Shanghai subway for Zuche, a car rental firm, reads: "Follow the scenery, not the tour guide." Travel to far western regions like Xinjiang and Tibet is one of the most valuable forms of conspicuous leisure, but there is a hierarchy based on the travel technology employed: bus < rented vehicle < personal sedan < personal SUV.

Meanwhile, in the ethnoscape of mobility, Tibetans face political constraints directly proportional to their mobility. Travel by Tibetans, especially abroad, is seen as a suspicious activity that could create broad, transnational ethnic solidarities, a pretext for limiting contact with foreigners. Students who spend significant time outside the TAR attending state-sponsored

schools no doubt benefit from free tuition and room and board, being able to acquire essential Mandarin and technical skills needed to assist their fellow Tibetans, yet their mobility saddles them with the gift of obligation. They become model minorities, those who are rescued from darkness and can consequently act as apostles of the state's generosity. One program recruits these successful students for tours of impoverished primary and secondary schools, where they discuss "economic development, supports for individual development, and personal experiences, all to encourage Tibetan children to have deeper understandings, a sense of gratitude 知感恩, and a modern consciousness with a cultural basis in scientific-rationality" (Cheng 2015). It is certainly a paradox of the geopolitics of the region that Han Chinese are rushing into Tibet to find spiritual fulfillment, while Tibetan students are being recruited out of Tibet to remove their superstitions.

The Vehicles

According to the report, two vehicles were principally involved in the crash: a Toyota SUV with Tibetan plates rented in Lhasa (see Figure 1.2) and a tourist bus run by a Lhasa touring company. Even though a third pickup truck was involved, the identity of its driver and its role are not discussed in the report.

The passenger bus traveling downhill on route 318 from Shigatse to Lhasa in Tibet did not avert a SUV traveling uphill, which had crossed the dividing line and was heading headlong toward it. Their left front ends collided; the bus swerved right, crashed through the guardrail and plunged down 11 meters into a ditch, crushing the top, killing 42 passengers. The SUV spun 180 degrees and returned to its original lane, where it was struck by a small freight vehicle, and eventually came to rest in a ditch. Two passengers died in the SUV.

The report states that the Toyota SUV was rented from Zhiyuan Rental Company in Lhasa. It was not registered for commercial use, but it had passed inspection and had normal brakes and steering. The passenger bus was registered to Shengdi Travel Vehicles, a division of Tibet Touring Company Ltd. It was registered for passengers, its steering was passable, and it operated at under-capacity. However, there was a brake problem.

Cross-country vehicles, or SUVs, have surged in popularity in recent years and are particularly prominent along the slopes of Route 318. In fact, a prominent trend is that SUVs, especially crossover styles (based on a car chassis), are propelling much of global automobile sales, gaining market share in Australia, the United Kingdom, the European Union, India, and China.[6] By 2019, SUVs comprised 43.6% of the Chinese market, compared to 49.7% for sedans and 6.7% for MPVs (minivans). SUV sales have explained most of the growth rates in passenger vehicle sales the past few years. Occupying only 6% of the passenger vehicle market in 2005 and 15% in 2011, SUV sales are expected to continue to grow in market share and have taken the least hit from the pandemic. The profitability of even luxury carmakers like Porsche and eco-conscious ones like Tesla depends on their SUV sales, the stylish Cayenne for the former, the tech-laden Model X for the latter (Cendrowski 2017).

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[6] SUVs comprise 25% of the Indian automobile market (Dovall 2017), and, combined with pickups make up 63% of the American market (Associated Press 2017). Crossovers and SUVs now outsell passenger cars in Canada (Cain 2016).

Figure 1.2: The style of Toyota SUV involved in the crash

The reasons for the recent rise in SUV sales in China are manifold. First, Chinese domestic manufacturers, especially Haval and Great Wall, produce relatively high-quality vehicles that compare well to foreign brands. Second, even though Chinese roads have improved greatly as far as surfacing and drainage, there are still many places, particularly in rural areas and western regions, where high ground clearance and power are helpful for transversal. Third, with better living conditions, families accumulate more material goods, and need more space both to store it and transport it. SUVs provide the carrying capacity for these goods, and for extended families. A common justification for off-road vehicles is that they are more convenient for long road trips, capable of surmounting various road conditions and adequately carry everything. Commenting on Tibetan travel, many automotive websites post articles inquiring if one can actually take sedans into the region. Usually, the answer is a resounding yes, with explanations about the smooth roadways, but the fact that the question gets asked shows that SUVs are the default means of western travel. And not just SUVs, but what are called off-road vehicles (yueyeche 越野车) (as opposed to urban SUVs) are especially elevated with respect to exploring national territory.[7] Fourth, SUVs provide "face," and flaunt wealth in more dramatic ways than most sedans, able to "ride high" above others on the streets.

An additional impetus for SUV sales is the Chinese Manifest Destiny, to "go out (zouchuqu 走出去)" spreading Chinese culture, to touch the wild and untamed, and challenge oneself in the unknown. A Shanghai Volkswagen promotion for a Tibetan excursion in their Tiguan SUV notifies drivers that "this trip will be hard and dangerous; you will face many challenges and boldly advance...You will imbibe much scenery and cleanse your spirit. We don't know what we'll encounter, but not knowing what will come is the real value of exploration" (Shanghai Volkswagen 2017). Driving in Tibet is now almost synonymous with driving a vehicle similar to the Toyota involved in the August 9 crash. Parking lots of Tibetan hotels are filled with four-wheel drive vehicles. Drivers of SUVs in Tibet often express their good fortune to not be driving a sedan during some of the more difficult mountain passes. In fact, wealthy Buddhist patrons often gift their Tibetan lamas with SUVs, assuming they are necessary for them to reach their homes (Flora 2015). A BMW billboard near Gongga, Tibet, in another symbol-laden fantasy,

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[7] As a video review of a Nissan urban SUV model explains the lurking temptations of exploration: "In fact, people who choose such urban SUVs generally do not go to particularly extreme road conditions, but in the face of such a vast and rich country as our motherland, you can't help but want to go out and take a look" (Anon 2022a).

shows an SUV leading a herd of Tibetan yaks forward through a valley (see Figure 1.3), proclaiming that it was "born for innovators (kaichuangzhe 开创者)."

Figure 1.3: BMW billboard near Gongga, Tibet. It says the X-class BMW was "born for innovators"

The very terrain and topography of Tibet merges with the desire of automobile hobbyists to test 4-wheel drive suspension systems and their masculinity. Automobile clubs and journalists often take new SUVs into Tibetan villages to ford streams and mud ride, sharing gravel roads exclusively with yaks and other off-roaders. One diary from a male driver shows his Nissan SUV charging through a rocky stream: "This is the picture I am most satisfied with. Mashing the pedal to the floor was quite fun; obviously, this sort of fun you cannot experience in a sedan" (Linzhi-Lhasa 2018). Even for those who do not intend to push their technical and vehicular limits, the complexities of the terrain produce sensations of accomplishment. When a married couple get their SUV stuck in mud along a mountainous road in Tibet, they use a combination of shoveling and towing to extricate themselves. The wife later writes that those 15 hours along that treacherous road were a combination of hardship and joy, and she got to witness her husband fulfill his manly sense of responsibility (Tibet 2014).

On the other side of the crash was the passenger bus. Two crashes prior to the 9*8 incident exemplify the hazards of long-distance bus travel. In 2011 in Shaanxi Province a bus crashed into the rear end of a tanker truck carrying flammable methanol, causing the tanker to catch fire, which then spread to the bus (Lie and Baijie 2012). Even though 36 people died in the fire, this case is probably better known for its political aftermath, when the Party chief of the province's work safety administration, Yang Dacai, was caught on camera smiling at the scene of the crash. Public scorn to his untimely levity was exacerbated by photos unearthed by netizens showing him wearing 11 luxury wristwatches, something incompatible with his official salary. Although their personalities are typically sealed away from the public gaze, and their statements ironed and pressed into perfect orthodoxy, Chinese leaders have had to master the art of public performance after natural disaster and catastrophic accidents, showing enough resolve and empathy to soothe an anxious public. However, public responses also present risks. Because of public uproar over

his facial expression, Yang was investigated for corruption and later sentenced to 14 years in prison for receiving bribes.

Figure 1.4: A passenger bus similar to the one that crashed in Tibet

The second exemplary bus crash occurred on the Shanghai-Kunming Expressway in Shaoyang 邵阳, Hunan, on July 19, 2014, at 2:57 AM. A tanker truck carrying ethanol rear-ended a sleeper bus stopped in traffic, igniting the fuel tank and rapidly setting both vehicles on fire and spreading to a few other adjacent vehicles. It killed 54 people and injured 6 others. The bus driver had ignored regulations requiring rest breaks during the hours of 2:00-5:00 AM. The chassis of the tanker truck was illegally modified, a pervasive problem in a highly competitive industry. This case also caught the attention of the State Council, which commissioned a panel of experts to investigate its causes and recommend corrective actions. What is most striking about this event, besides its dramatic imagery of charred vehicles, was the sheer number of individuals targeted for punishment. Not only the touring company and the local tourism bureau, but every entity affiliated with manufacturing, selling, installing, operating, inspecting, and monitoring the modified chassis was assigned responsibility. Thirty-four persons were targeted for civil litigation, and 72 others for Party discipline. Well-covered by national media, and a perceived threat to the legitimacy of the state, multi-fatality bus crashes have required careful damage control, both in showing appropriate sympathy with the victims and appropriate severity to those held responsible. It is probably true that having hundreds of small fatal traffic crashes occur under your watch is vastly superior for an official than allowing one very dramatic one, which finds its way into media, and which requires a measured public response.

The relative merits of public transit, buses, trains, and planes versus private automobiles also depends partially on the cost of petroleum. The oil industry falls under the rubric of a sensitive industry, meaning government management is justified as necessary to national stability. Thus, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) adjusts domestic prices according to political situations. However, more-and-more, these prices are marketized, meaning they are pegged, with some time lag and attenuation, to international prices. China's average price of fuel is slightly below the international average, much cheaper than Western Europe, and more expensive than the United States. The passenger bus would have benefited from choice rates on diesel, which is further subsidized.

For the cheapest grade of gasoline, the three vehicles in the crash probably paid 7.69-8.22 yuan/liter (about $4.73-$5.06/gallon) in Tibet at the time—with prices varying by location and

octane. The practices at the pump reflect politico-ethnic realities. The vehicles would have either entered a gasoline station with a red awning marked in white characters with 中国石化 (*Zhongguo Shihua*, or Sinopec) or a gasoline station with a red awning marked in white characters with 中国石油 (*Zhongguo Shiyou*, or CNPC), these being one of the two state-owned oil companies. Because of the politically sensitive nature of Tibet, and the usefulness of gasoline in self-immolation, the characteristic mode of protest by Tibetans against Chinese rule, special procedures have been installed at fuel stations to monitor purchases. Before reaching the pumps, drivers must show their vehicle registration and personal identification, then complete a form specifying the amount of fuel they would like to purchase and the vehicle it will be used for. Drivers are allowed a maximum of 60 liters; spare gasoline containers are forbidden. Such strict regulations on procuring gasoline have also become commonplace in Xinjiang.

The Work Units, Companies

Rental car companies such as Lhasa Zhiyuan Rental Company, which owned the SUV driven by the 4 women in the crash, have proliferated throughout China. Once controlled by government entities, these organizations now fiercely compete for travelers. Their advertising logic fits nicely into the rhetoric of visiting Tibet—to refresh yourself spiritually and spontaneously encounter life. Posters touting Shenzhou Rentals on the train doors of the Shanghai subway system urge passengers to "leave anxiety behind and be happy" (fangxia fannao, daishang huanle 放下烦恼，带上欢乐) and "love being free, without any reason" (爱自由，没理由). Now the largest rental agency in the country, Shenzhou operates under the mission of "Anyone, Anytime, Any car, Anywhere," providing access to motordom in over 70 major cities, 24 hours a day, with a selection of over 70 models, to anyone over 18 with a valid driver's license. In 2013, Hertz invested in the company. For its part, Zhiyuan's webpage in 2017 capitalized on ethnic imagery, featuring blue skies and SUVs photo-shopped next to green mountains, Tibetan prayer flags, and the Potala Palace.

The bus belonged to Shengdi (圣地 = sacred land) Travel Ltd. In service for 8 years, it was registered with the police for passenger travel. Although its steering was passable, its braking system was not up to code. Its 50 passengers did not exceed its carrying capacity of 55.

The bus in this multi-fatality incident is notable in that it did NOT exceed its carrying capacity. Thin margins characterize most bus lines operating in western China, and to cut corners, they will typically overload their vehicles, incentivize long driver hours, and skimp on regular maintenance, as evidenced in the Shaanxi and Hunan crashes discussed above.

The Drivers

According to the report, the SUV driver was Bai Congcong, a 26-year-old woman from Inner Mongolia. The passenger van driver was Dong Chao, a 46-year-old male from Sichuan. Neither driver showed signs of alcohol intoxication, and all of their registrations were in order—Bai with a C1 license appropriate for an SUV and Dong with an A1 license necessary to operate buses.

Dong Chao stands in a long line of Sichuanese whose income depends on Tibet. It is claimed by many outside China that Tibet is now a colony of China, but it is probably more precise to say it is a colony of Sichuan. Although I cannot back this up with statistics, but based on multiple accounts of Han travelers into Tibet, Sichuanese appear to dominate hotel, restaurant, souvenir,

and other travel service industries around Lhasa.[8] As early as 1999, the shops around Jokhang Temple were staffed by Sichuanese selling Tibetan ceremonial scarves (Hessler 1999). One businessman from Sichuan runs a well-known "museum hotel" in Lhasa, collecting treasures from the Tibetan countryside like jewelry, earthenware, and Buddha statues, displaying them throughout his stately lobby. As of 2008, many local Tibetans also worked in this hotel, e.g., as musicians who greet guests and as monks who oversee and bless anniversary ceremonies (Anon 2008). Travelers have remarked that even those Tibetans who speak Chinese do so with Sichuanese accents. Therefore, having a Sichuanese in your traveling party is especially useful.

The fears of growing encroachment of Sichuanese are backed up by a Tibetan joke:

> *A Japanese, an American and a Tibetan were sitting in the same passenger car of the train. The Japanese man took out a Panasonic laptop to send an e-mail and threw it out of the window afterwards. He said casually: "We have too many of them."*
>
> *Then the American took out a Motorola mobile and made an international call. He threw the phone out of the window, saying casually: "We have too many of them."*
>
> *The Tibetan turned red with embarrassment. He could not bear such provocation but did not know how to fight back since Tibet was only an underdeveloped ethnic autonomous region after all. At that moment, a Sichuanese stewardess came to serve drinking water. The Tibetan threw her out of the window and said casually: "We have too many of them"* (Anon 2018a).

The setup of the joke shows the desire to compete (culturally and economically) in a globally developing world. The response to the foreign challenge satirizes both knowledge of developmental logics but also the ways that Tibetans are overwhelmed by the influx of the Sichuanese who do the actual developing.

In order to attain their driving licenses, both Dong Chao in Sichuan and Bai Congcong in Inner Mongolia would have taken a standardized "theory" test. Unlike many nations, traffic safety in China falls under the control of the Ministry of Public Security, with almost no input from public health organizations. Additionally, no civil society organization exerts influence on automobile or pedestrian safety. The driver's education system is thus completely free of lobbying, and an evidence-based curriculum. Its effectiveness is thus completely unknown, and I could locate no published papers rigorously assessing its value. Hence, the drivers would have paid a few thousand yuan and enrolled in a driving school, elegantly chronicled in Hessler's *Country Driving*, which would prepare them for their driving examinations. Each province is allotted only 5% local content on this exam, so both drivers would have had similar qualifications. From the Inner Mongolia theory test in 2014, qualified drivers would presumably understand that drivers 18-70 years old could apply for a license, that emergency vehicles should be yielded to, that one cannot overtake another vehicle at an intersection, that you should yield to pedestrians even if they violate traffic laws, and that a lane marked "special bus lane" is for buses.

In addition to a written test, they would have to pass both a "field road test", involving navigating around fixed pylons and poles on a simulated obstacle course and an "actual road test", where they would be paired with a road tester, purportedly selected at random (PRC Ministry of Transport 2016). Corruption and malfeasance have emerged in each of these steps, including hiring stand-ins to take tests for you and bribing driving teachers for better results

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[8] Put in a broader context, Sichuanese food has increasingly come to occupy the foremost position among the numerous styles of Chinese cuisine. Already the most well-known abroad, Sichuanese food seems to shadow domestic travelers in China at the various airports and highway service areas, much as a McDonalds would in North America.

(Tang 2012). Yet, despite the clearly ceremonial role of driver education, there is still a veneration of experience, skills, and personal responsibility in determining road traffic safety.

The Assigned Causes

The report lists 4 direct causes of the crash. First, both drivers were speeding, the bus going over 60% the posted limit of 40 km/hr., the SUV 20%. Second, the SUV driver was in the wrong lane, having crossed the center lane. Third, the bus's braking system was not functioning properly. Finally, the SUV driver never attempted to warn the other driver, slow down, or take evasive action despite an estimated 4.6 seconds to react to the impending crash.

With their licenses, both drivers would be allotted 12 "points" a year. Traffic offenses carry weights that deduct points from this pool. Certain offenses such as "driving under the influence of alcohol" theoretically result in a loss of all 12 points and forfeiture of the license. However, police rarely act proactively against many offenses, rather recording them only after a crash has occurred or if there happens to be a nationwide crackdown against them. Speed enforcement, in particular, is generally dependent on overhead mounted security cameras, which record license plate numbers and then send, by mail or electronically, a citation along with a fine. In western China, the speed control policies are frequently based on measuring how fast drivers complete timed intervals between checkpoints, allowing drivers to speed during one leg of the interval and then slow down or stop during another part to stay within the legal time. Possibly because there was no fear of on-the-spot deterrence, both the bus driver and SUV driver exceeded the posted speed limits.

Legal Responsibility and Punishment

Like the aftermath of most well-publicized accidents in China, the targets of criticism and punishment were broad and extended up and down organizational ladders: to the SUV and bus rental companies, the Tibetan police, the city of Lhasa, and the two drivers.

- Zhiyuan Rental Company was found to be illegally renting passenger vehicles and not maintaining sufficient safety policies. The committee recommended the city of Lhasa revoke its license to operate vehicles and confiscate any illegal gains it had made. Its person in charge, Yang Yanjie, was charged under civil proceedings.
- Shengdi was faulted for bad safety management (anquan guanli hunluan 安全管理混乱), lacking specialized safety expertise, deficient safety training program, and ineffectively monitoring the route and speed of its vehicles. The report advised performing a complete reorganization of Shengdi. Its vice-president and person-in-charge Yang Jiankang was charged under civil proceedings. Its parent company Tibet Travel Ltd, was held accountable for not establishing a safety system and for inadequate supervision. Its CEO Ou Yangxu and President Su Ping were fined a sum worth 80% of their annual income and were disbarred for life from serving as executives in the freight and travel industries.
- The city of Lhasa Transport Authority (yunshu guanliju 运输管理局) was reprimanded for failing to adequately supervise the leasing of automobiles, to crackdown on illegal vehicle operation, and to hold Shengdi accountable for various poor safety practices.
- The Nyemo County Ministry of Transport was reprimanded for insufficiently patrolling and enforcing speed laws on Route 318.

- The city of Lhasa Ministry of Transport was chastised for insufficient oversight of Nyemo County. They were commanded to establish engineering safeguards on dangerous stretches of roadway, including steep hills, alongside riverbanks, and in high accident zones. The police were also urged to rigorously combat speeders during tourist season and on dangerous road segments.
- The governments of Lhasa and Nyemo County were criticized for inadequate oversight of their Ministries of Transport and Transport Authorities. The committee recommended that the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region submit an inspection report to the State Council and strengthen the safety work done in the region.

All told, 34 persons were recommended for civil litigation, and 15 CCP members were punished under Party discipline.

Yet the recommended course of action quickly plunges into vagaries which cloud our understanding of what really will happen to the responsible parties. Their violations also become bureaucratic non-speak that adduce few concrete lessons. For example, the Tibet Touring Company "did not establish a safe operation, or safe production, and to its subordinates did not provide sufficient management." Its tourist van subsidiary should be "reorganized" (zhengdun 整顿). The City of Lhasa was faulted for "poor work and weak supervision." While there may be jurisdictional sensitivities that must be protected in discussing suitable penalties, it is still notable that the report fails to address future prevention activities, ways to forestall such cases from re-occurring. How exactly should a tourist van company be re-organized? If the police have failed to enforce the law on 318, how should they improve? I would argue it is because road safety falls under the purview of a policing organization, the MPS, the culture of traffic safety focuses mainly on rectification and correction and is unable to diagnose or even imagine systemic improvements in scientific ways. Also, without civil society participation, there is no language constituency to satisfy, who would demand accountability and evidence of continual improvement.

In accordance with the Regulations on the Reporting, Investigation and Disposition of Work Safety Accidents, the report suggests applying fines to responsible employees. Administrative punishment was applied to Communist Party members. As one expects from intra-Party sanctions, there is little public record of its process or outcomes.

In December 2014, Tibet Touring Company released a statement assuring shareholders that they had fully complied with the report's recommendations: "we quickly called a meeting of managers, strengthened our safety consciousness, hired an industrial safety expert, and carried out a comprehensive overhaul of supervisory practices" (Tibet Touring Company 2014). Furthermore, they averred, the rental portion of their company made up only a small portion of total revenues and all compensations from the accident were carried out through insurance payments. The company is completely stable.

Even though the Traffic Safety Bureau of Tibet immediately began mandatory safety inspections of all tourist buses, just 10 days later, on August 18, another tour bus would crash in Nyemo County, this time rolling over into a river. Three were confirmed dead. Thirteen bodies were never found, lost to the rushing Tibetan stream.

Conclusions

Just as the streetcar helped people in the early 20th century "explore" their city by taking

weekend outings and seeking leisure in parks (Jackson 1987), the automobile has given curious Chinese people opportunities to tour the countryside (Hessler 2011), discover their homeland, and have an ethnic experience to display on social media. The 2014 crash in Tibet reveals patterns and discontinuities in the introduction of motoring to the frontier and the importance of travel as an integral part of China's ethnic minority policies.

National narratives of historic continuity and union with the political center, along with treasured markers of economic rejuvenation, are woven tightly into the travel experience. Automotive tourism participates in a territorial project, accomplished by pioneering drivers with responsive motor skills, which draws Tibetan landscapes and people into the money economy. Space is rearranged for the benefit of cultural visibility. The aesthetics of motor travel, especially on the diverse Route 318, enjoins a panoply of imagery that resonates with political consciousness—martyrs and engineers who built marvelous paths to bring civilization to the roof of the world—and psychological fulfillment—refreshment of the soul in pure water, blue skies, and a crowd of beautiful, happy pilgrims.

At the same time that public space is properly arranged to demonstrate victories over nature and over backwardness, Tibetans are forced to perform ceremonies of gratitude for their putative social mobility. They are actors who must constantly applaud the audience. Their road connections to the mainland are equated with curative powers, much as American highways in the central cities were compared to surgery in the 1950s and 1960s. That someone might not want a cavalcade of SUVs and joyriders jostling with them on mountainsides has not been part of the public conversation. This very tourism which floods the region with Han modernizers, particularly Sichuanese, in the name of development also awakens Tibetans to their own common norms. Asked to perform characteristic dances and explain their culture to outsiders, they are likely to form a new cultural politics built off the mobilities of the ethnic Han.

As the Chinese leisure class grows more attached to accessible, numinous landscapes, vehicles that advertise experiences of the natural world, such as the sport utility vehicle involved in the crash, have become especially attractive. Manufacturers and rental car companies have also exploited this sense of liberation in ethnic spaces, pushing fantasies of unconstrained, spontaneous outings among unconstrained and spontaneous people, namely, Tibetans. In the case of Tibetan motoring, the state, building up the infrastructure of cultural tourism and subsidizing drivers through gas prices and untolled roads, has been able to harness the rising middle class need for social distinction and freedom to consolidate control of a carefully secured dreamscape, that if not totally tamed, is at least enacting the prevailing logic of market-based nationalism.

The ethnic visibility of Tibetans that accompanied travelers along 318 marked the site for development. Another group within the PRC, peasants, would likewise be made visible by the transportation system, this time in a well-known legal case from 2010. Here their life chances would be the subject of public debate, but only in terms that made them metaphorical and invariable. The next chapter will explore their place within China's regime of mobility.

Chapter 3

Xi'an October 20, 2010: Zhang Miao and Yao Jiaxin—Traffic Law, Peasants, and the Court System

His name was Yao Jiaxin 药家鑫. Jia means "family" but is also homophonous with "increase." The pictograph of the character "Xin" is composed of three pieces of "gold" and roughly means "prosperous"; its homophones include "heart" and "salary." Devoid of any context, pronouncing Jiaxin would imply an increase in salary. He was 20 years old. His vehicle was a Chevrolet Cruze, which his parents bought with their savings, allowing him greater mobility in offering piano lessons around the city of Xi'an. He had been practicing piano since a young child and had received numerous commendations for his artistry.

Her name was Zhang Miao 张妙. Miao means "wonderful" and is used in words for "cure-all" and "ingenious." She was 26 years old, married, with a 2-year-old son at home. Her vehicle was an electric scooter. Zhang worked at a meat skewer stand at the Chang'an Campus of Northwest University and used the scooter to commute to work. She had dropped out of middle school to begin working.

The Scene: Xi'an (Chang'an)

Jiaxin and Miao collided in the city of Xi'an, a city of nearly 9 million people in central China, the capital of Shaanxi Province. Whereas Tibet is a point of contact where ordinary life is reversed, Xi'an is the great metropolis that links the heart of Chinese civilization with central Asia. Once known as Chang'an, and the capital of many Chinese dynasties, including the Western Han and the Tang, its location in a large floodplain was never particularly secure. It was besieged and captured by forces from Tibet from the southwest in the 8th century, Mongols from the north in the 13th century, Manchus from the northeast in the 17th century, and Communists from the south in 1949. In symbolic testament to its precarious position, it still retains its interior city walls from the Ming Dynasty, which have become a popular attraction.

Xi'an's significance today as a destination is quite secure. Its place in the imaginary rests on two selling points. It was one end of the famed Silk Road, a series of routes and entrepots that exchanged goods, ideas, and peoples across the Asian continent beginning roughly 2000 years ago. The spread of Buddhism to China, for example, depended greatly on the monks traveling from India through the deserts of the Silk Road. This glorious period, when Roman senators wore silk togas processed from Chinese mulberry trees has been recast into the political vision of China's Communist leaders. Reaffirming the Silk Road's importance, Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative places Xi'an as the eastern terminus of a land route that stretches all the way to Rotterdam, with trillions of dollars in investment in infrastructure recreating that golden age of shared wealth.

Fragments of Silk Road nostalgia are ubiquitous around Xi'an. The water show at Wild Goose Pavilion in downtown Xi'an is infused with ornate loudspeaker language designed to

bring ancient Chang'an into political alignment with modern Xi'an.[9] As some dozen jets of water shoot from the ground for 20 minutes, entrancing the children, the text from 2016 speaks in terse quatrains, challenging the adults.

> *As the great winds appear and the clouds rise*
> *In 138 BCE, a solemn expedition set forth*
> *Opening up a road to the rest of the world*
> *Resounding in a symphonic movement of human civilization*
> *The starting point for the Silk Road weaves together a magical ribbon*
> *One end linking the West, one end tying the East*
> *"One Belt One Road" a monumental construction of the age…*
> *Yesterday's Xi'an was ancient poetry*
> *Today's Xi'an is a grand symphony* (Zhu 2016).

Whoever wrote the script for the water show had an excellent grasp of Party shibboleths. The year 138 BCE is the assigned date for the beginning of the Silk Road, when a Han Dynasty delegation was sent to central Asia (modern-day Uzbekistan). "Resounding in a symphonic movement of civilization" plays off the title of a 2016 *People's Daily* opinion piece, which argues that China must find more even development that simultaneously builds up the city and the countryside, the coastal cities and the western regions. In the Chinese historiography of the Silk Road, conflicts and expansionism contort into poetry and symphony. Armies on the march are the eddies of human civilization. For a better perspective on the march of civilization performed by the water show, visitors can pay 40 RMB (about $6) for choice seating on a centrally located, elevated platform.

The other pillar of Xi'an's tourism success is its proximity to the Terracotta Warriors and the Tomb of Qin Shihuang. A major international attraction, the Terracotta Warriors are about 40 kilometers from downtown Xi'an, easily accessible by bus, private automobile, and new public transit lines. Discovered by a peasant in 1974, the site consists of thousands of free standing "warriors" (archers, infantry, chariots) built to accompany the first Qin Emperor Qin Shihuang (259-210 BCE) into the afterlife. A man whose iron-fisted policies made him many enemies in life, he learned to counter rebellion with sheer numbers in death, enough to frighten the scholars and officials seeking revenge. Tour guides and promotional materials, however, will be quick to inform you that every clay warrior had individualized elements, so no two figures look the same. We know little about the actual masons and bronzesmiths who worked on the project, but their faces were likely shaped into common terror, for as soon as they completed the tomb, they were executed to keep the site secret

While the Silk Road is easily digestible, seen benignly as contact, intercourse, exchange, sharing ideas, connection, and trade, Qin Shihuang at best takes a bit of chewing. While the Chinese government has worked hard to turn difficult history into "artistic history" or relics of material culture, diverting portrayals away from politics and ideology (Fiskesjo 2015), even the sharpest detours onto the artistic merit of the Terracotta warriors cannot hide representations of Qin Shihuang as a political creature. He was, in fact, cited by Mao and others as the founder of Chinese civilization, and the textbook explanation will say he united the Chinese race for the first time, regularized the language, established a common currency, and brought to heel many of the nomadic tribes. In the Zhang Yimou movie, *Hero*, Qin is revealed to be the nameless character who would stop at nothing to unify the land.

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[9] This fountain performance is billed as the largest in Asia.

For tourists, the standard reaction, likely ladled into visitors by tour guides and placards, is: "Barbaric though he may be, his dynasty sure produced some top-notch arts and crafts." Or "if it were not for Qin's despotic nature, we would not be left such impressive monuments." Another way to handle the dissonance of so ruthless a progenitor is to invoke Marxist history. Thus, one female traveler describes Qin as the founder of thousands of years of "feudal" China (Dunhuang 2013). I presume the undertone of the statement was that Qin was someone who did what needed to be done to get China out of slave society into the next phase of class conflict.[10]

Beside Qin Shihuang, the other stars of the museum are the local peasants who discovered the remains in a nearby well. Crowded around for pictures, these celebrities sign autographs and, for a small fee, will briefly speak with visitors. For some tourists, the peasant experience is layered into the discovery of the clay warriors. A nearby rural cultural square is promoted as staffed "with authentic local peasants, who because of the Terracotta Warriors' attraction to tourists, naturally became businesspersons, traveling the road toward wealth" (Village Travel 2012). This entrepreneurship is pressing given that peasant land was seized to make room for the world-class tourist facilities. The official discoverer Yang Zhifa even moved to a different village to avoid the resentments of those who felt he had brought in a different way of life (Yang and Shao 2013).

Xi'an: A City for Whom? Cars, Scooters, Peasants, and the Hierarchy of Space

One of the marks of a developed country is that more time is spent on highways, that is, places aimed toward movement out of them. Unlike a traditional pedestrian street, where numerous gaits and choreographies, tones and tenor serve as distinguishing features, a highway is a collection of ready-made symbols, ones that vary little from place to place. Thus, the scene of the collision at the center of this chapter, University Avenue, retains the basic geometry and symbol-set of typical urban thoroughfares in China. At least as seen in 2016, the center is a raised concrete median with grass on top. Adjacent are the traffic lanes, followed by another median populated by sparse palm trees, then a non-motorized traffic lane, and finally a sidewalk. The university itself is protected by an 8-10-foot-high concrete wall which lines the southern edge of the sidewalk. Portions of the roadway do not have a separate non-motorized vehicle lane. Like so many Chinese streets, construction is present. Propaganda posters decorate the construction barricades: a series entitled "Focus on Civilized Streets: Chinese Spirit – Chinese Image – Chinese Culture- Chinese Expression." The subheadings include "Bless the Motherland," "Chinese Dream, My Dream," and "Everything Ahead for China is Springtime." A separate-style poster reads "Create a Harmonious Xi'an, Respect the Traffic Rules." At the bus stops hang advertisements for Chevrolet and real estate.

Yao Jiaxin and Zhang Miao moved through two very different Xi'an cities. By virtue of his college education, Yao would be assumed to have high *suzhi* (素质), a tricky term usually translated as "quality." In the Chinese vernacular, it denotes education, moral bearing, worthiness to society, and possessing civil habits. From the countryside, Zhang would not automatically be accorded low *suzhi*, but would have to prove her merit in public space. Easily identified by their expressions, skin tone, backpacks, preferred color clothing, and baseline hygiene, workers from the countryside face numerous discriminations. Certain presentations of

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[10] This same female tourist would become much more ebullient, relating that Qin Shihuang's tomb had caused her imagination to roam: "It makes us Chinese not stint in our common struggle. I hope in a short while we will become powerful and rise again great. Then, we will have nothing to fear from the American imperialists and the Japanese pirates."

self would be expected from them, including dirtiness, a sense of inferiority, and diffidence. For many city residents, they are the chief cause of ills like strains on the transportation system, environmental degradation, and crime.

The everyday interactions between peasant workers like Zhang and citizens like Yao would be limited. For one, the built environment would likely partition them into different zones of the city. Although Zhang Miao actually had an urban hukou it is probable she lived alongside those with rural hukou, who have difficulty securing low-cost housing. Given that rural workers struggle to get bank mortgages and do not qualify for government-subsidized housing, they have limited options on where they live. This means they live further away from their work sites, often surrounded by fellow villagers, and have longer commutes (Zhao and Howden-Chapman 2010). Despite attempts to bring more low-income persons into middle-class housing, for the most part, residential complexes remain highly segregated and have various informal instruments to retain class homogeneity (Zhang 2010). Few would be welcoming to those with Zhang Miao's background.

Survey research in China consistently finds deep social psychological distance between residents with rural and urban backgrounds. A study by the Hefei government in Anhui Province in 2006 found that 66% of migrant workers felt there was misunderstanding (gehe 隔阂) or discrimination (qishi 歧视) in their interactions with urban residents, and 90.5% of them stated they did not want to have interactions with urban residents (Anhui Provincial Government 2006). As for urban attitudes, an online survey conducted by the China Youth Daily (2012) showed that 66.4% of urban respondents would like to make friends with migrant workers, but only 46.3% actually had any friendships with migrant workers. Thus, there is hesitation on both sides, with social circles that weakly overlap.

It would be easy to say that space in China is simply becoming car-owner space, the domain of those who can afford Chevrolets and Toyotas, all other forms of mobility completely yielding to motorized traffic. Nonetheless, in certain ways, automobiles are not so privileged. If substantial proof of such domination is provision of benefits to one group and shifting the costs to another, then China has not reached the level of the U.S. or even France. Briefly, there are many fees placed on owning automobiles, and these fees are based more-or-less on the environmental impact of the engine (its emissions level); so there is a sense in which the degree of social harm, by noxious emissions, is priced into the vehicle. License plates, especially in large cities are quite pricey and assigned in part by lottery. Another example is parking. Here we have the inverse of the American case: while in the U.S. roads are mainly government-funded and parking is largely private, in China, the highways are privately constructed and a large proportion of parking spaces are managed by local governments (Au 2012). And for the most part, these local governments have kept parking relatively scarce and almost always priced. There is almost no free, accessible parking, much to the chagrin of drivers. One automobile writer expresses his frustration at Foping, southwest of Xi'an:

> The roads were narrow and filled with cars parked to the side. In the past years, the growth in cars in our country has been fast…but up until now I have not seen any city building parking facilities. Parking on the side of the road is the easiest way to do it but it is the least effective. The solution is car parks (tingcheku 停车库)…Officials are well aware of this solution, and its effectiveness abroad, but they don't actually want to do anything about it (Xia 2016).

In 2018, Beijing had more than triple the registered vehicles than registered parking spaces, leading to massive shortages and cars cramming into various surface spaces (Zhao et al. 2020).

At least on the face of it, non-drivers are not strongly subsidizing the usage of city space for vehicle storage. But socially, migrant-style mobility has faced intense stigma and cultural censure.

If Zhang Miao had any knowledge of traffic policing or the legal system, it was that it was troublesome. Born in the village of Beixue in south Xi'an, her house being within the city limits entitled her to privileges denied to those just a few kilometers south. Because she possessed an urban *hukou*, she had some claim on the Xi'an social system; she could freely attend local schools, could get advantages in local college admission, and have easier access to social services and healthcare. Despite this urban hukou, the peasant visage would influence her mobility; she would likely have to produce her paperwork far more often than an educated Xi'an native.

When rural migrants are unjustly stopped by police, the case is rarely a public issue. In a sample of cases investigated by Wang (2010) where police had to apologize publicly in the news media for invasive checks and wrongful detention, every single victim possessed an urban hukou. When those possessing rural hukou were treated similarly, their grievances might make their way onto social media, but would not be covered by mainstream media organizations. Crackdowns on transients, such as the "3 Withouts" 三无 (Don't be without ID, residency permit, and work permit [wu shenfenzheng, wu zanjuzheng, wu yonggong zhengming;无身份证，无暂居证，无用工证明]) inevitably target rural workers and lead to various forms of detention, imprisonment, and deportation (Han 2010).

Zhang worked at Northwest University, and there is almost no better window into the changed political status of the peasant class than contrasting academic treatment from the Maoist years to today. When a troop of 10 intellectuals from Northwest University headed to the countryside during the lifetime of Zhang's grandparents, they expected to be transformed. In their report from 1958, they explained that they labored, ate, and lodged with the peasants, who were enthusiastically committed to a common quota of production:

It is obvious that labor is our way to enter(shenru 深入) the masses, the gateway by which we become one host. Labor brought us together; labor allowed us to have greater communication. We understood the masses and they understood us…We were inspired by their work to break through the heavens (zhapo diqiu chongpo tian 扎破地球冲破天) (Anon 1958:95).

Following Mao Zedong's adjurations, these intellectuals believed their literary theory must be substantiated with practice, with the class struggle.

In contrast, when the faculty in the Education Department of Northwest University in 2017 wrote about peasants (Anon 2017c), they would not "enter" the masses, instead urging the peasants to join them in the modern world. In a program entitled, "Training in the Countryside on E-Commerce Principles and Applications," they offered coursework on creating brands in a network economy. The project was funded by the Li Ka-shing Foundation, brainchild of the Hong Kong billionaire. Using phone interviews to contact the villagers, they assess the program's effectiveness at raising the peasants' level of e-commerce consciousness and knowledge. They recommend that with such shallow understanding of the internet by both farmers and cadres, it is essential that the government set up infrastructure and funding to provide internet access and training.

In a space of 60 years, the vanguard had become the rearguard, the masters of socialist thinking were now the holdouts from commercial thinking. This is not to say that the rhetoric of the past always aligned with reality. Peasant mobility and economic opportunity were severely

curtailed under Mao. During the Great Leap Forward, over 30,000,000 would die from starvation (Yang 1996), mainly a result of ignorant, cruel policies that limited the land peasants could grow crops on while transferring a growing share of their produce to the cities and factories. For as much as the ideology proclaimed the peasants as the foundation of a new state, they would be quickly sacrificed to feed the cities. Shaanxi Province would fare relatively well during this period (1958-1961); its neighboring province to the south, Sichuan, would lose over 10% of its population (Naughton 2018). From the Great Leap Forward, the masses would soon enter the Cultural Revolution, an organized yet emergent, creative mass event, like Burning Man, but where men were burned. Even despite these atrocities, many of those who lived through these events recall fondly a time when "we believed we were doing things that were good and meaningful" and "farmers and workers were like the real masters of the country" (Kan 2016). In this (albeit declining) nostalgia, Mao is still a hero, and Deng Xiaoping, who began the market reforms, turned his back on socialism, starting China on the path of corruption and amorality. The contemporary debasements experienced by peasants are likely sharpened by the rapid loss in prestige that accompanied the shift from socialism to capitalism, and it is no surprise that when they rally in protest against their treatment, they select language and images derived from a time when their spaces were sacred, and the urban elites were profane.

The Vehicles

Yao Jiaxin's vehicle, the Chevrolet Cruze, was the eighth best-selling passenger vehicle in 2010 (Anon 2013), the year of the crash and stabbing. General Motors combined forces with the Shanghai government in 1996 to form SAIC, a 50/50 joint venture that has proven immensely lucrative to both sides. Around the time of Yao's trial, Chevrolet had begun a chirpy ad campaign for its sedans aimed at new families, entitled "So Good" (Hao duo a 好多啊). In a masterful, ruthlessly infectious video ad (see Figure 3.1), the Cruze becomes the instrument of both family unification and middle-class conviviality. It begins with a father washing his Chevrolet (the Sail in this case). His young toddler joins in, and they soon drive away, an ever-smiling wife in the passenger seat, probably in good cheer because they found the only empty road in China. Passing rows of townhouses, but no other road users, they pick up the elder generation at the local park, stereotypically doing exercises. Now a three-generation cabin, the Sail spirits them to a larger green space, a park with weak enough oversight to allow a pow-wow of fellow Chevrolets to form a circle on the grass.[11] Here a picnic begins and smiles are passed around. This is middle-class utopia, a road unshared with anyone, public spaces and nature open without official constraints, the only solidarity possible with other car-owners.

The Cruze had developed a niche for what one online wit called a sensitive, unconventional person born during the 1980s (Yao Jiaxin was born in 1990) (Li 2014). According to his father, Jiaxin picked out the car himself, and they paid for it using a combination of moneys pooled from the entire family and a bank loan. The car gave Yao the freedom to teach piano on his own schedule and return home late at night.

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[11] The most fantastic element of all. Most large Chinese parks are gated and many charge admissions fees.

Figure 3.1: Screenshot of Chevrolet's "So Good" advertisement

Zhang Miao drove an electric bicycle (i.e., a scooter). Researching scooters is challenging. Few persons post online diaries and proud pictures of their scooter trips. Scooter companies do not spend billions on advertising. No references to this case discuss the type of scooter she operated. In the abstract, as Chinese cities decentralize and commercialize, scooters have played an important role in allowing access to various employment and leisure activities, much as they have in Vietnam and Thailand, and recently in cities of Europe. China is the world leader in scooter production, and its scooter and battery companies have been immensely successful at entering foreign markets, far exceeding what its automakers have done.

Nevertheless, in China itself, they are less a source of pride than of discord. Top-level Party leaders routinely ignore the electric bike industry (Zuev 2018). At the local level they are regarded as key contributors to traffic chaos and face numerous disadvantages. More people are killed riding 2- and 3-wheeled vehicles in China than automobiles based on 2013 data. Instead of changing the traffic environment, major cities have either banned them on major streets or tightly regulated their use. Xi'an has recently required all electric bicycles to meet national standards and be registered with the local police (Chezhu Zhinan 2022b). Xi'an has recently implemented its own specifications that limit electric bicycles to a maximum speed of 25 km/hr., over which the vehicle must be licensed. As any visitor to China can relate, scooter drivers do not adhere to a high level of discipline, frequently ignoring stop lights, failing to maintain lane integrity, and operating against the primary flow of traffic. For her part, Zhang Miao was obeying all the traffic rules. Her problem was traveling while a peasant.

The Event

On October 20, 2010, at 11 PM, both Yao and Zhang were returning home from work, him from his piano lessons at Xi'an Foreign Language University, her from the food stand. While he

was adjusting the radio, his Chevrolet collided with her scooter in the right-hand non-motorized vehicle lane of University Avenue, resulting in minor injuries to Zhang. When she proceeded to use her phone to record his license plate number, he took out a knife from the passenger seat that he had bought at a supermarket, exited the vehicle and proceeded to stab her 8 times, in both the chest and back, killing her instantly.

From this point until Yao's surrender, the details become sketchy, but Yao definitely fled the scene. According to some sources, he actually struck two additional people as he fled and was apprehended by police; the police at the time did not connect Yao to the stabbing death and released him. After divulging his crime to his parents, his father drove him to the police station to confess on the 23rd of October, three days after the stabbing.

When national news outlets began covering the case, it generated intense discussion, growing into one of the biggest stories of 2011. How could such a brutal act happen? Socialists said it was separation from collective values, Confucianists from moderation in conduct, Christians from God, educators from moral cultivation, and lawyers from legal consciousness. Before tracing the legal case against Yao, some background on how the legal system processes traffic crashes is necessary.

Legal Background on Homicide, Traffic Crashes

Historically, under imperial law (pre-1911), crime was treated as damage done to the social order, and penalties centered not so much on individual guilt but on the damage done. Lesser factors for assessing appropriate punishments included the person's status and, even less important, their motive (Muhlhahn 2010).

Additionally, repentance and confession—particularly without any coercion—could reduce one's sentence. The Confucian tradition had provided some opportunity for post-offense mitigation: "Where a person had committed an offense, had afterwards genuinely repented, and of his own accord had informed the authorities before its commission had publicly come to light, he was, under certain conditions, to be exempt from punishment or at least be permitted a considerable reduction" (MacCormack 1996:9–10). However, the acts of contrition were only effective for crimes where an adequate reparation could be made, e.g., property crimes.

The Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) had a sophisticated typology for assessing homicide, dividing it into 6 kinds:
  ►Premeditated murder (mousha)
  ►Decision to kill was only in moment (kusha)
  ►Mistaken killing of B, when intended to kill A (wusha)
  ►Killing in a fight where one was trying to injure only (tousha)
  ►Killing in a dangerous sport or game (xisha)
  ►Accidental killing without intent to harm at all (guoshisha): Examples include dropping a brick from height without seeing anyone or killing someone while hunting (MacCormack 1996:38)

An immediate question in the Yao Jiaxin case was the type of crime committed. Here much of China was introduced to a new term, "crime of passion (jiqing mousha 激情杀人), which qualified as less serious than pre-meditated murder (mousha 谋杀). It seems to bear some resemblance to the Tang category of *kusha*, or killing in the heat of the moment. According to the legal expert Xiong Hongwen, a crime of passion typically consists of the following elements:

- It involves a momentary lapse into passion, similar to "fluid entering the brain," a sudden loss of control involving loss of normal reason.
- The actions of this moment in no way predict the actions of the person in most circumstances. The person has no rational intent or understanding of consequences, meaning considerations of the law and its penalties do not occur. It is like a dream-state.
- The law cannot prevent these cases; the law has no deterrent value.
- When considering its circumstances, every person is a potential killer. Because a good person can carry out this crime, it does not represent character; thus a second chance is warranted (Xiong 2011).

Furthermore, there is an external incitement, usually some provocation or action of the victim, such as a mistake, joke, or cruel attitude. Assessment of crimes of passion require examination of the state of the offender and the victim (Huang 2011). Despite the public's ridicule of this new term, the defense tried to show that Yao's mental state had, because of various pressures, diverted from its true state, coming to a head the moment that Zhang tried to memorize his license place, which constituted a sufficient external stimulant to Yao's actions.

A second key question was whether Yao's entrance into the police station constituted "voluntary, willing surrender" (touan 投案), or whether he was passively confessing (tanbai 坦白). The former constitutes ground for lightening the sentence. The Supreme Court has laid out 4 ways that one can actively surrender (zidongtouan 自动投案):

1. Turn yourself in before the crime is discovered
2. Turn yourself in after the crime is discovered but there is no suspect
3. Turn yourself in after a suspect is put forth but there is yet no interrogation or compulsion
4. Turn yourself in during a pursuit

For Yao, much would depend on the interpretation of how much police compulsion influenced his actions, or whether he was expressing a voluntary admission of guilt.

Adjudicating Fatal Traffic Crashes

Although the stabbing of Zhang moved this case beyond a typical traffic accident, it bears remarkable similarities to how other fatal car crashes have been handled, particularly drunk driving. A few exemplary cases prefigure some of the legal factors that surfaced during Yao's trial.

In May 2010, on Chang'an Boulevard in Beijing, a man named Chen Jia, drunk from an outing with co-workers, sped his Infiniti directly into the back of a Fiat, and afterward struck a bus that was crossing an intersection. Two persons died and two were injured. He offered no aid and instead fled the scene.

For crashes by intoxicated drivers with serious consequences like fatalities, the two crimes courts will consider are "Causing trouble" (zhaoshi 肇事) (which can also be translated "dangerous driving") and "threatening public safety" (weihai gonggong anquan 危害公共安全), the latter being more serious.[12] The distinction revolves around the concept of "willfulness" (fangren 放任), whether the perpetrator truly knew the danger and carried an attitude of intentionality into the crash. For "causing trouble," this means the driver demonstrated fault

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[12] The 8th Amendment to Criminal Law passed by Standing Committee of the People's Congress (February 2011) made drunk driving a criminal offense, even if no harm results (previously there had to be either bodily injury or property damage). First-time convictions for driving under the influence can result in up to 6 months in jail.

(carelessness) but the consequences were unexpected, such that intent was indirect. Threatening public safety derives from section 115 of the criminal code, which mentions detonating bombs and committing arson with major harms to life and property. This crime implies that the perpetrator *intended* to commit a crime and can carry a sentence of 10+ years in prison, lifetime imprisonment, or death. The key distinction is whether the consequences are expected, such that the act was willful.

The defense for Chen believed this was a case of fault and corresponded to "causing trouble." His attempts to slam on the brakes demonstrated that he was not intentionally, willfully trying to harm people. And during the case, his lawyer argued, he had shown deep repentance 忏悔 and a willingness to compensate the victims. As noted earlier, punishment for crimes during the Imperial Era could be lightened if the offender showed a contrite heart and an abiding concern for restitution, but only for property crimes. However, the Supreme People's Court (SPC), in an effort to reduce the application of the death penalty, has over the past few decades recommended using compensation agreements with the plaintiff's families to soften penalties by suspending the death sentence. This included the issuing in 2009 of a list of "standard cases" showing judges actively negotiating for settlements and forgiveness in order to suspend the killer's death sentence (Trevaskes 2015). At court, Chen bowed to one of the elderly ladies injured and expressed regret. He implored his family to do everything they could to compensate the victims.

None of these defenses worked. Chen's escape and refusal to call the police proved to the court that his subjective state was one of willful disregard for life. In May 2011, he was sentenced to life in prison.

Now compare Chen's case to Liao Weiming, an assistant college dean in Jiangxi Province, who killed two persons and injured four while driving intoxicated in 2012. Liao was driving drunk, and while trying to pass a bus offloading passengers, lost control of his vehicle, striking an umbrella stand worker and then multiple pedestrians. Under the mediation of the police, he reached compensation agreements for all the victims. This meant paying funeral expenses for the bereaved families, and for the 4 injured persons, their hospital bills, lost work-time losses, nursing care, and disability compensation. The initial court verdict took into account that Liao immediately called the police, tried to rescue the victims, surrendered to police, and actively sought to remunerate the victims and their families. Even so, the court ruled that Liao had "caused trouble" and sentenced him to 3 years in prison. On appeal, though, the Nanchang City Intermediate Court overturned this ruling, saying that in addition to all the aforementioned aspects that should reduce his sentence, Liao was an important figure in applied agricultural science, such that the court decided to change his punishment to 3 years' probation.

Table 3.1 below sums up the main factors in adjudicating fatal traffic crashes. Note that social privilege and wealth provide immediate leverage in having the resources to adequately compensate the victims and can be a factor in the ambiguous "value to society" factor, which some courts have used to lighten sentences.

In sum, a good defense after a fatal traffic crash will build a narrative of the all-around good kid, talented and valuable to society, who in panic temporarily loses emotional control, but who afterward tried to rescue the injured, turned himself into police, and expressed genuine remorse and willingness to make it up to the bereaved families. In Yao's case, the defense lawyer could not cite Yao saving the injured (he stabbed her and immediately fled), and the carrying of the knife in the car made it difficult to argue there was no premeditation or preparation for violence.

Table 3.1: Main Factors in Assessing Severity of Crimes and Punishments for Serious Traffic Crashes

Factor	Increasing severity	Decreasing severity
Consequences	Resulted in fatalities or serious injuries, damage to public property, or endangered social stability; hurts the image of key institutions (Party, police)	Minimal harm to bodies, public property, or social stability; images of institutions (Party, police) untouched
On-scene response	Fleeing the scene; not surrendering to police; resisting arrest	Calling police; taking active steps to rescue the victims; actively surrendering to police
Willfulness, subjective state	Intentionally causing harm, endangering lives	Unintentional actions, negligence
Compensation to victims	No compensation agreement reached; resistance to remunerating victim's family	Forthrightness in remunerating victim's family, supporting them financially
Expressions of guilt/rehabilitation	Unconvincing expressions of repentance and remorse	Shows firm remorse and willingness to make up to victim's family
Value to society	Having high education, important occupation	Having low education, less significant occupation

Yao's Reasoning: "Peasants Are Too Difficult to Get Rid Of"

When asked by China Central Television (CCTV) why he stabbed Zhang, Yao admitted he was worried she would demand money from his family, because "peasants are too difficult to get rid of" (CCTV 2011c). The 20-year old elaborated that after his car struck her, in the back of his mind were the words of many people he had heard in the past: "they will tail you the rest of your life"; "if you are in a traffic accident and it immediately kills someone, it is far easier to handle and they won't pester you for the rest of your life." In effect, he sought sympathy with his perceived public by denouncing nearly half of China's population.

To begin, how did Yao know that Zhang was a peasant? In China there is an instant, instinctual distinction made based on appearance. Dirt, skin color, facial expression, luggage, a preference for certain hues, accents and accentuations, demeanor and posture all reveal migrant worker status. Even though Yao's grandfather and father were both born in the countryside, he had internalized the stereotypes of peasants widespread in large cities like Xi'an.

Migrant workers from the countryside are a loaded vector for the spread of all kinds of social anxieties. Few other groups in China are more regularly inspected, tagged, sorted, and shipped in the name of traffic congestion, environmental protection, and public health and safety. In Zhao Liang's 2009 documentary *Petition* (*Shangfang*, 上访), peasants, workers, and other aggrieved groups from across the country congregate near a train station in Beijing, living in marginal conditions to await an opportunity to petition the central government. This practice, a descendant of the imperial practice of allowing anyone to submit a plea to the emperor for direct redress, had become a last resort for many. One petitioner, Qi, went to Beijing because her husband died during a medical checkup at work, the authorities rapidly cremating the body to preempt an

autopsy. She arrived with her daughter demanding the local government be punished (Zhao 2015).

In the film, after two petitioners from Inner Mongolia were struck and killed by a train in their camp, they hold a memorial service, highlighted by an impassioned speech:

> *The whole system of law and politics and the whole system of petitioning is mainly to oppress (yapo, 欺压) the people, to hurt the petitioners, to dehumanize them. Comrades, the road of petitioning is a road of death. Death will resolve your petition. The petitioners from Inner Mongolia were hit by a train while trying to flee, killing two and injuring two, truly tragic. I urge you to wake up, to stand up, all petitioners set out to protest. To get rid of the Communist dictatorship and carry out democracy; this is the only way out for petitioners and the only way out for the Chinese nation.*

The language of its socialist past surely resonated with the crowd: an oppressor in the Marxist tradition, the need for a people's democracy, seen in China's 1949 Constitution, and the standing up (an allusion to Mao's victorious declaration from 1949). But such invocations had no resonance in the broader public space. The leader of the protest, Mr. Liu, would be set on by 3 officers on motorcycles, imprisoned and beaten.

Petitions and protests which occupy public space meet their end under the legal rubric of protecting public order. Thus, Mr. Liu, the petitioner in Beijing in Zhao's film, defends his march in mourning of his fallen comrades by asking the police: "What order have I violated? What traffic have I impeded?" (Zhao 2015) Other cases also show the shunting of channels for political communication. In Hunan, a peasant named Tang Fengyin is detained in 2010 for simply preparing to petition, spending days in administrative detention for "disturbing the order of a public place" (raoluan gonggong changsuo zhixu 扰乱公共场所秩序). Other petitioners meet various punishments, such as those in Xintai in Shandong, who are locked inside mental institutions, or those in Xuyi in Jiangsu, who are charged an indemnity called a "petition guarantee fee" (xinfang baozhengjin 信访保证金) (Yang 2011).

Not just at the street level, but at the city level, peasants find policies that work against their residential and street mobility, here often in the name of environmental sustainability. Beijing exemplifies these barriers. An ecological nightmare, with constantly polluted air and a rapidly diminishing water table, Beijing has become an exemplar in population shipping. In 2005, the city plan, which incorporated significant citizen feedback, made as its first goal to "reduce low-quality (suzhi) persons from entering the city." Its 2011 work report discusses ways to manage the population: use housing to re-direct people, use employment to limit the people, and use identification papers to control people. This also means targeted increases in the cost of living, e.g., by raising subway fares (Deng and Pei 2014). Its city plan explicitly places a population cap of 23,000,000 residents, the estimated environmental carrying capacity of the city's area, and has shown little inhibition in cutting water and power to those living in neighborhoods deemed unsafe (Agence France-Presse 2018c).

When the famed sociologist Fei Xiaotong wrote about the countryside soon after the Communists attained power, he considered the cognitive gap that led to rural-urban conflict. He drew upon the example of the city driver finding a farmer idling in the road, not moving out of the way. The driver stops the car, sticks his head out of the window, and yells "idiot." Arguing that city folk conflate intelligence and education, he goes on to tell the story of the city kids he took to tour the countryside; one of his students saw a row of maize, and thinking herself an expert, exclaimed "this year's wheat crop has grown so tall." Here the city kid shows idiocy. Having never been to the countryside, the urbanites were effectively illiterate, the same way the

peasant was unable to translate the car approaching from behind into a signification of yielding (Fei 1992). The upshot here is that the dual social worlds of the peasant and the city are brought into increased relief by their mobilities, particularly with the automobile. Cultural boundaries were drawn based on how certain groups responded to traffic cues.

The central government has tried to provide access to automobiles in rural areas, more from a sense of its economic potential than its lifestyle benefits. One program, drawing on Maoist idioms, was titled "Cars to the Countryside (qiche xiaxiang 汽车下乡)." Building off an initiative to send appliances to rural areas, the policy began in 2019 and tried to simplify procedures and provide subsidies for automobile purchasing. It encouraged auto dealers to send mechanics and technicians to teach farmers about maintenance and operational technologies, but it was hampered by poor administration and quickly died out.

Although there are many peasants who have gotten rich and find opportunities in the cities, back home the transportation options are limited. The roads are often shoddy, modified dirt roads, with uneven terrain. Urban motorists specify the poor condition of rural roads as a chief attraction of buying an SUV, where they can navigate safely to their relatives during the holidays. Transportation is particularly hard-pressed in the education sector. School budgets typically get directed to buildings, teachers, staff, and course materials, leaving little for transportation. Cash-strapped and drawing students from large geographic areas, rural schools, particularly pre-schools, often improvise new means of getting students to and from school. Sealed freight vehicles, regular buses, even 3-wheeled vehicles and tractors have all been used to carry rural schoolchildren (see Figure 3.2). This has led to many tragedies. A "bread truck", a box-like freight vehicle with few seats and little to no crumple zones, was being used to transport 64 young children in Gansu Province in 2011, when, under foggy conditions, the driver crossed into oncoming traffic and crashed into a truck (Yang 2011). Nineteen children and two adults perished. The next year, in Guixi (贵溪), Jiangxi, a bread truck packed with 17 people struck a rock in the road, swerved sharply, and then rolled over into a pond, causing the death of 11 children. In a rapid response, the local government paid out 480,000 yuan to each of the afflicted families the next day (Xinhua 2012).

Figure 3.2: A Bread Truck Serving as a Rural School Bus (from Caixin 2011)

One final point is that even when they gain access to automobiles, which to some extent equalizes them and negates much of their apparent backwardness, farmers face practical barriers and cultural barriers to using them. Migrant workers in Beijing may purchase automobiles, but only by meeting certain requirements. For instance, if their vehicle is registered outside of the city, they must purchase a permit every week to enter the city (mtj828 2016). Admittedly, Beijing is on one extreme, its residents notorious for a deep-rooted xenophobia, but other fast-growing cities have begun to copy its policies. The CCTV journalist Wang Zhian has even advocated for a massive entry fee into Beijing, along the lines of Singapore or London, enough "to turn most of the working-class car owners to subways and buses" (mtj828 2016) From a cultural angle, an article in *Xinhua* in February 2016 taps into general social anxieties about peasant drivers. Entitled "Worrying Trend of Farmers Trying to Keep Up by Buying Cars, Many Have Massive Debts," it explains that as soon as peasants make some money, in order to have face in the community, they immediately build a house and buy a car. Yet, the article states, they often do not have the means to do so and go into debt (Xinhua 2016b). Simultaneously, I could find no media discussion of worrisome debt for city drivers, even though the Yao family itself needed to pool their resources and take out a bank loan to purchase their Chevrolet. The emergence in public discussions of the insulting term *tuhao* 土豪 for parvenus without cultural sophistication, usually rural folk spending lavishly, shows the stigma placed upon "uppity" behavior of those considered born to the soil. The class structure is thus rigidly enforced by both material arrangements and cultural discourses of appropriate mobility.

When asked what influenced his actions to kill Zhang Miao, Yao admitted that when he encountered villagers in the city, he felt unable to communicate with them. "Often others say, for example, if you injure [a peasant] in a traffic accident, it'll be difficult to deal with (nan chuli 难处理)."

Yao's notion that injured peasants will interminably pester you is not completely without foundation. Whether peasants themselves are more personally nagging is dubious, but the complexity of legal payments for *non-fatal injuries* is certainly greater than for fatalities. The compensation structure varies from place to place, but according to guidelines published by the Supreme People's Court there are 11 potential constitutive elements of formal remuneration:

1) Disability (canji peichangjin 残疾赔偿金): based on severity of disability or lost work ability
2) Living allowance (beifuyang ren shenghuo fei 被扶养人生活费): Based on level of disability and support needed to survive (urban/rural distinction included); also includes lost ability to care for children, on death or injury.
3) Death compensation (siwang peichangjin 死亡赔偿金): also based on lost wages; a local calculation based on average income (urban/rural distinction included).
4) Cost of disability equipment: Based on a reasonable price of making, buying, and replacing equipment.
5) Medical expenses: Expenses incurred after the injury, including check-ups, treatment, recuperation, and physical therapy.
6) Loss of working time: because injured person cannot work normal hours; calculation is based upon the person's wages the last 3 years before the injury; if no evidence presented can use the average wage in their industry locally.

7) Nursing care: For those who provide nursing care for the person. Calculations based on lost wages for the person caring for them. If person providing care has no job, one can calculate based on the regular compensation for that level of care.
8) Transportation expenses: for visiting and transferring to different hospitals, including ambulance and taxi travel under special circumstances.
9) Hospital meal fees: can be based on local government-set travel per diems.
10) Nutrition fees: if person requires a special diet because of injury.
11) Funeral expenses: locally set calculation (Supreme People's Court (SPC) 2004).[13]

As can be seen, only numbers (2), (3), and (11) apply to payments made in the event of on-scene death. The remainder are applicable only to survivors. So, there was in fact a likelihood of a more protracted, onerous financial burden of restitution for not killing Zhang.

To complicate matters, the national guidelines for compensation stipulate two levels of compensation, urban and rural. While ambiguous, the law has been interpreted as revolving around the hukou of the parties. Compensations for those with rural hukou is less than for those with urban hukou, meaning a migrant worker who had been living in Xi'an for 10 years would receive countryside-level payments if an injured party. According to Fei-ling Wang (2010), rural hukous entitled one to only about 1/2 to 1/3 of what an urbanite would receive. Many local governments, in the name of "same life, same value" have instead based compensation payments in their jurisdiction on place of *employment*, but these policies have included many stipulations, such as Shenzhen's policy of requiring one year of residency and stable income. Contrary to Yao's assumption, if anything, being a peasant would have theoretically reduced the lifetime payments. (That Zhang was actually a Xi'an resident and had an urban hukou just like Yao was probably counter-sensible to Yao.)

The Legal Case as Media Spectacle: Intersections of Class, Education, and Social Morality

On January 11, 2011, the city of Xi'an Prosecutorial Office (Jiancha yuan 检察院) opened a case against Yao Jiaxin for intentional murder.

Many unusual things happened from that point.

A so-called human flesh engine search, where an informal team of online sleuths unearth information on a person of interest, turned up that Yao was from a rich family. Specifically, his father, Yao Qingwei, was a well-connected military official responsible for financial purchasing, a prestigious post. The Zhang family posted online its own allegations, claiming Qingwei owned 4 properties. An origin story emerged. Yao, the spoiled rich kid, showered with all manner of gifts, including cars, deprived in his upbringing of any sense of moral sympathy for the less privileged, thought himself immune from consequences. He became the new Li Qiming, the university student who earlier that year intimidated a pair of young girls he struck with his car with the infamous threat: "Sue me if you dare. My dad is Li Gang [a high-standing police chief in Hebei Province]." I mentioned earlier that for the Liao Weiming case, his social standing as an agricultural science professor helped him secure a lighter sentence. Here we have the opposite

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[13] These guidelines involve cases with some formality, such as civil and criminal court cases, or organized mediation such as by police. For most traffic injuries, settlements are likely made on the spot and handled without any formal record.

effect—an assumption of a position of high standing damaged the legal case of Yao Jiaxin, at least in the court of public opinion.

To deepen the narrative of the well-heeled, entitled youth came a piece of puzzling news. Those present at the trial, most of whom were students and classmates of Yao, received a survey to fill out, specifically asking them how they would rule on the case. Because of the national attention, the judge thought it important to gauge public opinion before casting a verdict. This unusual, though not unheard of, plebiscite, inflamed public opinion, who believed the media and legal system were further advocating for the privileged Yao family.[14]

At the same time, Zhang's family and fellow peasants gathered signatures for a petition calling for the execution of Yao. Zhang's father rebuffed any offers of compensation from Yao's father, calling it "blood money." By accepting compensation, he would also be perceived as forgiving, which would lessen the possibility of sentencing Yao to death, as in the Liao Weiming case.

Like most conspiracy theories, organized efforts to rebuff them only demonstrated to believers an even more insidious conspiracy. After the case went public, all media organizations were commanded to rely exclusively on *Xinhua* (the central news agency in China) for source material. The *Xinhua* slant was three-pronged: "his family was not that rich," "he expressed deep remorse," and "let the legal system handle this." Thus, on-air programs tried to commonize Yao Qingwei's background, clarifying that his military post was not extraordinary and that he only owned one property, a typical 1990s apartment with barely any amenities. This effectively made the mainstream media de facto accomplices in trying to exonerate Yao Jiaxin. When CCTV held a special interview with Yao in April 2011 in his holding cell, netizens contended this was the result of the Yao family's influence, able to bribe their way to sympathetic treatment from the mainstream media.

Handcuffed and wearing a blue jumpsuit, Yao said in his CCTV interview that constraint (yayi 压抑) and depression (jusang 沮丧) were his main accompaniments in life: "I've always thought my life has no value, from when I first entered junior high I began to often feel constrained (yayi), and I thought about suicide a lot, that there was no meaning, and that other people were so happy" (CCTV 2011c). He cites a difficult home life. Relations with his father were strained, and at one time during Jiaxin's teens his father locked him in the basement, where all he was allowed to do was study and sleep.

In China, the language available to explain pathology has multiplied considerably since the Maoist years. Until probably the late 1970s, whatever unhappiness one experienced could be directly attributed to the depredations caused by the sinister classes: the landlords, the rightists, the bourgeoisie, and, at times, the intellectuals. A key word would be *yapo* 压迫, oppression. With the same first character as Yao's constraint, *ya*, meaning pressure or to crush, *yapo* requires an enemy group, a cabal of exploitation. The way out would be socialized: to denounce these enemies of the state, to stand up together as one, and struggle against them without compunction. So many disorders other societies would consider mental (e.g., depression) were then externalized, to be cured with social class rectification (Lee 2011). For other digressions from the right path, the answer was either mutual criticism or labor, usually both. Thus, in the 1958

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[14] For those who believe the Party-State has mastered the art of manipulating public opinion and run an efficient machine of social control, the implementation of the courtroom survey stands as counterevidence. Probably the best explanation is simply that the judge had no idea what he was doing. My hunch is that he probably saw a bias in the press toward the Yao family and thought it his duty, and a way to impress higher powers, to marshal arguments on the defendant's side. Involving Yao's classmates in public relations also backfired. To take the most extreme example, one of Yao's classmates who attended the trial told a media outlet: "If it were me, I would have killed her too." The judge's intended contribution thus had the reverse effect, making Yao even less sympathetic to the general public.

Northwest University mission trip to the Shaanxi countryside cited earlier (Anon 1958), one of the intellectuals, named "Lazy Wang", was initially unable to handle the conditions, his days locked in constant misery, unable to eat and unable to sleep. However, through the magical workings of the farmers' unabated criticism, they transform him into a new man, able to handle the toil of growing crops, and so full of vigor that he regrets having to leave.[15]

In contrast, *yayi* means inhibited or constrained, unable to express or bring about desired results or emotions. Whereas *yapo* implies a denial of common interests, *yayi* implies a denial of personal expression. In explaining problems, the move away from socialism to free enterprise has replaced group-centered, structural failings with more diffuse, indefinite pressures. Whereas the ardent socialist could not escape the meaning of every gesture and fragment of life being attached to the political cause, youth today must assemble meaning out of whole cloth. In this modern moral system, where the very meaning of life depends on personal introspection and willpower (Fei 1992; Taylor 1989), there is an intense search for psychological causes, for emotional scarring and subtle inhibitions.

In traffic crashes, the social imaginary often yields the narrative of the "vented emotion," the accretion of mental lacerations that escalates into social revenge. For example, the appearance of road rage (lunuzheng 路怒症) as a social problem in the mid-2010s gained traction because it modeled the constrained individual releasing their emotional burden back onto others. Their mood thrown off by everyday pressures, the person loses the ability to emotionally regulate when they fail to accomplish routine goals, such as smoothly proceeding through traffic. In Yao's case, the image of a soul getting gradually crushed—from forced piano playing, cold parenting, cultivated discrimination, and joyless schooling—framed the account issued from Yao, his defense lawyer, and, most of the time, the mainstream media.

The CCTV broadcast interwove Yao's statements with the opinion of an expert, Li Meijin, professor of criminology at Chinese People's Public Security University. In full police regalia, with a firm, confident, forceful message, Li Meijin dissected Yao's motives, and became an instant internet celebrity. She explained that Yao carried stereotypes about those he was unfamiliar with and had only shallow life experience, so he was not fully grown up. With a grimness worthy of Dostoyevsky or Lu Xun, she draws an analogy between Yao's mindless battering of piano keys and his violence toward Zhang:

> *The motion of stabbing someone is a downward movement [she draws her arms up and down]. This motion is one he is very familiar with by playing the piano. At the beginning maybe he has an idea in his head [about peasants] but the remainder was completely a repetitious, robotic motion* (CCTV 2011b).

Pushed to the keys, his moral character neglected, he could only recite a smattering of strokes into the helpless woman; the exact downward motion of the knife emulating the pressing of piano keys. On the Chinese internet, this became known as "the piano made me do it" defense.

While Meijin's criminology seemed glib and borderline facetious, her basic logic would parallel much of the social problematization of Yao's case. Experts took Yao's education at the conservatory as emblematic of the rote, soul-destroying nature of Chinese education, a factory for producing fact-processing machines. Her recommendation that education include more humaneness (renxing 人性) and wholesome elements would be echoed in a 2015 editorial by a kindergarten principal, who taking into account the crisis of Chinese youth, suggested providing more "life education (shengming jiaoyu 生命教育)." Li Meijin would likely have approved of

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[15] To be fair, pretty much everyone in the article expresses not wanting to leave.

the many practical suggestions of this curriculum, including raising a pet, caring for plants, witnessing the autumn foliage, and practicing emergency preparedness (Guo 2015). Furthermore, Li Meijin said merely teaching skills was not enough, there must be kindness and compassion. When the Shaanxi Institute of Social Science published their thoughts on the case (Shao and Chai 2012), they too believed Chinese education lacked soul, that in a society where gold is worshipped, having compassion for others makes one subject to mockery; meanwhile, those without scruples become heroes. In a stroke of powerful imagery, they contended that "each time we deny praise to virtue and look for repayment, or give up our honor out of self-gain, we give another knife to Yao's mentality." Some localities, based on the assumption that schools were producing too many Yao-type personalities, began offering extra points on the *gaokao* (the Chinese college admission test) for displaying good moral behavior (Nan 2014).

Even though Meijin's actual logics were hardly distant from what I would consider mainstream views, her putative motives were questioned. She became a pawn in a far-reaching, imaginary chess game to acquit the well-connected, wealthy Yao family. The journalist, Li Chengpeng, wrote in his blog: "After each awful traffic accident, be it the Li Gang case, the Qian Yunhui case [a village chief in Zhejiang Province who was crushed under a truck], or the Yao Jiaxin case, CCTV attempts to rationalize the murderer's conduct; the show belongs to the consultant, who never discusses legal punishment, just human frailty and psychological causes" (Li C. 2011). The online essayist Liu Hongbo railed against this careful behind-the-scenes manipulation; those suspects with "some official position, one skill, or a special contribution are given special care", making an exception in the principle that "everyone is equal before the law" (H. Liu 2011).

Because legal punishments depend on the subjective state of the defendant, both before and *after* the crime, penitent performances can save one's life. In effect, CCTV was providing a forum for Yao to improve his legal case. Like Chen Jia and Liao Weiming, he was an active penitent. In the courtroom videotape, Yao bowed to the victim's family and expressed his desire to make amends. In his CCTV interview, he sobbed, saying "If I am given a chance to survive and leave here, I can keep working hard. If I make money, I will feed them, no matter how they will treat me or scold me. I will atone for my sin and provide for them in place of Zhang. I hope they can forgive me and give me a second chance" (Jing 2012).

Many netizens asked why CCTV spoke on behalf of the offenders rather than the offended. If Yao were a peasant's son, they wondered, would his voice be heard? Indeed, inequality became a theme of many writers, yet it was usually under the main premise that Yao was wealthy, and that he needed to be defeated. Rarely did opinions, either in the mainstream or social media up until the end of the trial, express that Zhang, peasants, and migrant workers needed more *opportunities* or safer transportation options in the city. The lawyer Zhang Yuanhuang, for example, did consider it a case of transportation failure, but only in the driver's conscientiousness. For him, bad driving was a "national problem of moral indifference", with the car regarded as a personal plaything for the elite, a tool for their own selfishness (Zhang 2011). The solution demanded here is moral reformation, not spatial transformation. At the same time, the comparison online was mainly our rights (Zhang becoming a stand-in for any oppressed person) vs. Yao's perquisites. Zhang was a victim par excellence. They would agree that Zhang certainly did not deserve her fate, but they denied her a narratable life history, in the end serving as a mere predicate of the runaway rich. The grievances were about justice but only through a politics of ressentiment.

During the trial, public opinion appeared to solidify. Polling in China is mostly ad hoc and unreliable, yet perceived beliefs easily slip into public beliefs. An online web poll posted by Yahoo asked if you were the judge how you would rule (Jing 2012). Of the approximately 11,000 responses, 96.4% said the death penalty should be enforced immediately. Asked if CCTV's coverage had been objective and impartial, 82.1% chose the option "I never expect CCTV to be objective and impartial." The write-up of the case, in online encyclopedias and contemporary summaries, is that the people were awash in righteous indignation, and they wanted to see blood.

The first verdict, on April 22, found Yao Jiaxin guilty of intentional murder, sentencing him to death and removing his political rights. It stated that whereas his surrender to police did count as "giving oneself up," it was not sufficient to reduce his sentence. After his car struck Zhang, instead of lending aid, Yao stabbed her to death. The court wrote that "the motive was extremely despicable, the measures extremely cruel and the consequences extremely serious" (Xinhua 2011a). According to the law such acts befit the conditions for punishment by death. Figure 3.3 below shows a translated graphic released by the media chronicling the case.

After the ruling, the internet erupted in collective righteousness. On the automobile forums I followed, the opinions were few but crystallized. Death was justice (zhengyi 正义); without the execution the world would be turned upside down; I hope they execute him fast; his crime deserves hundreds of deaths; I hope they don't overturn this ruling. Nearly everyone joined in, almost as a competition in vengeance. Beijing University Professor Kong Qingdong said Yao Jiaxin looked like a killer and ventured that we should execute the whole family (a punishment reserved for grave crimes during the imperial era). When 5 professors from Shaanxi urged leniency and forgiveness, a commentator on the Chinese blog website Weibo asked: "Would you forgive those who committed the Nanjing Massacre?"

But at least in another social domain, the legal field, there was dismay, showing in part the maturity of China's legal profession. It seemed the courts had blatantly placed public opinion ahead of the rule of law. For them this was a case of emotion (qing 情) versus law (fa 法). The will of the people(minyi 民意) could not be quelled, and the Chinese state kowtowed to expediency over correct process. Writing in the journal of the Chinese Procurators, Xiong Hongwen (2011) regretted that online opinion was firmly on the side of executing Yao, because the "will of the people" is not rational, whereas the law is balanced and rational. In the same issue, Li Caixia and Wang Lingli, commenting on the in-court survey, call using popular will a double-edged sword, in some ways increasing the feelings of justice, yet eroding the independence of the law and its long-term viability (Li and Wang 2011). In a lecture in the U.S., Beijing attorney Pu Zhiqiang admitted there were reasons both for and against the death penalty, but that a lighter punishment could not be considered in so tumultuous a climate (Pu 2012). China had for a moment become a democracy, and the legal advocates were not happy about it.

Yao's legal team appealed the initial verdict, citing five elements for a lighter sentence: (1) The incident occurred at night and Yao could not see what he was doing; (2) it occurred in a flash of passion, and was caused by depression and pressure; (3) the police recognized the voluntary surrender; (4) this was Yao's first offense and his parents were actively trying to compensate the victim's family; (5) according to the law, exacting the death penalty requires careful prudence. On May 20, the Shaanxi Province High People's Court denied this appeal. The Supreme People's Court (SPC), which reviews all death penalty verdicts in Beijing, also confirmed the initial ruling. Yao Jiaxin was executed on June 7, 2011.
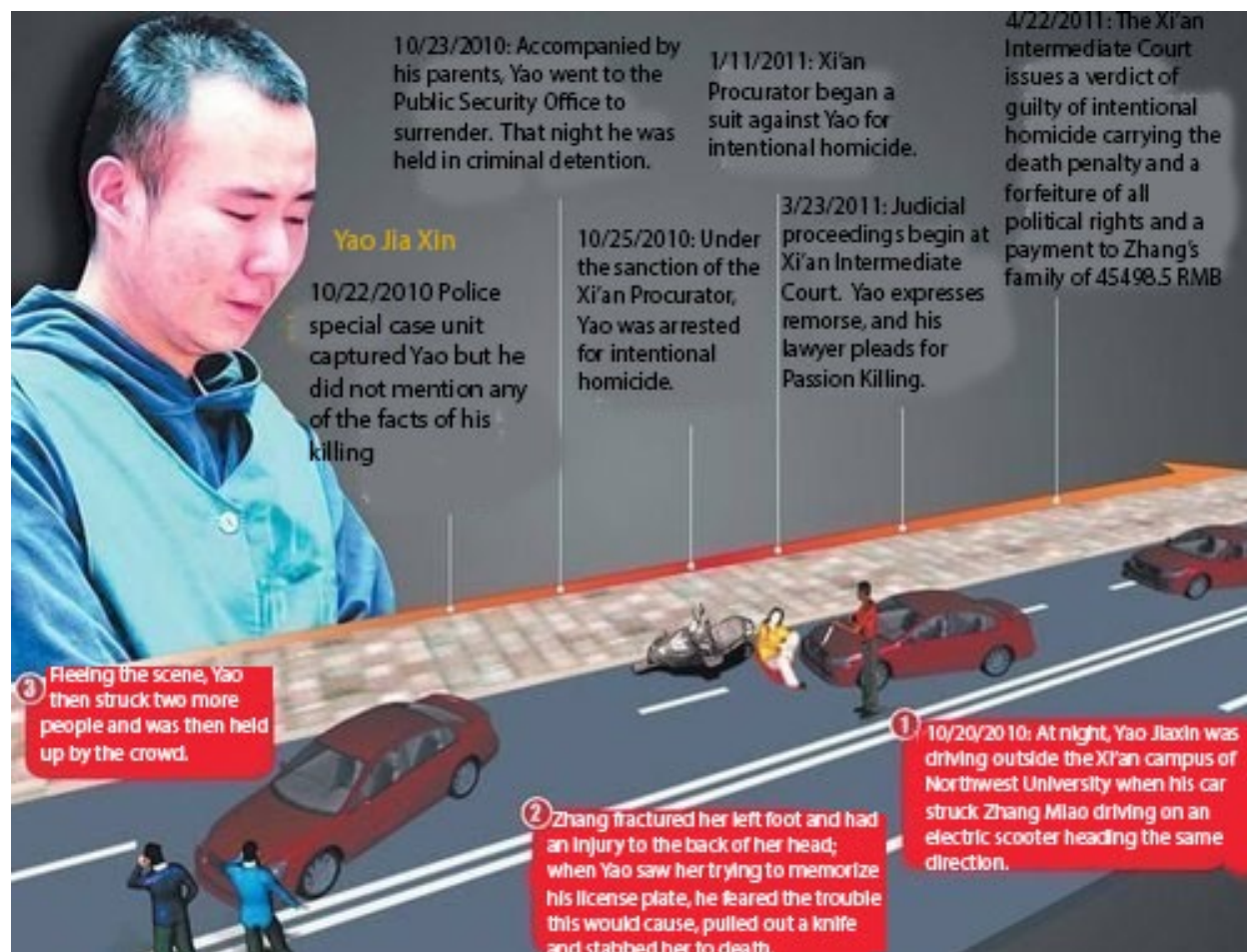
Yao Jia Xin

10/23/2010: Accompanied by his parents, Yao went to the Public Security Office to surrender. That night he was held in criminal detention.

1/11/2011: Xi'an Procurator began a suit against Yao for intentional homicide.

4/22/2011: The Xi'an Intermediate Court issues a verdict of guilty of intentional homicide carrying the death penalty and a forfeiture of all political rights and a payment to Zhang's family of 45498.5 RMB

10/22/2010 Police special case unit captured Yao but he did not mention any of the facts of his killing

10/25/2010: Under the sanction of the Xi'an Procurator, Yao was arrested for intentional homicide.

3/23/2011: Judicial proceedings begin at Xi'an Intermediate Court. Yao expresses remorse, and his lawyer pleads for Passion Killing.

③ Fleeing the scene, Yao then struck two more people and was then held up by the crowd.

② Zhang fractured her left foot and had an injury to the back of her head; when Yao saw her trying to memorize his license plate, he feared the trouble this would cause, pulled out a knife and stabbed her to death.

① 10/20/2010: At night, Yao Jiaxin was driving outside the Xi'an campus of Northwest University when his car struck Zhang Miao driving on an electric scooter heading the same direction.

Figure 3.3: Graphic released by official Chinese media summarizing the Yao Jiaxin case

Conclusions

The Yao Jiaxin case was a traffic crash and a murder. It expanded to an evaluation of rich privilege, the education system, social morality, and eventually the rule of law. But the whole time, the traffic crash itself received little attention; there was no overt politics of mobility, even though there was a subterranean one. Yao's mindset and Zhang's social status overwhelmed any explanation of spatial and roadway causes. If Yao had indeed killed her on first impact, this suit would likely have been handled in civil court, compensation agreed upon, and not a single media outlet would have covered it. In a parallel fashion, an article in the USA Today, explains an event from October 2017: "Terrorism ruled out after car plows into pedestrians in London, injuring 11" (Stanglin 2017). Its purpose is essentially to tell people this is just a *normal* traffic accident, and that 11 people injured by an automobile is nothing that should concern us as a society. A news story clarifying there is no real news story. But death by knife is different than death by front fender, and from the abnormal mindset of a murderer, not a routine vehicle operator, the news coverage began.

While China's regime of mobility is still in transition, it is striking how it has quickly institutionalized a form of immobility: peasant immobility. Just as suspicion and anxiety would accompany the mobile African American, so has the exploration of space by rural persons in

China stirred its own resentments and suspicions. Yet while there was much sympathy for Zhang Miao, she became just an allegory, meant to play the victim's role, the inequities of her actual life subservient to those perceived to be caused by the runaway rich. Yao's biography was investigated, the contours of his life no doubt shaped and chiseled into villainy, but he was at least made into a three-dimensional villain. His car, education, parenting, and musicianship all appeared as topics of debate. Granted, Zhang Miao did not survive to step to the courtroom podium or perform for the cameras at CCTV, but her education (or lack thereof), her vehicle, and her family were either unilluminated or supererogatory. And insofar as I followed the facts of this case, I am guilty of this too to some extent, all too easily collapsing her into a phenomenological category of peasantry, focusing on the web of structural and cultural constraints on her mobility but denying her an active will in negotiating them. Perhaps I specify further her life chances as product of social category but maybe this group specification was meaningless to her and her family, and we should not use lack of detail as pretext to make her into a stock image. It is very difficult to write about marginalized groups without reaffirming and reinforcing the vivid activities of powerful social groups, which in this case means that stories about automobiles are more engaging than those about electric bikes.

Perhaps this case shows the remarkable deftness of the urban middle-class to make stories all about them. Yao's family was no elevated elite; they floated in the same waters as so many car-owners. By vilifying them as part of a merciless, tyrannical class who defy moral norms of decency, the vocal assailants of Yao's family merely transposed social responsibility for Zhang Miao's death away from themselves. Creating a category of ultra-privilege coincides middle-class victimization with Zhang Miao's victimization, but less out of sympathy with Miao's situation than because of a perceived common enemy. This absolves them from any need to resolve the deprivations and stigmas laid down by urbanites on rural migrants. Problematization was monopolized by a minority, who censured Jiaxin for overt prejudice against peasants, while they themselves have institutionalized rural discrimination, as a class finding rural persons difficult to deal with and of low suzhi. The urban dominance of the rural, and the transportation disadvantage that accompanied it, disappeared from view.

As a bizarre coda to this case, public opinion shifted drastically in 2012, when the Zhang family began pressing the Yao family for compensation. Having rejected earlier offerings from the Yao family as "blood money," they now demanded it for medical treatments for Zhang Miao's mother. Yao Jiaxin's father, Yao Qingwei, began his own suit in September 2011, alleging that Zhang Miao's husband and her lawyer had slandered him on the internet and in the media, spreading rumors that exaggerated his net worth and social connections. According to a spokesman for the Yao family, the Zhang family had "turned this into a 'class' struggle - the urban against the rural, the rich against the poor" (Ng 2012). For his part, Zhang Xian (her lawyer and relative) claimed that with their weaker social position all they had for leverage was free speech; it was up to both the people (minzhong 民众) and the media to supervise the legal system.

After Yao Jiaxin's execution, his father appeared on CCTV, giving the cameras an inside look at his lifestyle. He showed his apartment, which he said was built in the 1990s, and stated that he received a monthly pension of 6,000 RMB (about $1000) (CCTV 2011a). In point of fact, Yao's family had lived in the same apartment complex for 20 years, a complex without an elevator, built of the gray stone characteristic of urban housing of the period. He explained: "I'm living in a place with 108 square meters, not the 200 claimed by Zhang Xian (Miao's lawyer and

relative).[16] On his Weibo page, Qingwei described himself and his wife as just a "regular family (putong jiating 普通家庭)."

Seeking the common symbolic damage of 1 yuan for a righteousness-based suit, Yao Qingwei charged the defendants with "defamation of character," claiming they had callously spread rumors online, which he believed had the direct effect of turning public opinion against his decidedly non-elite family and corrupting any potential for legal fairness. Using the internet to spread rumors is now classified as a crime and can be used to suppress public statements deemed unpatriotic or anti-Party. At the time, the statutes stood as evidence to many observers of China's long-standing war on the right to free speech. The Yao case was one of the early encounters China had with the power of mass dissemination. The public sphere experienced a spiral of misinformation, confirmation bias, and emotionally led mob justice. Beliefs owed as much to resentment—against the uber-rich, mainstream media, and political elites—as to facts. Perhaps the courts would have sent Yao to the executioner anyway, but the very integrity of legal institutions **was** directly affected by the evocative, erroneous content that appeared online. The crimes of slander and rumormongering might serve as grounds for an authoritarian state to oppress, but for Yao Qingwei, it offered some opportunity for belated justice.

Pulling peasants into the mainstream has been a major project for nation-states like China for a long time. For those with rural backgrounds like Zhang Miao, a whole host of institutions and discourses would target them to raise their productivity and improve their everyday behavior. Their habits should catch up with modern city life. Although considered culturally more progressive than the countryside, the Chinese city itself would have its own inferiority complex. Better than the countryside but not up to world standards, city leaders would attempt to align their economies, visuality, and everyday street life with globalized imaginaries. In these growing metropolises, civic mindedness among strangers would become a priority. The next chapter will look at a case of failed civility to explain how transportation mobilities have become staged actions for proving national character, and are now subject to new material and political technologies of social control.

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[16] It is almost impossible to find out exactly the Yao family's wealth and power, but the weight of the (admittedly sketchy) evidence suggests that they were probably not especially influential, unlikely able to pull enough levers to direct the media and the court system.

Chapter 4

Foshan October 13, 2011—Little Yue, Public Morality, and Street Discipline

"A melon forced off the vine is not sweet 强扭的瓜不甜" –Chinese proverb

Nietzsche once wrote that "The German himself is not, he is becoming, he is 'developing'." For a modernizing society, like Nietzsche's Prussia, one rescuing itself from obscurity or barbarism, the "self" is never set but transforming. They are in transit: toward something that strengthens the collective; or something adroitly staged for foreign audiences; or something that augments statistical table; or something that preserves the current political system. As grapes for wine are the individuals to history.

While Yao Jiaxin was on trial, five professors from Shaanxi Province put out a statement in support of letting Yao live. In it they argued for moral rejuvenation 复兴 to match China's great economic rejuvenation.

> *The rejuvenation of our people is not just an economic jump; it also needs cultural rejuvenation (renwen fuxing 人文复兴) ...What is civilization (wenming 文明)? It is not just avoiding smoking in public places, not just refusing to mistreat animals, not just punishing drunk drivers. It is a respect for life, it is a treatment of those who harm us with broad-mindedness and open compassion. Yao Jiaxin committed an unforgiveable crime, but must we take one life to pay for the other? Because he killed someone, must we kill him? Is this way of exacting blood-for-blood, tooth-for-tooth really civilized? We need a merciful, compassionate society, that respects life, even of the criminal. One mother has already lost a child, why should we allow another mother to lose her child?* (X. Wang 2011).

The underlying assumption of their statement—cultural improvement is possible and necessary—is one that Chinese from the late Qing Dynasty onward would both recognize and approve. In this view, culture has become a problem, but also a strategy, a weapon to be deployed. Georg Simmel took note of this for turn-of-the-century Germany: culture could no longer unfold as a natural life process but struck one as a perceived outside force. This "tragedy of culture," where people were alienated from their cultural productions, was counterpart to Marx's alienation from industrial production. Simmel believed this confrontation with an externalized culture the hallmark of life in the modern metropolis.

But this alienation from organic, non-self-conscious culture, has presented opportunities for its strategic deployment. In Tibet, the culture of primitivism is used as a lure to capital, to appeal to consumers of exotic distinction, but also to justify the continued state project of civilizing the frontiers. For Han officials in the cities, cultural transformation is used as a checkbox, marking the initiation into the next stage of social development. For sure, they seek physical, hard measures in infrastructure and economic performance, yet they seek to fill in the gaps between buildings with well-programmed populations. From sky-level things look modern, and from street-level the organisms act worldly. For Party leaders, GDP growth, square meters of living

space, number of billionaires, aircraft carriers, and space exploration all serve as markers for the resurgence of China. But many leaders, including President Xi Jinping himself, have noted much of the improvement in living conditions has been dampened by suboptimal spiritual growth, that long term progress requires a better culture, one that is creative and innovative and has a sophisticated groundwork in morals. Like the five scholars defending Yao Jiaxin, the question crops up: where is the cultural leap to accompany the moneyed one?

The case addressed in this chapter bears witness to a push for cultural transformation and moral ordering. It highlights how the looking-glass self, seeing oneself historically and comparatively with other societies, magnifies perceptions of general deviance throughout the nation. Rooted in perceptions of proper roadway behavior and norms of civility, this idea of becoming whole through public acts adds momentum to a push for new techniques of moral regulation. Hence, one area in which the social imaginary is stimulated and fought over is through conversations around streetscapes and crosswalks.

The Prelude

The traffic crash in this chapter is less an isolated event than a direct sequel. Little Yue's death was seen as rooted in a previous traffic event that occurred in Nanjing on November 20, 2006. In that case, a 65-year-old woman named Ms. Xu was waiting to board a bus when she fell to the ground and fractured her femur. Offloading the bus at the same time was a 26-year-old man, Peng Yu, who helped her up and escorted her to the hospital, even paying a portion of her hospital bills. Later Xu sued Peng for personal injury compensation, arguing that he caused her fall when coming off the bus. At court, Peng defended himself as someone who was just performing a good deed and had not caused her injury. The court declared that although the plaintiff presented no direct evidence proving that Peng caused her fall, neither could Peng clearly demonstrate that Xu fell because of a slip or trip. Because Peng was the first person to offload the bus, his likelihood of having contacted her was high.[17] In what would become notorious logic that flummoxed many, the judge stated that:

*If the defendant [Peng] was acting heroically in doing a good deed, then a more fitting action would be to catch the offending party that bumped into the plaintiff [Xu], not just kindly helping her up. If the defendant was doing a good deed, according to **social reason (shehui qingli 社会情理**), when the plaintiff's family arrived, he would have explained the facts and then allowed them to take her to the hospital, leaving the scene on his own; however, the defendant did not make this choice, which is clearly contrary to social reason* [my bold] (People's Court of Gulou District, Nanjing 2007) .

The view that helping someone implied guilt was widely lampooned, including harsh criticisms from *Xinhua* and *China Daily*.

However, the verdict itself also exemplifies the logic by which traffic cases are adjudicated, being less about finding a party at fault (as in many other legal systems) than repairing harms, individual and social:

The plaintiff in this case could not have foreseen the collision with the defendant while getting on the bus; at the same time, the defendant's vision was blocked while exiting the bus and he could not accurately determine the situation at the door; for this reason, in this

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[17] It should be noted that in my experience rarely are such passenger exchanges done sequentially, with offloading getting priority, followed by boarding. Usually there is direct contact between the two flows as they occur simultaneously

*accident there was no fault (guocuo 过错). Therefore, this case must use fairness (gongping 公平) to apportion responsibility for the harm. The concept of fairness applies where there is no fault on either side; here according to the law **we do not assume there is no responsibility just because there is no fault**. According to the concept of fairness, we consider the harm to the victim, the financial circumstances of the parties, and other basic circumstances…we rule that the defendant bears 40% of the damages* [my bold] (People's Court of Gulou District, Nanjing 2007).*

The 40% of damages added up to 45,876 RMB. This parsing of responsibility is typical for a traffic injury case. Even though Xu was deemed more responsible for the harm, Peng still bore part of the fault and was required to make recompense. The judge even cited a principle of fairness, which disregards fault and instead transfers resources based on a more obscure responsibility. Similarly, according to the Road Traffic Law of China, even in cases where a pedestrian showed gross negligence and rushed across a freeway, drivers still bear a certain monetary responsibility, by law a minimum of 10%.

Cases like the Peng Yu case have proliferated in post-reform China. Yunxiang Yan (2009) looked at multiple cases of post-accident extortion in China and found three reasons for them. First, the legal system does not penalize fabricating charges, so there is no penalty for attempts to extort money. Second, Chinese society is characterized by hostility toward strangers. Third, and most important for our purposes, is the general feeling that since the social system is unfair to me (the accusers typically being elderly or lower class), someone somewhere is responsible. One informant tells Yan: "It is very important to catch someone to pay the bill, no matter who it may be" (18). This possibly relates to attributions of social causation in other domains. For instance, upon hearing the O.J. Simpson verdict, many Chinese people could not comprehend how no one would be held accountable for the two murders discovered in Los Angeles; what they demanded was substantive justice, punishment somewhere equal to the crime, not procedural justice, a set of criteria and formal rules that must be carried out in full (Bo 2000).

Even though there were nuances of law attached to the case, the lore that emerged from the Nanjing Peng Yu case included the prescription that one should not involve oneself in the injuries or suffering of others. One cartoon revealed the foregoing of compassionate instincts for circumspection (see Figure 4.1). A man stands over another man lying in the road, reading a book entitled "Helping the Elderly safety Book." He tells the man below him, "Don't worry uncle, I need to study a bit first then I will help you." Doing good contained risks and extending a hand required prudence. As another popular line went, heroes shed blood then tears (yingxiong liuxue you liulei 英雄流血又流泪).[18] The cases investigated by Liebman also show the danger of becoming a social being on the street, particularly if you are a person of wealth. While the Peng Yu case may have been an extreme version, the operation of the legal concept of fairness, over and above assessing legal wrong, does put an onus of proof-generation and justification on those who become part of the causal chain, even in a remedial role. Based on public knowledge of some of the consequences of helping, a generalized credo arose: a rational person would be leery of getting involved in the suffering of others (Xu 2016). This would manifest itself vividly in an incident in Guangdong Province five years after the Peng Yu case.

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[18] This appears to be a re-working of a common maxim from martial arts fiction: "heroes shed blood but not tears".

Figure 4.1: Cartoon from the early 21ˢᵗ century showing a man consulting a book ("Helping the Elderly Safety Book") before lending a hand. The guy standing says: "Don't worry uncle, I need to first study a bit then I will help you." (from Zhihu 2021).

The Case

According to the footage released from the elevated security camera, 2-year-old Wang Yue took no action on the narrow access road in Foshan on October 13, 2011. She was run over by the front right wheel of a white bread truck; after the driver paused for about 3 seconds, the truck continued on, running her over again with the back wheel. Three persons then pass by her bloody, supine body. The first person walks directly next to her, not even looking at her body. The second rides past on a motorcycle, veering to the right to avoid her body. The third person walks by in an identical line as the first passerby but he stares at her as he passes by. Then another small lorry drives through, running her over again and causing secondary injuries to her lower body. Her injured body then lay in the street for several minutes, as onlookers walked by, angling themselves away from her. One of them was a mother walking with her young child, both of them gazing at the body as they continue on. Including the initial three passersby, a total of 18 persons passed by. Person number 19 was a rubbish collector who set down her trash bags and attended to Little Yue, summoning her mother to the scene. The entire surveillance feed lasted 7 minutes.

The event occurred in a business area on a poorly lit back road generally used for carrying freight and other commercial items. Little Yue was about 100 meters from her house. At the time, her mother was putting away clothes, and her father was tending to a customer.

After a week-long coma, Wang Yue died of organ failure on October 21, 2011. The surveillance camera footage became a viral phenomenon, a shared national event, striking a chord with many people over the state of Chinese character.

Public Discourse on the Little Yue Incident

It would be impossible to sum up the full diversity of Chinese public opinion about this case. Probably the most widely deployed rhetoric was of moral decay or a spiritual vacuum that had seeped into society (Wang 2013). The first comment from *People's Daily* was to blame everyone, with a headline proclaiming that we were all on the street when a young girl got crushed (H. Li 2011). The Hong-Kong based *Oriental Daily* explicitly cited the "cold-blooded Chinese" (Zhao 2014). An official in Guangdong Province suggested that the event was a "wake-up call" that demands we "look into the ugliness in ourselves with a dagger of conscience" (Xinhua 2011b).

Across the Chinese internet, many debated the question: if you were on the street in Foshan that day, what would you have done? Unsurprisingly, few likened themselves to the ignominious 18 that made no effort to help Little Yue. Even so, there were many who admitted that they would not actively assist or move her, out of fear of causing secondary injuries. Rather they would report it to the police.

Another well-worn term after the event was social apathy. Some writers likened Little Yue to a "sacrificial victim" placed on the altar by national indifference (S. Wang 2011). Some referred to the novelist Lu Xun, who in *A Little Incident* (Yijian Xiaoshi 一件小事) had cited the indifference to the troubles of others as a national trait. The onlooker attitude seemed like something indelible. Using a different Chinese source, another stance took from Mencius the idea that people had innate goodness and natural empathy for others but required the right environment to maintain it in action (Zhao 2014).

For some the environment of goodness was maligned by the Cultural Revolution. Whatever brought social cohesion and common sympathy was decimated by the attacks on elders and teachers; all the repositories of how to act—in the Confucian canons, in Buddhist temples, in ancestral halls—were denounced and desecrated; once erased, they could not be rewritten; once torn down could only be revisited as a foreign land. Intellectuals like He Huaihong have claimed that the Cultural Revolution smashed those persistent customs of kindness in the Chinese tradition (He 2015). People became self-centered as a defense mechanism, to save themselves from ever-shifting political purges. Sticking one's neck out for another would leave one vulnerable to being labeled a sympathizer—of capitalists, rightists, imperialists, etc. Better to have no public identity or markers of loyalty. Making tradition kneel before socialist megalomania, there was nothing left to elevate the people.

Others marked the inflection point as the commercial reforms of the 1970s, which ushered in a time when money became the criterion of social value, and people would do anything (buze shouduan 不择手段) to get ahead. A few years after the Little Yue case, a joke circulated online: "A young person saw an old person lying down and asked him as he passed by, 'Uncle, my monthly salary is 2000 RMB [about $330], can I to help you up?' The old man responded, 'Thanks, you can go, I think I'll lie here a little longer' (Zhang 2015). Basic human emotions, as in helping an old man up, were convoluted by market logics. Some holding this view held that at least during the Mao years, the people believed in something, had some form of faith. A terrible faith was better than rank avarice. To these, often older, Chinese people the betrayal of the Maoist heritage for a policy of get-rich-quick profaned any foundational social values.

Others cited the overall good character of the Chinese people but the flaws in the legal system that restrained their good inclinations. Because extortionists (which Xu was widely believed to be) receive no punishment, they can press claims with immunity. Others, including

Xinhua and *People's Daily*, looked abroad for Good Samaritan Laws, citing German and Italian codes that protect those assisting the injured. One scholar offered policy recommendations including setting up a fund to reward and protect Good Samaritans, more news features showing regular people doing heroic deeds, and a better social welfare system (most of those suing were elderly women who lacked the resources to fund medical care) (Ye 2012).

Even with the frequent citing of social and legal factors, many simply wondered where the parents were in the Little Yue case. What parents would leave their daughter on her own to wander through the streets? These critics might still uphold the cold climate of society, but they still saw causation primarily in terms of personal failings.

In general, what was not to blame was the traffic system. This event was not considered an automobile crash, and the configuration that brought toddlers into contract with 2-ton freight trucks was not much debated. Many car owners in fact blamed pedestrians and traffic laws that they felt discriminated against them, making them pay out even when they did nothing illegal. Caught up as it was in vituperation over interpersonal morality, the public discussion eschewed broad thinking about the configuration of urban spaces and types of dangers brought on by the magnification and stratification of kinetic energies operating on the streets. That streets had been lost as spaces for childhood ramblings in favor of free-flowing traffic was missed.

The Looking-Glass Self and Collective Deficiency

Whereas class considerations were very much at the forefront of discussions of the Yao Jiaxin case, the Little Yue case focused much more on social ethics and Chinese culture. Some academics brought Confucianism back in, saying there was no abiding concept of the gentleman (junzi 君子) anymore. Related to this line of attack was to reprove the blatant hypocrisy of political leaders, always excoriating people for their own poor conduct, but constantly getting caught up in corruption scandals and defying the public trust. Their endless circulation of platitudes, such as "happiness is helping other people" (Zhuren weile 助人为乐,) rang hollow. In contrast, others excoriated Confucianism for focusing on the gentleman and not on having enough emphasis on strong, consistent laws. As is common when criticizing Confucius, the Legalist school of Chinese philosophy appeared. An editorial from the online newsmagazine Caijing in October 2011 quoted Laozi's famous dictum that "if the sage is not killed, banditry will not cease (shengren busi, dadao buzhi 圣人不死，大盗不止)", meaning it is less important to make room for virtue than it is to punish the thieves. Rule by law, this argument ran, would set up the foundation for virtuous behavior better than invectives and sermonizing (S. Liu 2011).

Still others saw it through a lens of global prestige and comparisons of national character. One blogger on Weibo noted the severe sense of shame he felt in Japan, when he could offer no response when his business colleagues asked him why the Little Yue case occurred. State-run media, always swinging like a pendulum between scolding a laggard public and fluffing their ego, ran articles noting that the Bystander Effect was a universal thing. They recounted the Kitty Genovese case in New York City (a sensation at its time for its moral signaling), where a woman was left dying in the street. This line of thinking berated the foreign media, who, quick to pounce on China's flaws, did not examine their own sordid histories. Instead, as is their wont, they look at China with its "rising income, its cars, its luxury goods" and choose to focus on its problems, its food safety, pollution, and mass protests (Yao and Wang 2012). *People's Daily* adeptly tiptoed the fence, certifying a national deficiency that justified ethical instruction but not brooking any such charges from foreign press.

The paradigm of the "slippery slope" and an alternative, better moral base exists is extremely important to the boundary-making of Han Chinese. The recent Chinese embrace of the market has led to pride in moving up the value chain, and yet self-denunciation for at the same time becoming perverse and artificial. This becomes a point of comparison against the conscience-bound and integrated others: the West, Chinese tradition, and ethnic minorities.

Unlike Han Chinese, turncoats to their good nature, the ethnic minorities are believed to retain traditional benevolence. A Beijing traveler in Xinjiang tells his blog readers that at Uyghur shops, "you can rest easy. They have laws for commerce under their Islamic religious laws. You don't have to worry about being cheated, or having adulterants added; they are more trustworthy than the Han [Chinese]."

I mentioned in Chapter 2 the importance of discovering the chunpu lifestyle on the Tibetan Plateau; it inverts the discourse on moral decay—the encomium of the yak-herder and the opprobrium of the Han driver. A 26-year-old male bicyclist along route 318 explains:

> *Tibetan areas are not as well-developed as neidi is, but they preserve more goodness in their personality. We neidi people will think it stupid to give up any chance of making money, but the Tibetans earn what they need—they are not greedy. That is the power of religion. In Han areas, you have to bargain with hostel owners because they will charge people differently, but the hostellers in Tibetan areas charge everyone the same. They are honest people* (Liu 2017:93).

Another young traveler in Tibet remarks that the locals have no emulation (panbi 攀比) or materialism (Lhasa 2014). When the writer Yu Hua contended that the spread of counterfeit products and bamboozling tactics shows that "we live in a frivolous society, one that doesn't set store by matters of principle" (Yu 2011:221), by "we", he was narrowing his scope to Han Chinese. This lamentation of lost principle seems to require a caricature of ethnic simplicity, implying that once a people move forward in material progress, they have to forgo part of themselves.

While not the case for official media, for many laypersons, there is an additional idealization of that ever-important fabrication—the West. One citizen bicycling across the country to protest corruption complains that Chinese dynasties start well but eventually fester and cheat the people:

> *You see in the West, people have a moral standard that is inside them. It is built into them. Chinese people do not have that moral standard within them. If there is **nothing external stopping them** they just do whatever they want for themselves, regardless of right or wrong* (Gifford 2008:54)[my bold].

As we shall see, this idea of a rampant, lemming-like model of herd behavior invites and justifies countermeasures that require something "external stopping them."

Societal Aftermath of the Little Yue Case

The immediate aftermath of the case witnessed a series of soul-searching editorials and debates over creating a system that protects Good Samaritans. The city of Shenzhen, near Foshan, made headlines for drafting a bill which protected rescuers, placing the burden of proof for any misdeeds on the person saved. Those falsely accusing a Good Samaritan were required to pay a fine and issue a public apology (Branigan 2011). A Shanghai-based insurance company added an insurance plan that provided compensation if one was sued for responding to a person in need (Ni 2012). A host of scholars called for some reform of the legal system to better protect good deeds.

In spite of the criticisms stemming from the Little Yue incident, with many indicting Party leaders for their lack of good examples or their lack of personal propriety, Chinese officials found an addition to their quiver, charging that it was precisely the lack of Chinese soft power, exemplified by the public behavior in Foshan, which needed fixing. As early as 2007, Joseph Nye's term "soft power" entered Party literature. Used by Nye, soft power describes the ability of a political unit to exert its will through persuasion and non-coercive means because its culture and values have resonance on a wider scale. For instance, Nye argued that American foreign power was assisted by Hollywood films and pop culture, which frontloaded, perhaps subconsciously, the American value system. The term has had especially broad applications in China, encompassing international strategies of persuasion, cultural products, creative potential, and the overall actions of regular people.

In advocating greater cultural soft power, the 6th Plenum of the 17th Party Congress in 2011, held while Little Yue was in the hospital during mid-October, stressed the importance of the spiritual civilization, specifically culture and ideology (Creemers 2015). Spiritual civilization had been emphasized periodically throughout the Reform period, but this was a pivotal moment in bringing more profound emphasis on culture in top-level policy. The plenum noted that some members of society have distorted outlooks on life, and that special education and governance in the field of morality should be carried out. During a Politburo study session in December 2013, President Xi Jinping called for increased "comprehensive national power." These included 6 lanterns: national behavior (guomin suzhi 国民素质); cultural image (wenhua xingxiang 文化形象); cultural industry (wenhua chanye 文化产业); cultural resources (wenhua ziyuan 文化资源); cultural innovation (wenhua chuangxin 文化创新); and the knowledge economy (zhishi jingji 知识经济). The end result was hoped to be a better narrative of Chinese culture.

What is interesting about Xi's delineation of cultural power was that it included paraphernalia included in typical definitions of soft power, such as cultural resources and a cultural industry, but also mental factors, such as cultural innovation and knowledge, and behavioral factors. The definition of culture is expansive in the way some social scientists now articulate culture: extending beyond texts, images, public declarations, the arts, and ways of life to technologies, skills, spatial arrangements, and bodily postures (Garland 2006). Achieving soft power in this framework requires a more totalizing personal and societal transformation.

Although whether China truly has soft power is an important question (Shambaugh 2014), the pursuit of soft power has hard consequences for Chinese bodies. The building of cultural power depends on both the fabrication of better artistic works and better cultural diplomacy, but it also has a behavioral component—as performances of culture in banal settings. In fact, the staging of everyday street life received an additional impetus from the tragedy of Little Yue. In keeping with China's desire to create a spiritual civilization parallel with economic growth, the policing of streets, curbs, and crosswalks has moved into the forefront as an avenue for accessing moral regulation and urban prestige.

But the long-run implication of this case was its telescopic focus on the need for wide-ranging behavioral and cultural reform: calls for the kind of people who would not wantonly disregard the life of a toddler. These appeals dovetailed with both a discourse on winning the hearts and minds of foreign audiences and a massive assemblage of disciplinary control and civilizing institutions.

To better understand the context of moral ordering of mobilities, let us work backwards and see how Chinese culture has become problematized since Reform and Opening. A few key institutions have infiltrated public discourses and shaped new modes of desirability.

Culture as Problem-to-Be-Solved

After the death of Mao, the political will to collectivize culture diminished among top Party leaders. Having himself been brought down by the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping steered a more pragmatic course, softening the need for ideological purity in politics. Deng Xiaoping's transformation of society would center on experts and technical skill, bringing in technocrats to manage an economic transformation. His practicality was summed up in the famous dictum, "No matter if it is a white cat or a black cat; as long as it can catch mice, it is a good cat." Moral campaigns still persisted during the 1980s but there was far less emphasis on raising consciousness or moral character. "Spiritual pollution" was attacked, and criminal elements would be dealt with by "strike hard" campaigns, but a nation of individuals would be somewhat tolerated. Soon the clothing on Beijing streets would be multi-colored, multi-fabric, lit by the lights of a diverse set of private operated restaurants that would no longer require government coupons. Diversity in political expression also found greater tolerance and the optimal political system was somewhat openly debated.

This would all change after May 4, 1989. Viewing the loose controls on thought and freedom of expression as root causes of the student protests at Tiananmen Square, Deng would reemphasize patriotic education, inculcating socialist values and bringing orthodoxy back into the lives of the masses, from cradle to grave. Cultural regulation was not to be delegated anymore; the Communist Party would approve the final cut of available cultural content. Many of those involved in the "cultural fever" of the 1980s, which sought to diagnose disorders within the Chinese tradition, were castigated and hounded into submission. The producers of the film, "River Elegy", which saw the civilization emerging along the Yellow River as inherently close-minded, were targeted for persecution (Keane 2000). While study sessions for the most part would not return, other means of sculpting a common culture did. Lei Feng, the all-good-doing youth tragically killed helping others, was recalled after a decades-long furlough. His likeness appeared in numerous slogans, articles, and street posters. While espousing social responsibility, Lei possessed a refurbished urbane image—in some images wearing wristwatches, traveling on motorcycles, and donning stylish sweaters (Steen 2014). Colleges added new requirements for training in Marx-Lenin-Mao-Deng thought. Mythical figures that defined a particularistic Chinese identity, such as the legendary emperor Yu the Great, were actively elevated and praised (Perry 2017). Ironically, as the material substructure became more and more capitalist, the framing of history and citizenship became thematically more socialist and traditional.

But these socialist heroes would have competition. Two new discourses, that of civilization and suzhi (person-quality) would exert newfound influence on propaganda.

Civilization, or acting according to a putative global paradigm of proper behavior, was institutionalized politically at the central level. In 1997, the central government set up a Central Guidance Commission for Building Spiritual Civilization within the Party's Propaganda Department. This would eventually become the Civilization Office (Wenming Ban 文明办), responsible for promoting civilized customs, and since 2005, conferring honors on "Civilized Cities." The Civilization Office, through local branches, coordinates propaganda and sponsors projects to raise awareness of civilization. Their advocacy posters are a fixture of public spaces, as seen in Figures 4.2 and 4.3.

Figure 4.2: Street-level poster in the Minhang District of Shanghai, 2015, urging citizens to practice yielding to safeguard free-flowing traffic (photo by author)

Figure 4.3: Placard in Shanghai exhorting citizens to be civilized by helping others and being Good Samaritans (photo by author)

In its municipal evaluations, the Civilization Office takes into account various markers of civilization, including museums, air cleanliness, political education, road conduct, and volunteerism. Using these factors, it assigns annual scores from 1-100 to cities for a so-called "Civilization Index." Leaders of major cities, increasingly envisioning themselves governing

world-class spaces, attempt to prove they have both upgraded the built environment and elevated their residents' moral expressions (Cartier 2002). By way of illustration, the city of Heyuan 河源 in Guangdong Province celebrated its 2014 selection as a "Civilized City" by the Civilization Office:

> *Since the 2014 nomination, the city has convoked meetings to promote civilization…the city has a whole new look; the streets are clean and bright, traffic is ordered (jingran youxu 井然有序); service windows are kinder; public facilities are more complete; suzhi keeps getting higher; good people and good happenings keep appearing; and civilization has made its way to all corners.*
>
> *Heyuan has remade itself, its competitiveness revealing itself, not only is the city more developed, yet it has also a more charming image, and raised the value of its appearance (yanzhi), with a deeper and more resounding business card (mingpian 名片)… Progress in civilization is a region and a city's core competitiveness; it is a long-term project….it involves every person* (Heyuan City Government 2017).

The intimations here of positive image, good people, and a culturally competitive landscape echo Xi's comprehensive treatment of cultural power.

The announcement also included a photograph of civilized street movement (Figure 4.4). Take note of the absences in the photograph: no cars parked on sidewalk, no scooters going the wrong way, no pedestrians in the middle of the road (oddly, no pedestrians anywhere), and no merchandise or boxes billowing out of the stores. The city champions its relatively high civilization index of 82.58.

Figure 4.4: Photograph of city of Heyuan accompanying the announcement of its recognition as a Civilized City

Whereas civilization is manifested in both physical spaces and human action, "suzhi" had come to be identified with the personal qualities befitting a well-socialized person. During the 1970s, it was initially used in discussing family planning and reproductive control, hinging upon

inbuilt traits. Later, in the 1980s, the meaning shifted into both inbuilt qualities and nurtured manners, outlook, and behavior. Today, high suzhi implies being educated, courteous, clean, self-governing, generous, and sophisticated. Even with a lack of high income, having a college education would imply high suzhi (Hsu 2007). For example, the best-selling novel, *Harvard Girl* (Hafu Nvhaizi Liu Yiting 哈佛女孩刘亦婷), is subtitled "A Record of Suzhi Cultivation" (Suzhi Peiyang Shilu 素质培养实录). Although tied somewhat to social class and status, there is no one-to-one relationship between suzhi and background; suzhi operates on a different axis of evaluation. Not just persons, but whole populations can be labeled as high or low in suzhi, depending on the perceived moral level of the citizens.

Though supposedly representing the total person—body, spirit, mind, and habits—usually only a few elements stand in for the whole. Sensory elements like smell and loudness, and basic behaviors like littering and spitting are decisive factors. Suzhi would apply very readily to road traffic and demarcate how well-socialized a person or community was. Things like returning rented bicycles, modestly using high-beams while driving, or stopping at a crosswalk could represent person-quality.

Both civilization and suzhi merged with the new emphasis on governmentality, that is, increasing the health and welfare of the overall population (Foucault 1978). In his later lectures on changes in political techniques, Foucault traced a new component in the reason of the state to manage the habits and movements of its subjects. For Foucault, modern societies do not rely on brutal public punishment; instead, they use nudges and external insinuations to erect patterns of behavior. They govern conduct overall, not simply the law-breakers, thus making the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate behavior more salient (Lyon 1994). In this view, the state disposes people to greater ends, magnifies and mixes their acts so as to foster wealth, health, and productivity.

I would add, however, that the issue is not just governmentality but also inter-governmentality. To join international organizations, China has had to produce statistics for this population, a line for "China" in international statistical registers, such as those issued from the World Health Organization and the World Bank. Births and deaths, infrastructural lengths, parks, pollution, and poverty—all counted and weighed as part of relativizing metrics. Because of ready-made national comparison, the population was placed on the grid of normalization. This normalization of the population would also have an aesthetic and performative component. Theatrically, the people should look the part and evince becoming qualities. The Party would seek to build bodies that represented worldwide standing. These would be athletic, strong, and beautiful, and weighed down by Olympic medals (Brownell 1995; Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005).

At the same time, international cultural recognition would become a national obsession. Hosting an Olympics in Beijing and piling up UNESCO heritage sites delighted officials, whose work reports championed the cultural renaissance under their watch. Public morals became broadly construed as part of this culture, as comparable quanta evinced in the actions that regular citizens took on the roadways, in the theaters, and on the internet. It would allow Chinese people to be compared to each other, to catch up to the baseline, but it could also be used to compare China to the world. Social Darwinism found new footing in the governmentality of cultural infrastructure. No longer a closed economy, China now produced tourists and business travelers. Officials, students, travelers, and professions would carry stories of the perfect merging of traffic in Kyoto, the affability of pedestrians in Australia, and the cleanliness of Singapore. Amidst

these global vistas, the shirtless peasant roaming Nanjing looked comparatively crude. Actions were encoded by their fluency within this international grammar of civility.

Soft cultural power would have an infrastructural dimension—producing winsome art and performing traditions, but it would also imply correcting bad habits. Foshan, the site of Little Yue's death, has actually become since 2011 a leader in bridging the changing perspective on growth—from one of economics alone to a broader index of modernization that included cultural metrics. It is to some of its efforts that we turn to now.

Marking Foshan for Development

Foshan, the site of Little Yue's death has exemplified a shift in infrastructure from hard to soft, from facilitating movement and trade to facilitating breakthroughs of the mind. As part of the Pearl River Delta, the region of China encompassing much of Guangdong Province, Foshan benefited early from the economic liberalization begun after the Cultural Revolution. It also brought its own innovations. It was Foshan that built the connecting toll road to Guangzhou, the first time such a capitalist instrument of infrastructure creation was attempted in China. When exports were still verboten in much of China during the early 1970s, the city began the Foshan Experiment of building production zones and arranging contracts with Hong Kong merchants. Because national guidelines during the early 1980s allowed local governments leeway in land use decisions on plots of less than 10 mu (about 1.65 acres), the city built a series of workshops on 9.9 mu of land (Vogel 1990:185).

Indeed, much of Foshan's economic development would hinge on its transportation network. If Tibet is constructed out of dreams and Xi'an out of nostalgia for the Tang, Foshan is made of concrete. Its poetry is traced in cloverleaf intersections and rail tracks. Very early on, the city had fulfilled the 3 pillars of modernity: roads, water, and electricity. The city's 13th 5-year transportation plan, released in 2016, lays out its goal of establishing an integrated system of transport with smooth traffic flow, efficiency, green-ness, fairness (gongping 公平), and safety. This means making the city more competitive, becoming a transport hub in the Delta, and lowering carbon emissions. One of the explicit targets of the city plan is to shorten travel routes between Guangzhou and Foshan and improve minimum speeds during rush hour.

While keeping infrastructure and economic targets foremost, the city has proceeded to increase its cultural legibility, or at least be recognizable as recognizing culture. With models of urban development worldwide moving toward forging creative cities—that is, providing the climate and facilities necessary for creative people to thrive intellectually and artistically in the information economy—leaders of cities like Foshan have put forth efforts to win over the creative, cultural class. Like "smart city" and "big data," "creativity" has become a shibboleth, copy-and-pasted throughout speeches and planning documents.

Herein Foshan has done what essentially every city has done and portrayed itself as culturally progressive. The economic development promoted by city elites not only includes land development in the traditional economic-growth-first models, but also heritage, entertainment, and image (Zhang 2008). Searching for superlatives and comparative advantage in terms of culture, municipal boosters have found charm in architectural wonders (Chengdu's largest building in the world by square footage), literary connection (Shangri-la County as setting of Hilton's Lost Horizons), historic residents (Hefei as the home of the great, incorruptible official Baozheng), animal residents (pandas in Chongqing, camels in Kashgar), cuisine (Longjing tea), exotica (the largest Naxi population), erotica (the most beautiful women), and mode of

movement (Maglev trains in Shanghai, rickshaws in Pingyao). Some places have even competed for name-brand historic imagery, with multiple towns laying claim to being Shangri-la and adjacent counties in Jiangsu fighting to have their town listed as the "hometown" of the first Han Emperor Liu Bang (Yan 2017).

Foshan's glossy brochure would tell us it contains Xiqiaoshan Baofeng Temple, one of the 4 great temples of Nan'ao (a county of Guangdong). A 5A-level attraction built on a dormant volcano, the temple complex touts a 45-million-year history, in addition to a rich human legacy of over 6000 years, giving it the moniker of the "beacon" of Delta Civilization. Foshan also claims one of Guangdong's 4 great parks, Chaiyuan. It has an architecturally rich area called "Heaven and Earth" 新天地, which is supposedly better than Shanghai's Heaven and Earth district, incorporating elements of Qing, Republican, and Western building styles. Its yearly work report brags that it was named one of China's most charitable cities in 2017, with an expanding set of NGOs and service organizations, all carefully monitored by the government.

Following the logics of the creative cities movement, and success stories like Brisbane, Soho New York, and Montreal, Foshan was one of the experimental leaders of creative investment. Foshan 39º Space Art Creative Community was founded in the Nanhai District of Foshan in 2011. By early 2017, it had 44 cultural creative enterprises, including high-tech companies, advertising, and new media (Jiang et al. 2019). Given preferential rent and infrastructure access, such zones are intended to stimulate innovative thinking in an information-based economy.

Its work report reveals its ambitions to make a higher quality city (gao zhililang 高质量), a happy city, a pleasant place to live and work in, a city suitable to creativity—a "high character, modern, international city (gao pinzhi xiandaihua guoji dachengshi 高品质现代化国际化大城市)" (Foshan Municipal Government 2018). The standard way to demonstrate your efforts to higher-ups is to build an urban planning museum. Its Urban Planning Museum, renovated in 2017 to better reflect the city's image, is located in a recently rehabilitated district with swooping, eye-catching architecture. A spokesman lays out their hopes for the completed 4-story museum:

> The exhibit is a trademark (pinpai 品牌) built by the common culture of the city, a new platform (pingtai 平台) for communication, a new site tourist site (jingdian 景点); it has already become a lobby receiving business and a business card for the city's charm; not only will it raise the city's image and cultural standard (wenhua pinwei 文化品位), it will also have a role in improving spiritual civilization and attracting investment (Anon 2016a).

As one does with these types of museums, the top floor is occupied by a diorama of the city, allowing visitors to gaze upon its changes as would a player of the video game Sim City. Architectures and aerial visuality are treated as means to further culture the people and advance market competitiveness.

Bodies as Cultural Artifacts: Something External Stopping Them

The other dimension of culture more directly relates to the Little Yue case, where the focus is not on high culture and beckoning intelligence but on vernacular culture and the groundwork of morals. Believing in national cultural deficiency, an engine of cultural development has emerged throughout China that restrains and readjusts personal mobilities into civilized, high suzhi formations.

This appeal to betterment has reframed the relationship of state and society in China and modified the material encounters of everyday life. One of the chief informal measures of the cultural level of the Chinese has been their behavior on the street. An episode of the CCTV news magazine "Focus" put it directly: "Public places are platforms where societal functions are revealed, the principal stage 舞台 that reveals the character and atmosphere of society (shehui fengqi 社会风气). Here, many people behave wonderfully, but many people behave monstrously" (Anon 2014c). This episode would go on to explore running red lights, aggressive maneuvers directed at slower vehicles, and roughing up police officers. It would proceed to call for greater public ethics (gongde 公德) and the raising of the baseline of civilization. Although hardly distant from themes of nationalism, the notion of a civilized being, of a person to be made whole by public acts, exists to Chinese leaders as the imagined resultant of a continuous, government-mandated inculcation. What this call-to-arms to improve public order shows, and what I want to argue in the rest of this chapter, is that transportation safety in China is more than just a simple problem of protecting lives, more than a rational calculus based on risks; it is an integral part of nation-building. Everyday street life is a lynchpin of state-making and crafting a social order.

In this civilizing process, nothing would be left to chance or individual will. When social critic Han Han attended a car race in Australia, he was struck by the utter lack of forced ordering, as if the Australians allowed their people to be inferior. He noted the police were not in force (in China they would have installed thousands of police to maintain order); there were no road closures and compelled beautifications (e.g. painted grass), and you could talk to anyone (no regulated intercourse) (Han 2013). The staging of the international event fit in organically with the everyday operation of the locality.

Studying the writings of the great early 20th century novelists Lu Xun, Andrew Jones (2011) argued that evolutionary theory and the paradigm of the survival of the fittest challenged state officials and scholars. Reading translations of Herbert Spencer, they learned that there was inevitable Darwinian competition among societies, sorted clearly into weak and strong. Yet in Darwinian time horizons, it took centuries, millennia even, for species (i.e., races) to evolve. What could China then do? Taking the sanguine view that China could indeed catch up and not abide by the millennial timelines suggested by Darwin, these thinkers believed the key medium for rapid advancement was culture. To enhance this culture, writers such as Lu Xun fabricated stories in the image of fairy tales, using unsophisticated language that treated Chinese people like children, to be scolded and reproved for their bad habits and indigence. They believed that part of the power of the literary art was in awakening the people to action. The moral campaigns that have characterized much of contemporary Chinese life would still be tinged with this paternalistic remonstration. What Han was conscious of is the belabored disciplining of public spaces, the green paint, and the brute force civilizing process that works against voluntarism and spirit.[19] Han Han and others recognized they are not so much freely developing culture as being cultured.

In these fairy tales, there is an exaggerated infantilization of mass behavior, as if people are interchangeable. Civility efforts and education of the masses is everywhere, using cartoon characters to school users in appropriate conduct. Subway stations are often a battle between commercial advertisements and propaganda. Inside the Shanghai subway, train doorway stickers

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[19] This is not to say Chinese are passive recipients of regulation. Chinese netizens use numerous expressions that play off the passive voice to ridicule their official voluntarism, e.g., calling censorship "being harmonized" or being invited by police for a chat as "being forced to tea" (bei hecha 被喝茶).

push the romance of Zuche rental cars ("Follow your mood, not the route"), while the electronic signboard overhead scrolls in red text: "Respecting the old and loving the young (zunlao aiyou 尊老爱幼) is a traditional Chinese virtue, please give up your seat to those in need." Skin care products are advertised on the staircases, showing you how to stand out, while video screens on the platform show a herd of cloned white creatures bull horned out of rear cars during an emergency (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Safety video at a Shanghai Metro station showing how to offload a burning train (photo by author)

Demonstrating how worldwide models of street behavior create a feeling of deficiency requiring state action, a common expression for pedestrian behavior is called "Chinese-style crossing" (Zhongguoshi guo malu 中国式过马路). This fits in with a common official tactic of using collective monikers to incite remorse in a recalcitrant populace, including such behaviors such as "Chinese-style lane hogging"(Zhongguoshi zheng daolu 中国式争道路) in a safety journal, "Chinese-style driving" (Zhongguoshi jiashi 中国式驾驶) in *People's Daily*, and "Chinese-style bad habits" (Zhongguoshi louxi 中国式陋习), which to the Chinese encyclopedia Baike includes willfully crossing the street, stomping on grassy areas, being raucous in public places, littering, and not queuing properly (Baike 2018). See Figure 4.6 for visual representation of a few of these behaviors.

As social commentary, these appeals to in-group indignities and national disgraces are used to motivate cultural transformation. Indeed, during international events (when international image is at stake) such as the Olympics and international summits, campaigns for civilized behavior are intensified. In anticipation of a 2014 APEC meeting in Beijing, city officials began a rabid behavioral correction campaign, to encourage "civilized orderly and courteous transport, to improve people's overall quality to display (their) wonderfulness." "Wonderfulness" meant proper line-queuing, stopping cars at crosswalks, an end to littering and spitting, and not making a racket (Agence France-Presse 2014a).
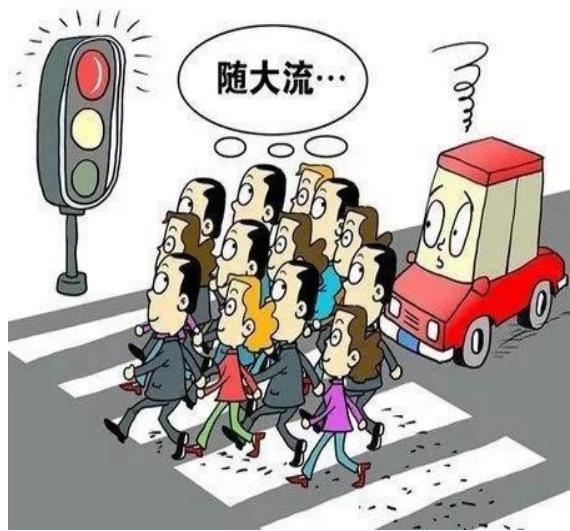
"Chinese -style" Road Crossing
"Going with the flow"

"Chinese -style" space -hogging

Figure 4.6: Cartoons depicting "Chinese-style" road maneuvers

Streets as Progressive

In the context of conversations around national shamelessness, micro-behaviors become political acts. Public criticism of moral decline and deficiency, reinforced by the Little Yue case, has been mobilized to exert social control over transportation mobilities. For this reason, Chinese propaganda tends to use a language of moral exhortation relatively often. Moral exhortation relies on two imagined personas: what a person is and what a person could be. Moral exhortations use a language of becoming—specifically, civilized. The author of a safety guide notes that huge strides in economic development have not been matched by progress in culture, and that finding solutions to ingrained social practices like drunk driving is a long-run project (Huang 2012). China's Youth Daily more concretely traces this moral transition:

> From deciding for yourself that "I want to go, so I'll go, I want speed, so I'll speed," which becomes stop lights to restrict movement, to relying on the united efforts of all road users," a Shanghai engineering professor Qian Yubin said. Everyone hopes the city traffic will become more fluid, but in addition to the appropriate basis provided by relevant government bureaus and road designers, and traffic management, the most important thing is the people's conscious obedience to traffic rules, common courtesy, and establishing deep-rooted law-abiding habits (Anon 2012).

The language of moral exhortation captions an everyday action with national-historical meanings, as one frame of an ongoing moving picture. In this way, streets are signified as avenues of progress and regress, as judgments on national character, demanding desirable habits that define the narratives of Chinese culture.

When we think of surveillance and social order, we tend to think of these in terms of suppressing deviance and punishing wrongdoing. While these are still major goals of road

policing in China, there is an added dimension built on creation, that is fostering national character through disciplined habits, law-mindedness, good will, and courtesy. The notion of moral depravity, exemplified by the Little Yue case, pairs well with the use of disciplining technologies and rectification campaigns within urban transportation.

Here I look at some examples of how mobilities normalize a social imaginary, specifically a duality of an ordered, civilized space and the extant deficiencies that plague China's transportation system. Four examples show the use of streets as stages of soft power and as sites of moral direction.

Crosswalks

Probably one of the best places to study Chinese society is not the courthouse, not the schools, not the jails, not the temple, but the crosswalk. Here various belief systems and political strategies come together. Here the urban imaginary, both the actual one and the idealized one, come into being.

I certainly have felt out-of-place by the crosswalk in cities like Shanghai. Right-of-way was fuzzy and took some acculturation. In general, the smaller yields to the larger and cars merge into roads from the right without looking to see if they have room. Even experts are unsure on certain principles, for instance, whether a car turning left has the right-of-way over vehicles going straight, with different police departments enforcing it differently (Liu 2007). In my experiences, the goal of a walker is to ever proceed forward, like an uncrowned checkers piece, seizing territory with quick dashes into zones of control. Hesitation, or backtracking, was sketchy and would never lead to sympathy from other road users. A pedestrian lunging out into the street does not typically freeze traffic but instead becomes like a boulder in an onrushing stream, the flow continuously detouring around it. The cartoonist Guy Delisle caricatured this stream as a bicyclist in Shenzhen. He laid out two major principles: first, "an empty space may be filled at any time"; second "nobody else matters; trying to think further ahead is useless" (Delisle 2006:72–73). From his perspective, every inch of space would be filled, as if following the laws of fluid dynamics.

But this aberrancy would be recognized by most Chinese too. The situation of being a pedestrian on a street in China was grilled into me during an opening session of summer Mandarin classes in Beijing. When crossing the street, our orientation speaker said, do not look both ways, look ALL ways. You never know where trouble is going to come from. A Beijing car owner, notes that while China in 2001 had half the number of cars on the streets as the U.S., it had twice as many serious traffic crashes:

> *In China, this economic transition has been quite fast. Many drivers use the sidewalks to drive on. How can one walk and drive? They move in a disordered pile; where possible, they will tightly tailgate. They rarely use the turning signal. They [we?] rely on the language of the vehicle: if the car sticks to the left, you can assume they are about to turn left. They are excellent at improvisation. They can make the sidewalk into a passing lane. If it will be quicker, they will go the opposite way through a roundabout. If they pass an exit on the expressway, they will just back up on the shoulder* (Anon 2016d).

When traffic cops are caught on videotape carrying elderly persons across the street (a common motif in propaganda), half the bemusement centers on the fact that vehicles at the intersection remained stationary while it happened.

Here my point is not to find some hidden significance of Chinese-ness through traffic behavior, but to show that in the street lie numerous prisms that residents themselves see as reflecting Chinese-ness, making such spaces sites of reformation. Since about 2005, local governments have employed a variety of tactics in cracking down on "Chinese-style crossing." If caught in person, the police may assess on-site fines, these usually being no more than 20 RMB (around $3 USD). Another method is to use shaming tactics, such as referring the incident to the offender's work unit, a tactic less effective against those who have no formal work unit or who provide false information. Some cities, such as Nanjing and Yangzhou, began sending photographs of jaywalkers to local media.

Cities like Nanjing and Shenzhen have used a "voluntaristic" approach in lieu of fines. If a pedestrian charges a red light, they are "volunteered" to perform traffic control duties on-site. In Shenzhen, a jaywalker can escape any fines by spending two hours assisting traffic police in directing traffic.

Although all of these approaches exist as models for traffic police, they are far less attractive than technology-centered social control, which are symbolically more "modern" and "creative." Shanghai, Shenzhen, Jilin, Beijing, and other cities have been at the forefront of turning facial recognition software (FRS) to police usage in public spaces. Shenzhen uses FRS to identify jaywalkers, with repeat offenders shamed by replaying their transgressions on large video screens at intersections. The city of Suzhou 宿州 in Anhui Province has published online its list of offenders caught on video (Suzhou Online Today 2020). The official Weixin (a Twitter-like social media platform) page for the Shanghai Public Security Bureau proclaimed in 2016 that automized technologies will become more prevalent, using information technology to cover a wider area with more infractions under surveillance. "If people mind the laws, there would be no monitoring, when the people don't mind the laws, there are eyes everywhere (chuchu shi tantou 处处是探头)" (Shanghai Public Security 2016). It is worth noting that these eyes-everywhere technologies have been explicitly justified as a means to prevent extortion as in the Peng Yu case.

Cities campaign to show law-abiding cross-walkers, with statistics to back it up. In a 2017 press release, the Shanghai Traffic Police congratulate themselves on a massive technological campaign to root out vehicles not stopping for pedestrians: "in these efforts, we have to raise people's suzhi, and use the deterrent effects of electronic policing" (Shanghai Traffic Police 2017). During the campaign period, they claimed an increase in yielding from 10% to 30%.

One of the most effective cities at making its crosswalks pedestrian-oriented is Hangzhou, something a visitor to the city will instantly single out. In recent years, the city instituted a 3-2-1 policy on crosswalks: at 30 meters you let off the accelerator to reduce speed, at 20 meters slow down to 15 km/hr., at 10 meters, you must stop. These encouragements are buttressed by a series of monetary deterrents begun in 2011. Drivers not yielding at crosswalks are assessed a 2-point deduction on the driver's license (drivers are granted 12 points a year), and a 100 yuan fine. According to the city, in 2 months, they penalized some 5000 people. In a news item publicized by the Civilization Office (Wenming Ban 2011c), a visiting journalist supposedly recorded a crosswalk in Hangzhou where 270 consecutive vehicles yielded to pedestrians. The article applauds the city for its courtesy: "Yielding at a zebra-crossing seems like a small thing, but tiny things embody the modern *suzhi* of the city's people." These small things in the street would constantly be evidenced to judge civilized behavior.

Car horns

The signaling structure on Chinese roadways is indeed heavily dependent on angles, nudges, and especially the horn. As Hessler (2011) observed, there are different horn intonations for different desires. It is often used to signal lane change, alert another to your presence, and the universal exclamation that the light is green and you should move. A children's guide to traffic safety shows what has priority, explaining that when a car nearby honks their horn, this tells you not to cross the street. You should stop walking and wait for the car to go by first then cross the street (Jin 2010). Like Hessler, I was gripped by the wave of sounds on the roadways. I wrote in my field notes in Shanghai that:

The car horn must be the music of Chinese street life. You hear guitars, zithers, percussion, and serenades from cars only in the form of 'I'm passing' or 'I'm driving here.' 'This is my lane.' Or 'these are my two lanes.' The horn serves less a scientific purpose than a ritual one. It is as incense waved, a gesture to ward off evil spirits, not to direct other humans" (2011).

Yet as musical as the horn might have seemed to Hessler and me, it is a problem to urban managers. Foshan itself has called excessive horn usage a menace to the urban fabric, attributing it with disturbing the people, scaring passersby, and provoking road rage. The police suggest that decibels between 85-100 impact people's psychology and produce chaotic effects on city order. In nearby Shenzhen, the horn has been regarded as an annoyance and a token of poor suzhi. To combat "wild honking", the city set up sonar zones in early 2017 with the expressed intent to "control the problem of noise disturbance, attack the disturbance to the people by car horns, and raise the civilized atmosphere of the city" (Shenzhen Traffic Police 2017b). Wild honking includes:

-honking more than 2 times
-honking more than 1 second
-honking with too loud decibel level
- in traffic congestion, queuing using horn
- honking to urge pedestrians to hurry up
- honking in residential areas, hospital, and school zones.

Violators have their license plates posted to a screen, and they receive text messages notifying them of their infraction. Repeat horn offenders are placed on a blacklist, and citizens have been urged to report horn violations by mobile phone.

Edensor (2002) spoke of everyday street sounds as integral to national identification, but the sound of horns in China has been less symphony than cacophony. The relentless chiming of traffic, considered uncivilized, becomes the ground for disaffection and dismantling of embodied habits.

Ambulance Lanes

Another example of the exertion of state discourse over road conduct has to do with emergency vehicle lanes. Perhaps taken for granted in other places, yielding to ambulances has epitomized civility. This was made a public issue in December 2012, when a woman died in a Beijing ambulance while stuck in traffic. The 3-kilometer route to the hospital took 40 minutes as drivers refused to yield to the sirens and a row of illegally parked cars blocked the bicycle lane. Netizens derided the cold-blooded, immoral drivers, yet others believed that the sirens

could not be trusted. Said one commenter: "I have to say that many ambulances and police cars misuse sirens even without any emergency tasks. The true murderer of the woman is the loss of trust" (Tao 2012). With this case, yielding to ambulances became another social problem attached to transportation mobilities.

City governments have, in fact, begun to address both the issue of illegal parking and trust. In an article entitled "Considerations of the Causes and Countermeasures for Ambulances Encountering Chinese-style Lane Hogging", a Zhejiang police official suggests both improving the habits of ambulance drivers but also installing GPS monitoring within the ambulances itself, to monitor in-vehicle behavior but also to assess infringements of their right-of-way by adjacent vehicles (Ye 2013).

Publicizing courtesy to ambulances is a regular pastime of civilization offices and local government bureaus. In response to a well-circulated video of German drivers making way for emergency vehicles, the Shenzhen Traffic Police responded with a video of their own—a July 2017 event, when traffic cameras caught an ambulance rushing a patient to the hospital. Over one-thousand drivers actively moved out of the way, and the ambulance was able to make it through expediently. The traffic police relayed that they were "proud of the citizens" and "proud of Shenzhen" (Shenzhen Traffic Police 2017a). In 2021, Shanghai released a video they said got numerous 'likes', that of a series of vehicles and street users acting in unison to make way for an ambulance. This synchrony among diverse persons led media to laud the virtuous performance: "Security guards, couriers, and delivery guys, these are the most ordinary people around us. Their daily actions best reflect their inner character: friendly and harmonious, civilized and self-disciplined, respecting rules and keeping their word" (Huaxiazi 2021).

Prosocial Action and Good Samaritanism

One perspective on the Little Yue case was to focus on the complexity of street interactions and the maintenance of norms among strangers. Indeed, living among unfamiliar people yet still exerting some responsibility for their welfare was a theme among many commenters on the case. After the incident, information came out showing that those who passed Little Yue came from various provinces, including Shandong, Zhejiang, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Hubei (Xu 2016). Trying to instill compassion for those outside one's immediate social circles has become an issue for many city leaders.

To a large extent, altruism has become institutionalized. The Civilization Office has long made monetary and honorary rewards a component of its recognition of civilized persons and places. Jiaozuo, in Henan, began a regular patrol of police—not to issue citations, but to present gifts. The gift, emergency kits, were rewarded to those who did good things like honor crosswalks. Civilized driver competitions throughout the country have long rewarded company drivers for their "safety consciousness," willingness to stop for pedestrians, thorough inspections of vehicles, and speed control. In recent years, such contests have been extended to the general public, using mobile phone apps to solicit nominations and cast votes for civilized taxi drivers.

Civic mindedness is also encouraged for reporting violators. Creating a mobile platform for reporting in 2017, the Shenzhen Traffic Police urged people to report numerous uncivilized behaviors, like cars parked on sidewalks or blocking traffic (100 yuan per successful report). A program initiated in Foshan in 2020 allowed road violations to be reported by Weibo, Weixin, and their own online reporting platform. According to their instructions, those reporting must submit 3 time-stamped photographs of the offense within 2 days of its occurrence. The reward

structure is tiered: 20-yuan in rewards for reporting such violations as failing to yield crosswalks, stopping in emergency lanes, or driving in the wrong direction (see Figure 4.7); 50-yuan for using fake plates, driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol, or driving a bus or passenger coach vehicle over the person limit; and 100-yuan for street racing, committing insurance fraud, or buying and selling driver license points (Youche yihou 2020).

Figure 4.7: Instructions for submitting visual evidence of driving-the-wrong-way violations in Foshan. The guiding text suggests that the vehicle plates must be clear, and the image must include the pavement arrows for the legal direction (from Youche yihou 2020).

Many commenters on the Little Yue incident stressed that there should be better rewards for helping behavior, including monetary payments and ceremonial commendations. Many cities have instituted reward structures for Good Samaritanism. Compensation rules can be quite precise, adjudicated by the type of roads, time of day, and level of assistance. One indicative post from Shenzhen in May 2019 relayed the story of a man named Yang, who noticed an old man slowly shuffling his feet to cross a busy highway. Stopping his car and putting on his vehicle's emergency flashers, he helped him across and then called the police to escort him home. Because his aid occurred on an expressway, Yang was eligible to receive the maximum reward of 10000 RMB (~$1400). The text states that as part of these "campaigns of helping" (yuanshou xingdong 援手行动), the traffic police had rewarded prizes totaling 48,050 RMB (~$6000) in 2019. The accompanying language stressed that all are involved in altruism: "Those kind citizens who participated in the campaign, no matter if a taxi driver, a bus driver, a street cleaner, a retired cadre, a white-collar commuter; no matter their age or career differences, all demonstrate public-spiritedness and selfless spirit" (Shenzhen Traffic Police 2019). The emphasis on a common mission of street mindfulness has been a recurring motif of the traffic education apparatus.

The Aftermath for the Persons Involved in the Little Yue Incident

Circling back to the tragedy of Little Yue, we can see some of the tensions of this civilizing process in China, where everyday actions become allegories for much larger social forces, and where much larger social forces envelope everyday actions.

For the first driver whose vehicle contacted Little Yue, surnamed Hu, police were able to track down his whereabouts on October 16, and he turned himself in that day. Hu claimed that he heard a noise on the right side of his lorry, but he didn't get out to check. The second driver also entered police custody, but it does not appear that any criminal indictment was pursued.

On September 5, 2012, the Nanhai District Court of Foshan found Hu guilty of Negligently Causing Death (similar to Wrongful Death in some countries). This crime entails causing death to another because of a failure to anticipate harm that should be anticipated (Yu and Zhou 2014; Zhang 2016) and carries sentencing guidelines of 3-7 years in prison. Because Hu was considered to have actively surrendered (zishou 自首) and because he had given some money to the victim's family for health expenses, the court inclined toward leniency. The court sentenced Hu to 3 years and six months in prison (China News 2012).

On appeal, the Foshan Intermediate Court issued its ruling on December 5, 2012. Interestingly, the core legal technicality involved in the case was whether the back alley should be considered a public road (daolu 道路), which would classify Hu's act as Traffic Accident Crime (jiaotong zhaoshi zui 交通肇事罪) and fall under the Road Traffic Safety Law of China. Because the sentencing of the latter crime is typically less severe (Yu and Zhou 2014), Hu's lawyer pushed for the crime to be considered a Traffic Accident Crime. The intermediate court stated that the event took place on a passage between the shops and was not for public vehicle use, so that the scene did not fit the definition of a public road. They believed the initial ruling was acceptable. Nonetheless, they adjusted the sentencing. Unlike in the Yao Jiaxin case from Chapter 3, where Zhang Miao's family refused any offer of payment from Yao's family, Hu was able to reach a comprehensive compensation deal with Little Yue's family, totaling 303,000 RMB (~$50,500). Given this amount and the Yue's family expression of understanding (liangjie 谅解) toward Hu, the court mitigated Hu's sentence to two years and six months in prison (FindLaw 2012).

Many of those who passed by Little Yue were asked about the events of that day. The general chorus was that they had become filled with trepidation at seeing Little Yue. They worried that by getting involved, they would stir up trouble. Indeed, training books for new drivers often have dedicated sections concerning how to defend oneself from the devious tricks of other road users. One guide advises to immediately lock your doors and raise your windows on entering the car to prevent robbery. If there is a traffic crash, call the police but do not leave the vehicle. According to the book, there is a common ruse of feigning a problem on the road to get you to stop your vehicle, allowing them to rob your car interior (Cheng and Zhang 2010). Additionally, in mainstream media, there have many circulating stories of frauds and extortions occurring in traffic. Combined with the charges made in the Peng Yu case, these suspicions have led to widely held figments that once a person gets involved with strangers, anything can happen.

The first man who walked by Little Yue had been in Foshan a year for work. He said in an interview that he ignored the girl because he did not want to stir up trouble (reshi 惹事). When asked why he did not stop the truck driver, he referred to his social status: "I am an outsider

(waidi ren 外地人); if I offend someone, who knows what the consequences would be (bukanshexiang 不堪设想). After all, it was not my child" (Anon 2011b). Not wanting to take action and become a public figure, he retreated into his own bubble of self-interest.

As possible confirmation for his apprehensions, the proceeding events of the rubbish collector, Chen Xianmei, are revealing. Chen instantly became a local celebrity. The Foshan government, already reeling in shame in having to account for the 18 passersby who ignored Little Yue, trumpeted the 58-year old Chen as representative of Foshan's actual level of civilization (wenming chengdu 文明程度) (Anon 2011a). Distancing herself from the other passersby, Chen claimed to have felt unconcerned with dredging up trouble. Reporters accompanied her for days afterward, hounding her as she visited the hospital where Little Yue was in intensive care.

For her heroism, Chen received 20,000 RMB (~$3300) from the city of Foshan and was given recognition by the Civilization Office. Guangdong SEG Chesheng Navigation Technology Co., Ltd. also gifted Chen 50,000 RMB (~$8200) and offered her a job as a janitor. Another 18,000 RMB (~$3000) was granted Chen by the Yangshan City Government and Party Committee (Baike 2022). She received numerous national recognitions, including the 2011 Ordinary Person Conscience (pingfan de liangxin 平凡的良心) award from Beijing University.

Yet transformed into a public figure, she was also plagued with insinuations that she was a poser, seeking celebrity and monetary gain. Although she denied formal interview requests, her reputation was a bit eroded by these allegations of social climbing. Chen's son came to her defense, arguing that he was still supporting her economically, and that she did not even read the newspapers. What effect could fame have on her? For a time after the Little Yue case, she was often visited by reporters, much to the dismay of her neighbors (Yangcheng Wanbao 2011).

Conclusions: The Street as Terrain of State-Making

This chapter examines the Little Yue case, where a young girl in Guangdong province was run over, eighteen persons passing by the street without offering aid. I use this controversial case as a lens to investigate state efforts to create a modern, civic-minded Chinese subject through street discipline, in demanding that Chinese drivers give way to pedestrians at crosswalks, exercise forbearance in horn usage, surrender emergency lanes to ambulances, and assist other road users. Overall, these four examples of transportation regulation, using disciplinary punishment, engineering solutions, education, and monetary rewards show how everyday mobilities are infused with meanings of civilization, connecting people to national projects of culturation.

The Little Yue incident revealed the perceived cultural lag of Chinese people in graphic detail. That road behavior is a national humiliation and barometer of moral quality is an opinion held across many social groups. Even rebels such as Han Han cannot but assume what government leaders assume—that the Chinese have a corrupt mobility that requires a new consciousness:

If you insist on asking me when the best time for a revolution in China, I can only say that when Chinese drivers know to turn off their high beam lights when they pass each other, we can safely proceed with the revolution. But such a country actually does not need any revolution. When the suzhi and educational level of the citizens reach a certain level, everything will occur naturally (Reuters 2011).

While Han Han might simultaneously resent top-down imposition of suzhi-raising, he concedes to the primary belief system that guides the state at all levels.

When many people cross the street in any major city, they probably do not think much about the crosswalk itself as a social construction. But the crosswalk is a preeminently social institution. It is a social construction that involves power relations, historical legacies, struggles for recognition, inequality, and cultural frameworks. In contemporary China, micro-behaviors have been idealized as telling political acts. One thing I want to further emphasize is not just that there are schemas of action that are preferable in global perspective, chosen cognitively, but that deep emotions are involved, particularly shame. The attachment of the adjective "Chinese-style" to various habits, including road crossings, is one piece of evidence of the way that affective registers operate through mobilities. After the Little Yue incident, the city of Foshan found itself scrambling to defend itself from opprobrium, bolstering various philanthropic projects and touting Chen Xianmei as their foremost representative of civility.

There is a "structure of feeling", to borrow Raymond Williams' (Williams 1961) term, around moral development that situates Chinese mentality and bodies in a perennially limbic state of transition. If we define the urban imaginary as "the mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality and the interpretative grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live" (Edward Soja, quoted in Lindner and Meissner 2019:6), we can see that the grounds of evaluation are laced with sensations of a dog-eat-dog atmosphere of mass ignorance, where kindness places you in danger of extortion. This Hobbesian state of nature invites and justifies a Hobbesian form of rule, with force and compulsion specifying how people move around. Yet it also legitimizes a powerful apparatus of national creation, where cities are expected to cultivate knowledges and habits that meet a global expectation of order and charm.

Thus, the ideal street movement is seen through the lens of global culture, a series of institutionalized scripts that show legitimacy on the world stage. Cultural soft power is enacted in vernacular habits. For many observers, surveillance is just another form of autocratic imposition—and indeed the element of controlling disorder and state subversion are key reasons for mobility control. But the disciplinary mechanisms on Chinese streets are actually intended to be subversive: to subvert the herd mentality supposedly contained in the national bloodstream. What makes the eyes everywhere discourse so powerful is the cognitive mapping of space that envisions deviance everywhere—and inevitable without forced transformation. To truly have soft power, everyday pattens must befit the civilized mold, and the positive and negative reinforcements are considered necessary to accelerate this transition—from an indifferent society that keeps moving along, to one with sufficiently ingrained awareness to stop and lend a hand.

At this point in the dissertation, there is a bit of a changeover in style. While the previous chapters worked through the production of transportation mobilities through state infrastructures and legal institutions, the next section will look at the perception of China and Chineseness through long-distance mobilities. It shows how tourism is a means to spatialize, classify and order the world—and in doing so create meaningful identifications and distinctions. The territory that is China, and the type of people who properly belong to it, are deeply implicated in these processes of domestic and global travel.

Section II: Tourism Mobilities and the Nation-State

Whereas the first section considered the collisions in society resulting from constellations of mobility, the moments where movement came to a halt, this section considers the extension of mobility across the territorial span of the Chinese state and the world. Cross-country travel has become a new phenomenon in China in recent years. Aided by automobile ownership, high-speed rail, electricity and sewer connections, and comprehensive tourist facilities, these trips can include various destinations and can have various motivations. Similarly, Chinese tourists are exploring new frontiers outside of their borders, experimenting with different modes of travel. This section will explore how these journeys engage with elements of the nation-state.

For most of the subsequent analysis, I perform purposive sampling of online travelogues written by Han Chinese from 2006-2020, followed by content analysis involving coding of relevant themes. Purposive sampling is the process of selecting informative cases that are likely to provide key theoretical insights into a relatively undeveloped phenomenon (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim 2016). The key phenomenon investigated here was the connection between travel experiences and the institution of the nation-state. The analyzed travelogues were written mainly by urbanized, middle-class travelers with enough resources to travel for leisure for multiple days. They were posted online to general blog websites (e.g., Sina Weibo), travel websites (e.g., Mafengwo.com.cn, Qunar.com.cn), and automotive websites (e.g., Xcar.com.cn). The years 2006-2020 were chosen to reflect a period of rapidly increasing domestic travel, when highways and tourist infrastructure appeared, when automobile ownership became accessible to the urban middle class, and when travel websites became popular social fora. Many of these websites have witnessed growing popularity in China. Mafengwo, for example, features information on 60,000 global destinations and had over 130 million accounts as of 2017 (Alarice 2020).

Online travelogues have been considered rich data sources for researching the shaping of political and geopolitical worldviews (An, Zhang, and Wang 2020; Henry 2021; Sweeney 2019), as they inevitably engage with deep-rooted understandings of the architectures and dynamics of the world. The travelogues analyzed in this section are typically a mixture of text and photographs, with the occasional video added. Many had over 100 photographs. These diaries were supplemented with analysis of additional materials related to travel and tourism, including travel guides and official media coverage of long-distance travel. See Appendix A for more details on this dataset.

Although this section will shed light on the political resonance of travel, it should be emphasized upfront that most of the travelogues do not list political motivations as primary reasons for travel. In fact, few if any tourists reasoned that their motivations for travel were to "discover the nation" or even to "learn about history." Rather, their chief motivations tended to cluster around more individualistic themes such as escaping city life, finding spiritual refreshment or serenity, seeing something different, challenging oneself in a new setting, or spending time with loved ones or interesting people.[20] For instance, a news article depicting the lifestyle of a couple that constantly travel in their customized motorhome suggests touristic reasonings: "Sometimes you can't help but realize, travel is a good medicine. Your work-life throws you into confusion, and travel is like a flatiron, flattening and quelling all the disturbing elements" (Sohu Travel 2018). One travel diarist frames travel as a natural inner longing:

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[20] Because the dataset consisted mainly of long-distance trips, usually away from coastal cities, it might skew toward more exploratory forms of travel and understate other significant travel motivations, such as visiting family, attending meetings or classes, shopping, and more urbane activities.

Some people say that traveling is going from a place you're tired of to a place others are tired of. We see the pictures of people backpacking, palaces, simple villages, majestic mountains, trickling streams, oases sparkling with life, the boundless Gobi, and many more beautiful details. Looking in the mirror, we are filled with a mysterious temptation, making us want to get out and travel (Tibet 2014).

As a final example, a female tourist connects personal growth with achieving distance:

I only know that it is on the road that I can find my true self. What about you all? In order to end our youth, we must go further and further; to seek happiness, we must go wider and wider; to remove loneliness and be independent, we must live freer and freer… (Dunhuang 2014).

A previous study finds similar individualistic explanations for self-drive travel in China: self-enjoyment, social interaction, self-enhancement, psychological relaxation, and visiting attractions (Zhou and Huang 2016). These motivations imply that if nation-state practices emerge, they will typically be more adventitious than part of a pre-planned schedule. It is precisely these micro-formations of politics that I will now analyze.

Chapter 5

Politics as a Vacation: Tourist Mobilities and the Making of Chinese Territory

The connection between leisure and social structure has been a cornerstone topic in social science since at least Veblen's (2007) *Theory of the Leisure Class* and Simmel's (1971) essay "Fashion." Both demonstrate how seemingly unproductive activities, such as conspicuous consumption and ornamental fluctuation, reproduce social organization and foster social distance. But one particular form of leisure, tourism, has received only slight attention from mainstream sociologists. As one of the largest industries worldwide, and one where imagery and cultural stereotypes are as important to production as labor and capital, tourism has been researched in various academic disciplines outside of sociology. Even so, this literature has been dominated by a focus on tourism as economic activity, one usually describing travelers from core, richer nations visiting peripheral, poorer nations (Cohen and Cohen 2015). With some notable exceptions (Adams 1998; Evrard and Leepreecha 2009; Gladstone 2005; Leong 1989; Winter, Teo, and Chang 2009), we know far less about the political dimensions of domestic travel, especially in the developing world.

Besides reinforcing core-periphery understandings, this approach ignores that fun has serious political consequences. As Orwell long ago noted, British imperial power was as much concentrated in the club as the barracks or customs house. As shown in the introduction to this dissertation, recent shifts toward looking at political institutions as phenomenological entities that develop out of *beliefs* and processes of *sense-making* has construed state-building as more uneven and less beholden than previously thought to reified theories of statehood. In this culturalist approach, the state is treated as a "fiction" (Abrams 1988), given coherence only by image-control (Mitchell 1999), and seen as having power more circulatory than top-down (Foucault 1995). This perspective sheds light on how state legibility and legitimation require continuous processes of consent-building (De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal 2009; Gramsci 1992; Scott 1998), a contested struggle using various mental scripts that constantly re-negotiate the boundaries of state and society (Bourdieu 1994; Migdal 2001; Steinmetz 1999). To be a meaningful organizational sphere, the nation-state must continually replicate its obviousness and implant itself in the common sense of its members. Because of the emotional resonance of the nation-state schema, it is important to study it from a range of practices across everyday life (Painter 2006).

In this chapter, I show the how the mobility practices associated with long-distance travel in China make the nation-state realizable as a whole entity, as an institution with its own distinct territory, people, and trajectory. Much of the scholarly output on state-making centers on government representatives and bureaucratic projects. By looking at a social activity usually framed outside of political meanings we can form a different, supplemental perspective on the reproduction of the nation-state's obviousness. By observing the political practices of tourists, who move in state-defined spaces with motives of pleasure and escape, we can shed light on political sense-making distanced from official institutions.

One reason to be attuned to the political consequences of tourism is that the principal means of governance in the modern world, the nation-state, depends heavily on ordered, legitimated

means of mobility and exclusion of alternative forms (Torpey 2018). Core components of nation-building, such as mental representations and rituals marking a political community are key components of the tourist repertoire. Essential functions of the state, such as monopolizing violence and marking territory, both permit tourism and become objects of tourist perception and experience.

The approach here is greatly inspired by the everyday nationhood literature mentioned in the introduction. As a quick recap, those studying everyday nationhood (a relative of banal nationalism) trace the impacts that mundane practices and objects have on political beliefs and emotions. The background assumption is that people do not think through the nation all the time; rather, national schemas are triggered in variable places and times (Bonikowski 2016). Building on classic works by Anderson (2006) on print media and Brubaker et al. (2006) on everyday ethnicity, this tradition has sought to identify the expressions of nation within contexts that are not directly prompted by government projects such as taxation or enumeration. They follow the advice of Timothy Mitchell—to treat polities not so much as structures but as "the powerful, apparently metaphysical effect of practices that make such structures appear to exist" (Mitchell 1999:94). Analyzing heterogeneous sites of national identification among the non-elite population (Billig 1995; Bonikowski 2016; Zubrzycki 2017), the nation is treated as a cognitive frame that can be initiated by contact with vernacular material things such as landscapes (Mukerji 1997), pottery shards (Greenland 2017), and flags (Köse and Yılmaz 2012). Rituals and performances such as tea ceremonies (Surak 2011), holidays (Ozouf 1991), and daily habits (Edensor 2002) are also explored as mediators of shared collective feelings and solidarity. A noteworthy methodological move of everyday nationalism investigations, and one which I attempt to emulate, is to replace persons with nationalist *practices* as units of analysis (Goode, Stroup, and Gaufman 2020).

In looking at domestic tourism in this chapter, I extend these accounts of everyday nationhood by considering physical mobility, routings, and territorial encounters as large-scale practices that are critical to how state objects and infrastructure are interpreted and performed. Analyzing tourists' movements allows us to further trace how both nation and state appear intelligible, coherent, and performable through employing collective symbols in public space. By moving in space, objects are chained together into meaningful narratives that enact national histories and cultural diacritics. In other words, travel symbolically reinforces tourists' sense of territory and security, both of which are required for state legibility (Scott 1998).

As in Chapter 2, I argue that domestic tourism plays an important existential role in shaping the contours of the nation-state. In this chapter, I adopt an approach to culture and knowledge inspired by Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu that emphasizes the importance of kinetic learning and embodied experiences for perception and recognition of sociopolitical distinctions (Bourdieu 1990; Merleau-Ponty 2013). I hope to answer the following questions: How does tourism mobilize the physical and mental structures of the nation-state? How does mobility corporally and affectively connect citizens to larger structures? In what ways do tourist practices perform legitimizing functions that naturalize components of the nation-state, e.g., its territory, monopoly of force, and economy? Whereas Chapter 2 focuses on one region of China, Tibet, this chapter more broadly connects tourist mobilities to various situational reactions across the Chinese nation-state. Additionally, it provides more theoretical grounding for how state territory is cognitively mapped through cross-country movement, illuminating how territorial sovereignty and ordering of the past are constituted through leisure travel.

After explaining contemporary treatments of the nation-state, I will suggest how studying tourism practices supplements theoretical approaches to the micro-practices of state-building. The PRC, due to its fast-growing middle class and extensive infrastructural development, has become one of the largest domestic tourism markets in the world. This, combined with the constant ideological work to forge a unified territorial body—makes China a revealing site for the connection of travel practice and political worldviews. Using travel journals, I aim to demonstrate the activation of nation-state schemas in tourist mobilities, a structuring of movement and landscape experiences that affords opportunities for performances of political entities like China.

Tourism and Chinese Politics

As laid out in the historical overview, during most of the era under Mao Zedong (1949–1976), tourism in the PRC was viewed with deep suspicion as a bourgeois extravagance. Movement was highly restricted for almost all Chinese except high Communist Party members, who traveled mainly for work meetings (Oakes and Sutton 2010). There were tight restrictions on outbound travel. After the Reform and Opening policies of the late 1970s, small groups and individual travelers were permitted into the country, but they were tightly supervised and restricted to certain destinations.

Only after China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 did the tourism industry really blossom. As the size of the middle class and transportation infrastructure expanded, domestic travel became feasible for millions. According to official statistics, from 2006–2018 domestic travel (measured by domestic arrivals) increased over three-fold from 1,394,000,000 arrivals to 5,539,000,000 arrivals. In revenue, domestic tourism has greatly overshadowed incoming foreign travel, with around 47 times the yearly revenue produced (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of People's Republic of China 2020).

Bordering 14 countries and having few formal allies, China's geopolitical condition causes constant apprehension among its state leaders. The outlying regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, with large ethnic minority populations, are a source of anxiety over separatism and cultural immiscibility. As discussed in Chapter 2, the expansion of infrastructure and markets into the west is thus interlaced with discourses of securitization and spreading development. China also exerts relatively tight control on physical mobility, partly a relic of its socialist past (Tse 2013). For example, tour guides are required to be licensed at the provincial level, usually having to pass an exam to acquire proper credentials. This gives the Party stricter control over cultural narratives. Hence, the way internal travel works in China might be more intimately influenced by socio-political concerns than in other places. During the 2020 pandemic, for example, national media routinely championed surging domestic tourism numbers as signaling a return to normalcy and a source of public pride in the Chinese recovery.

The experiential dimensions of tourism are likely further influenced by the inaccessibility of foreign visas. Even though a growing world power with a large body of outgoing tourists, China erects major obstacles to outbound travel. According to the Quality of Nationality Index (Kochenov and Lindeboom 2020), China ranks 104th in "Travel Freedom" (between Malawi and the Dominican Republic), meaning that Chinese nationals have relative difficulty in securing visas for foreign travel. Because of the hassle of going abroad, domestic trips, particularly to western regions, often substitute for foreign destinations. Routes into Western China are

sometimes expected to contain exotica and offer the chance encounter differences that approximates going abroad and seeing the world (Liu 2017).

Data for this chapter was taken from the 100 domestic road trips in the main dataset. In line with the focus on political perceptions and practices, I created overarching codes for themes associated with national identifications—like a common history, common descent, or common mission—and elements oriented to typical functions of a state—such as regulating the economy, marking territory, providing national security, building infrastructure, enforcing rules, and seeking political legitimacy. These dimensions frequently overlapped, but I incorporated different tourist experiences according to their fit within these conceptual frames.

Nation-State Contact Sites

Recall that I defined the nation-state based on a few major factors: 1) It is coercive and relies on a monopoly of violence (Tilly 1985; Weber 1978); 2) it territorializes political authority (Brenner 2003); and 3) it naturalizes a common peoplehood—with common history and destiny within this distinct territory and under this coercive authority (Smith 2010). None of these are pregiven and must be maintained through wide-ranging material and discursive practices.

Based on the travelogues, travel experiences in China are frequently interlaced with beliefs and practices that reinforce these facets of the nation-state. I have categorized the nation-state experiences of Chinese domestic travel into four major categories, each denoting a mechanism by which the nation-state is recognized, perceived, and performed in tourist mobilities: through geographic/territorial experiences, historical reenactment, ethno-cultural encounters, and perceptions of a common modernizing mission. After discussing each of these elements, most of which serve to legitimate state idioms, I will show ways in which certain state patterns of regulating movement and landscapes are resisted by travelers.

Geographic and Territorial Experiences

For a nation-state to legitimate its natural control over certain lands, it must survey landscapes, highlight central themes, mark political spots, demarcate borders, and regulate movements (Painter 2006). For Anderson, the census and the map worked together to confirm new regions and peoples. Through its massive infrastructure construction, China has opened new socio-spatial vistas that make use of maps and spatial scaling to form mental representations of territory. In tourism, the map is an actively consumed object. Online mapping software allows travelers to both color in their routes on preexisting maps and insert themselves into state spaces. For example, one traveler to the island of Hainan uses a series of footprints on Baidu maps (a popular mapping site) to illustrate his family's journey along the coastline (2014). One of the opening images in many travel diaries is the charted course outlined in a thick red or blue line. New technologies thus allow a more personalized cartography and bottom-up visualizations of territory-citizen connection.

With one destination in particular, Xinjiang, the territorial dimensions of travel are quite salient. Inspiration partly stems from the spatial expanse of the region. Travel diarists frequently explain that one of the main reasons to visit Xinjiang is to learn "how big China is." One female writer recalls poring over statistics and a map of Xinjiang before visiting, admitting she had no concept of its 1,6600,000 square kilometers or what the map really showed (Tekes [Tekesi 特克斯], 2018). A male motorist explains that: "Even though I knew our country's land is vast, I

really didn't have a conception (gainian 概念) of it. Here I did. This was a 5-hour trip. To go from one European country to another is an hour-plus trip" (Karamay [Kelamayi 克拉玛依] 2016). Thus, the journeys into this isolated region justify themselves as expanding one's horizons, offering specifically a direct perception of what the sovereign Chinese nation-state encloses within itself.

Yet official designations do not exhaust the sense-making involved in tourist movements. Out of the diverse panorama of Route 318, journalists and other middle-class travelers have fashioned a metaphorical national motorscape, effectively making it into a gliding museum. They adroitly fuse cultural authenticity and modernization along its trek. Chinese *National Geographic Magazine* states that Route 318 "perfectly represents the poles of China's massive society," and praises it as "a belt-like world class road of landscape," able to cultivate "national consciousness and national territory consciousness, a bountiful system of wondrous symbols, with almost all types of Chinese natural landscapes" (Shan 2006). In the diaries, the physical kilometer markers on National Route 318 in Sichuan and Tibet (kilometer "zero" corresponding to People's Square in Shanghai) are a common image in photographs, particularly numbers "4000" and "5000." One touring party becomes indignant at seeing graffiti scrawled onto the kilometer markers and tries to tidy them up (Labrang Monastery 2015). Route 318 is the closest China has to the U.S. Route 66, a place where biography and collective identity are co-created through common movement.

Another route that features prominently is the Silk Road. This passageway invokes both connections within the nation and international grandeur. Often travelers will entitle their travel blogs with reference to this historic network of trading ways. A travel guidebook to northwest China sets forth grand motives: "In Xinjiang, you will not only be like the nomads, taking your car to the grasslands, you will also be like the ancient explorers, feeling delight at traversing Asia" (Cai et al. 2015). One female tourist finds fulfillment in traversing the full historic corridor in her international route, even if this sacrifices some pleasure: "During my whole trip, Kazakhstan was the most boring. If it wasn't about completing the whole Silk Road, I wouldn't want to come here" (Central Asia 2016). Diarists often indicate in their diaries when highways, such as Route 315 in Xinjiang or G7 in Inner Mongolia, overlap with historic trading pathways (Hongqilafu 红旗拉夫 2018; Altay [Aertai 阿尔泰] 2018).

Tourist landscapes provide a form of baptism into a permanent territorial body mediated by official symbols. An informal ritual around the Potala Palace in Lhasa is for tourists to congregate at one corner of the courtyard and photograph themselves at an angle that matches the imprint on the back of the PRC's 50-yuan note (see Figure 5.1). Typically, they post pictures of their attempts to imitate their currency juxtaposed to the actual bills (Tibet 8/2014; Lhasa-Yongbulakang 2016). In another trip, using a mobile home, a group of males use the 2019 official announcement of new currency designs as pretext to search out the images on the bill faces, venturing to such places as Beijing's Great Hall, Hangzhou's West Lake, and the Three Gorges Dam (Yangshuo 阳朔 2019).

In border regions, the imprinting of collective symbols onto territory becomes especially pronounced, as tourists incorporate spatial rituals that demarcate China as a sovereign territorial state. At one of the China-Pakistan border crossings, a popular activity is to snap photos with the ostensibly friendly Pakistani guards in full regalia. Photographs from one Honda SUV driver at the Huoerguosi 霍尔果斯 China-Kazakh port of entry reveal the fascination with state emblems and cultural signs of difference. Twelve total images appear in the diary at the site: a brick gate, female equestrian police, a counter attendant, crossing certificate, asphalt border line (the photo shows tourists stepping between them—China's surface painted red, Kazakhstan's surface

painted blue), Kazakh police car, an eagle statue, stretch limousine, fencing corridor, Kazakh-labeled plastic bottle, Marlboro cigarettes, the old Kazakh gateway, and Versace-labeled perfumes (Kashgar-Huoerguosi 2017).
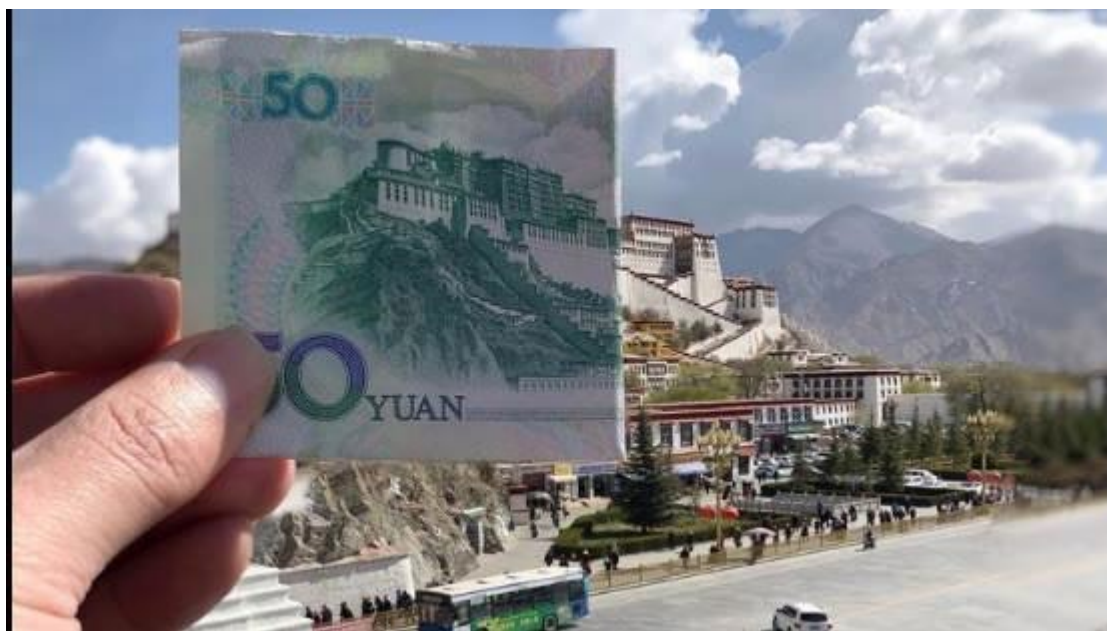

Figure 5.1: Example of how the 50-yuan note is used for photographs next to the Potala Palace in Lhasa (from Chunqing Lvshe 纯情旅社 2022)

Yet sometimes more spontaneous political rituals occur in geographic confirmation. A video trip that begins in Beijing intentionally ranges across multiple areas of the Chinese state, from Sansha 三沙 (considered the most southern city in China), then west to the Burmese border, and then finally northward to a refueling station for American troops during World War II. At each stop, the driver delivers a Chinese flag to the person who meets them. At one point in the video, the narrator intones: "Although this Chinese flag has nothing special about it, it accompanied us on the whole trip" (Guizhou 2019).

The Pakistan-China border at Hongqilafu, hailed as the highest border crossing in the world, also garners pride for the military sacrifices demanded to construct and guard it. A female visitor "felt a feeling of pride fill me, full of reverence for these border soldiers" (Kashgar 2018). One traveler is inspired by these western reaches such that he has the sudden urge to watch the movie "Wolf Warrior 2", a hugely popular patriotic film released in 2017 (Kashgar-Altay 2017). Domestic travel is thus capable of eliciting gratitude for more banal martyrdom, the unnamed persons who continue to build up and protect the state's sovereignty.

On a bus trip through Xinjiang, a tour group stop at the border with Kazakhstan, which is accordingly marked as the "northwesterly part of China." Here the solo male traveler stops at a raised plaza-space and takes a picture in front of a stone map of China nearly twice his height. According to his diary, the situation turns serious as their tour guide, "suddenly pulls the Chinese flag out of nowhere," and then has them stand at attention and sing the national anthem together (Hongqilafu 2017). Here, textbook lessons about the exact span of the Chinese state (school children have to memorize the latitude and longitude of China's extremes) come to life in a celebratory way. A news article that discusses the site's sudden popularity shows photos of tourists holding the Chinese flag next to the number 5 placard (presumably the 5th marking of

the China-Kazakh border, see Figure 5.2) and a pair of females photographing themselves next to a razor wire fence (China News 2013). Much like border tourism near North Korea, severity is part of the attraction.

Figure 5.2: Photograph of news article describing a border marker as tourism attraction

As a final example of the importance of travel to constituting sacred frontiers, we can look to the case of island tourism in the western Pacific Ocean, specifically in the Paracel Islands. This tourism circuit links mobility to of disputed territorial claims. Claimed by various East Asian states, these islands (called Xisha 西沙 in Mandarin) bring in boat tourists launching from Hainan Province, instilling a measure of joy and pride in their ostensible possession by the PRC.

According to one travel itinerary, performances along the boat trip involve passengers in various ceremonies. The daily schedule of one cruise ship is filled with group events:

5:30-6:30: sunrise and pictures at sea

6:30-7:30: self-serve breakfast

8:30-12:00: (at Yagong Island) experience island's ecology, tour landscapes, patriotic activity (raising the Chinese flag), oath, island tour and cleanup, photographs. (During the day free rides will be offered to tour the coral zones)

12:00-13:30: self-serve lunch

13:30-14:30: rest

14:30-1700: head toward Silver Island, experience island's ecology, tour landscapes, photographs, jigsaw puzzle with coral shells, participate in volunteer work for Xisha ecology and fishing village

18:30-19:30: self-serve dinner, view island's sunset

20:00-21:00: song and dance event (Hainan International Touring Company 2018)

The patriotic activity on the islands involves gathering around the Chinese flag as it is lifted, raising the right fist, and repeating the chant: "I love my country! I love the Xisha Islands!" (Liu 2016). These mostly barren islands sport a seafood restaurant, generators, and a handful of

permanent residents, who assist in tourism. Promotional materials note that the post office on Yongxing Island (Beijing Road to be specific) allows visitors to mail letters anywhere in China. As with much Chinese tourism this travel passage is intensely territorial, connecting micro-regions with the center, essentially domesticating them.

Historical Reenactment

Throughout the travel blogs, writers react frequently to China's perceived place in the world and its historic trajectory. Whereas much tourism is about seeking sensations of novelty and strangeness (as in Tibet), other moments are felt as finding one's roots or encountering sacred, unifying symbols. A site such as the Hukou Waterfall, along the Shaanxi and Shanxi Provincial border, is most popular with domestic tourists. The first cataract of the Yellow River, considered the source of Chinese civilization, elicits quite emotional reactions from tourists, who find it torrential and a reminder of their common ancestry (Xinjiang 8/2016). One tourist explains that reaching the Yellow River is like "meeting one's mother, feeling great gratitude for her bringing you into being" (Lhasa 2009). Another place of intense emotion visited by two sets of travelers is the disaster site of the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake in Sichuan. Free to the public, this circuit around ground zero features a stone clock fronting a crumbled school, the clock face permanently set to the exact time of the earthquake. A male tourist takes a reverent photo before the clock, hands pressing in a prayer pose. Here the novelty mixes with solidarity, as heroes are celebrated and lost compatriots mourned: "When passing through I felt the same feeling as altitude sickness; I hoped the souls of the victims rested in peace" (Tibet-Kekexili 可可西里 2014). In both cases here, myths—of Chinese civilization emerging along the Yellow River and of the heroism of disaster response—are given affective resonance by on-site visits.

Given its long historical memory, China is replete with famous voyages, explorations, delegations, exiles, retreats, marches, and other passages. Sometimes aided by road signs, travel guides, and other media, many tourists assign meanings to their journey in parallel with the movements of historic figures. Especially significant in the northwest is the monk Xuanzang's (c. 602–664) arduous route through central Asia to India to find original Buddhist scriptures. The famous novel that details his travails, *The Journey to the West*, is flagged in various places, including the Mountain of Flames near Turpan, Xinjiang. When difficulties surface, diarists frequently compare themselves to Xuanzang. One journeyman designs his whole trip around the theme of seeing what Xuanzang saw, prefacing each new site in Xinjiang with descriptions taken from Xuanzang's own supposed impressions (Taxkorgan [Tashikuergan 塔什库尔干] 2018).

Other routes are more inventive. An experienced automobile writer assembles his own highway course that parallels the Tang imperial consort Yang Guifei as she fled the capital in the 8th century (Han Zhong 汉中 2016). One innovator, hoping to revive historical memory of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, takes a Buick in chronological order through battle sites in northeast China, beginning with the exact site of the Japanese invasion. He laments that the sites are neither well-marked nor publicized (Liaoning Province 2018).

Roads are rarely just conduits; rather, they mean different things based on their location and the direction of movement along them. From the Silk Road and Tea-horse Road of millennia past, to 20th century Communist treks such as the route of the Long March, tourists cross with ancestral ghosts along indigenous pathways. Moreover, journeys westward both combine historical continuity with geographic continuity as they visualize the expansion of Chinese (i.e., Han) control over the refractory border regions. As tourists drive from Xi'an to Tibet in a

westerly direction, they find monuments and memorabilia in elegy to the Tang princess Wencheng 文成 (c. 628–680/2), whose morose journey to be a Tibetan bride invigorates one female traveler. This traveler relates the story carved into a marker in Qinghai Province at Daotanghe 倒淌河 ("reverse-dripping river"): when Wencheng crossed Sun-Moon Mountain she turned back to gaze on her homeland. Since her vision was blocked by the mountain, she became sad. For the greater cause of the Han, she continued west, weeping the whole way. Her tears left behind a river that continued to flow in that westerly direction, against the prevailing wisdom that rivers flow east (Mount Kailash 2014). Because Wencheng's marriage to the Tibetan ruler Songtsen Gampo (Songzanganbu 松赞干布) is often cited by orthodox Chinese history as the moment when Tibet came under Chinese suzerainty, following her route reinforces this historical narrative.

Where cultures clash, a foreign entity is typically involved. In Xinjiang, travelers are heartened to learn the fabled history of the Torghuts (Tuerhute 土尔扈特), a Mongol tribe that spent centuries living in the Volga River region away from their original home in current-day China, but who returned faithfully to the homeland in the 18th century. The feeling of a reunion is reinforced in an open-air performance in the Bayanbulak (Bayinbuluke 巴音布鲁克) Grassland region, where hundreds of extras and actors on horseback re-enact the Torghuts' brutal battles against Cossack soldiers on their march back to China and their "liberal" (youwo 优渥) re-settling by the Qing emperor Qianlong (Xinjiang Baguacheng 八卦城 2017; Altay 2018). The first act of the performance is entitled "Return Home," affirming a natural, primordial space within Chinese borders.

Although many encounters with historical narratives involve imperial history, there is one type of tourism that revolves more closely around contemporary political history, Red Tourism. This burgeoning branch of domestic tourism entails visits to places that conjure the glories of the socialist past, such as battle sites (e.g., Luding Bridge), model worksites (Dazhai 大寨), meeting places (Zunyi 遵义), and childhood homes (Mao's birthplace). For example, one middle-aged couple toured Xibaipo 西柏坡, the site where Mao launched his military campaign descending from the mountains to the plains. A museum there depicts the founding of the state and the demise of feudalism. Inside, they see displayed the route from Yan'an, Mao's Jeep, and various armaments. When heading to Yan'an, the headquarters of the Communists during the Japanese occupation, this same married couple so venerate its socialist military significance that they decide to wash their car the morning before reaching Mount Baota 宝塔 (to Yan'an 2016).

In Red Tourism, socialist heroes are given tightly scripted biographies, their only appetite serving the Chinese people. At Yan'an tourists find preserved Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai's (1898-1976) living conditions during the war against the Japanese, perfectly arranged to show their Spartan endurance amidst the national struggle. One older man circling the revolutionary site is deeply affected by the hardship of the residents during the 1940s, recommending that we should all appreciate what we have today and continue struggling. Unlike everyone else he sees in the park, he refuses to ride the 4-wheeled cart and walks the entire pathway by himself (to Yan'an-Kashgar 2016). A mother traveling with family at Yan'an expresses sentiments of identification mixed with some ambivalence:

Mao spending 13 years here was not easy, it was like his second hometown…We regular people who can only worship, we got emotional many times. Like father said, we should still admire the Communist Party. Although there are problems and degenerates, just like every person has issues, so must a large party (to Lake Kanas [Kanasi 喀纳斯] 2015).

These secular pilgrimages render accounts of socialist martyrdom concrete and available to sensory and emotional adjudication.

Nevertheless, we should not automatically assume these domestic tourists are knowledgeable about or even interested in particular elements of national history. Youth, in particular, seem relatively insouciant toward museums and commemorative sites. The college graduate referenced above at the Kazakhstan border treated the singing of the national anthem as a sudden performance, more like a tornado drill than an organic culmination of his own desires. A young female visitor to Luding 泸定 Bridge acknowledges: "What I know of Luding comes from textbooks, how the Red Army fought for Luding Bridge. Luding Bridge is a scenic area. My companion and I don't have the older generation's patriotism, so we just took a cursory look" (Lhasa 6/2014). Other tourists have to research the "famous" figures they find commemorated in plaques and signage. While writing up their diaries, they sometimes acknowledge they have forgotten the stories behind some of the places they visited.

Ethno-cultural Encounters

Benedict Anderson does not much address the differing specifications of "community" that can be imagined. How "we" is conceptualized and the duties that different components have to each other varies across political systems and situations (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Wimmer 2013). We must ask of China: how are the various ethnic groups brought into an imagined state space through domestic tourism, becoming instruments in ethnic classification projects?

It might be best to describe the aggregation philosophy of China as authoritarian multiculturalism. On one hand, multiculturalism, the belief in political duty to protect cultural traditions, is reproduced by tourist practices. Generally, Chinese tourists are in search of cultural characteristics (tese 特色), which are symbolic (biaozhixing 标志性) and definitive of different ethnic groups. These include dances (the Maogusi of the Tujia people), drinks (Tibetan butter tea), architectures (the two-story Dai house of Yunnan), animals (Tajik sheep), clothing (Muslim hats), and musical instruments (the Uyghur flute). A number of descriptors of culture involve chemistry metaphors: finding "concentrated" (nongsuo 浓缩) in the bazaar of Urumqi the various customs of Xinjiang (Urumqi 2016); sleeping in a yurt to experience "concentrated" Kazakh grassland and horseback culture (Xinjiang 7/2017). Driving a car along the Tianshan Mountains, one male narrates: "along the Silk Road, heading toward Central Asia, experiencing Uyghur, Mongol, Kazakh ethnic culture; it's not just a road for nature, it's also a road of cultural "distillation" (renwen zhilu de shenghua 人文之路的升华) (Xinjiang 9/2015). There is a sense from tourists' impressions that being part of the multicultural Chinese nation-state allows (and encourages) continuance of traditions at the elemental level.

Most of these ethnological emblems are inspired by a state education system and propaganda that constantly affirms the 56 distinct ethnic groups of China. The institutionalization of this ethnic sensibility takes many forms—including stamps, currency, television programs, museums, textbooks, and public spectacle (e.g., the Olympics) (Mullaney 2011). In general, most presentations of ethnic minorities center on their relevant axes of distinction, especially in body comportment and source of living; these inculcated "ethnic specialties" consequently shape tourist expectations and the marketing of various destinations.

In many ways, Chinese tourists play into the search for cultural authenticity so widely reported in the tourist literature (e.g., MacCannell 1999), searching for representative vistas that show cultural preservation of distinct ways of life. Infrastructure at times reflects this

indigenization. Street signs and train tickets in the Tibet autonomous region are given in both Chinese and Tibetan scripts. Building ordinances in many tourist villages require strict adherence to codes for front facades that conform to "traditional architecture," such as using proper building materials and colors (Yang and Wall 2008). For their part, tourists often believe, and explicitly write, that they are witnessing residents who have been living the same way for thousands of years, with one saying the only difference for Kashgar Uyghurs is that there are more tourists in their perpetual home (Kuqa [Kuche 库车] 2017). Delighted with the primitive simplicity of the cuisine, a female exploring south Xinjiang comments that it seems "from its origins until now, it has always been this flavor, never experiencing any change" (Kashgar 2018). Tourist experiences thus help make collective identities *feel primordial*.

On the other hand, the PRC's authoritarianism, its forceful and preemptive negation of civil society and mobilization, requires that tourist terrains express cultural content in politically approved ways. It is telling that the sites that are considered the most symbolic of minority culture and could serve as sectarian symbols—such as the Potala Palace in Lhasa and the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar, Xinjiang—sit on Beijing Road and Liberation Road, respectively. Analyzing photographs taken by Chinese tourists, it appears old town Kashgar (an historically Uyghur district) has a ratio of Chinese flags to shops of about 2:1.

The recent conversion of the Xinjiang region into a police state with tightly regulated movement and surveillance apparatus strongly colors the tourist experience of the region. As of around 2016, a series of security measures greet tourists in Xinjiang, including numerous police checkpoints and metal detectors at restaurants and markets. One travel group photographs the gas stations. They explain that to refill the tank, all passengers must exit the vehicle and wait outside a metal fence while one lone individual person fills out forms and pumps the gas (Lake Kanas 2017).

Through their reactions, Chinese tourists participate in the symbolic domestication of this obstreperous region. In a series of exclamations, one visitor sums up the commercial and political viability of Xinjiang:

> *Xinjiang is really big! Xinjiang is really pretty! Xinjiang's sunlight is really intense! Xinjiang is really plentiful in products! Xinjiang is really a big ethnic family! Xinjiang's ethnic minorities are truly simple and honest (chunpu) and hospitable (even if the Hunanese taxi driver in Urumqi told us they don't get along)! Xinjiang is really safe! Police in all places! So many police will protect your travels, how can it not be safe? The beauty of Xinjiang welcomes you!* (Kashgar-Altay 2017)

Like many tourists in the northwest, this traveler draws from his bodily encounters to espouse political beliefs consonant with a sense of unified multicultural peoplehood and a beneficent monopoly of force. In another case, a father goes to great lengths to describe Xinjiang as the safest place in China, listing all the occupations (the military patrols, the guards wearing red armbands, the owners of eateries and hotels, and the plainclothes police) that will ensure one's safety (Xinjiang 6/2017). Certainly, no self-preserving Chinese blogger will directly criticize the central government's ethnic policy for fear of sanction and censorship. However, the intense approbation of the securitization of the Xinjiang region suggests an acute appreciation of the means of coercion in the northwest frontier. The next chapter will further explore the sanctioning of this monopoly of violence.

To sum up domestic tourism's effect on the imagined Chinese community, these practices intensify the multicultural recognition of contemporary ethnic boundaries, making these groups appear primordial and true to themselves. The encounters in Xinjiang also affirm the political

logics of securing the frontiers, the coercive instruments of state control envisioned as part of the natural march of progress. Whereas some bristle at the hassles, they tout how securely they were able to roam about. The "tourist gaze" feasts on a specific visual tableau (Urry 1992), one that makes a people's traditional way of life attractive, regards security forces as peacekeepers, and yet shields them from the very patterns of domination that make this access possible.

Perceptions of Common Modernizing Mission

Travel provides a context through which to react to China's economic development, to central-level programs of modernization. One of the principal means to evaluate the scale of progress is, interestingly, infrastructure itself. A major marker of successful development is the state of the roads—the presence or absence of potholes and mud, the width of the road, or the length of a tunnel. On the way back to Sichuan from a western vacation, one driver reacts to the unfolding roadscape: "we went through a series of tunnels; they were large. All these big engineering projects, using the strength of the whole nation, easily built at the drop of a hat. The country is really developed" (Dunhuang 2012). Emotions swell for a young male passing through a tunnel on Route 318 near Erlangshan 二郎山: "Looking at this tunnel, I was moved. Our country is formidable, the railroads, highways, and bridges already world-class. I cannot contain my 'national pride' (minzu zihaogan 民族自豪感)" (Lhasa 2018).

In contrast, conditions on the roadway exemplify some of the negative aspects of economic change. A particularly frustrating stretch of highway awaits Beijing tourists as they head west to Xi'an. A driver calls the parts in Henan Province bleak and backwards, and fears getting stranded in the middle of nowhere (Lhasa 2009). Nearer to Shanxi Province, drivers face an endless cavalcade of coal trucks shuttling back and forth from the mines. One group of Beijingers on the way to Shanxi Province advises against this route:

The mountains were for coal, there were no trees, just bald. It was desolate and gray. Even scarier is that the road became bumpy, with numerous coal trucks passing by. Everything was coated in coal soot and ash and became one color. That coal smell: it was hard to endure. The only good thing is there was no congestion (Wutaishan 五台山 2006).

Environmental degradation becomes a theme in multiple travel logs, as tourists complain about the smog in Dali, the trash-ridden streams of Guangxi, and the untouchable waters of Erhai 洱海 Lake in Yunnan. Tourists are zealous to free themselves from urban ills and have low tolerance for seeing them on their travels. Still, these complaints are unlikely to raise broader concerns with socioeconomic development, given that a tourist, especially one with a car, can always find greener pastures and bluer skies simply by typing different characters on their GPS.

At the same time, these visitations become referenda on the extent of economic development, particularly the perceived distribution of state benefits to ethnic minorities. In the Tibet Autonomous Region, happiness seems like the principal harvest, as tourists repeatedly find Tibetans profitably adjusting to economic and political changes. As discussed in Chapter 2, Tibetans by nature are presumed to be serene and contented, but many travelers narrate this happiness as sustained by deliberate government policies. The following account mirrors the general attitude of most Han visitors to the region:

The [Tibetan] man sat with crossed legs, playing with his iphone4, his clothes simple and unprepossessing; he might have more money than us. The woman carries her young grandson; you can tell her face is filled with happiness by her smile, unintentionally revealing itself. Only in their 40s, they have a grandson . . . they probably don't even

remember their precise birth date. Their grandchild will be much luckier than them; his birthdate will be inscribed in his brain; he will celebrate his birthday every year like us Han. When Chairman Mao liberated the lowest class of serfs, their lives were completely changed. Now, every generation has it better than the last. That night we spent 500 yuan and ate with our compatriots (Lhasa 2015).

One traveler driving with a caravan of SUVs is able personally to verify hearsay with his journey through Tibet:

I heard that the economy of Linzhi 林芝 *is the best in Tibet. Passing through many Tibetan villages, I had direct perception (zhiguan) of this. Every household is a small, two-story building like in this picture. Everywhere on the street one sees large agricultural machinery and private cars. The standard of living is pretty much equal to the developed eastern provinces* (Linzhi-Lhasa 2016).

The structuring of the travel experience makes China's national rejuvenation appear inclusivist, various persons reaping its benefits. These "rituals of reassurance" (Gorsuch 2003) serve to confirm the economic system—that development is truly reaching all people within the state.

In Xinjiang, unlike Tibet, there is much less celebration of economic prosperity; rather what the state delivers is security and improved mindsets. In Xinjiang, the showcase state presence is not infrastructure but security forces. One father driving through the region in 2018 approves of the transformation that these security guard jobs can have on the ethnic minorities:

Many places in Xinjiang are poor, and the youth have nothing to do. The country recruits many of them as guards; as part of the crew they receive education and training, giving them a monthly income of 2000-3000 yuan. If they were farmers, they would make 7000-8000 a year, and it would be exhausting. So they are more than willing to become security guards. If one person becomes one, he can support his family. And even if they quit, their thinking has improved. In their everyday lives if they encounter someone suspicious, they will immediately report it to the authorities, not giving any cover to terrorists (Taxkorgan 2017).

As the next chapter will show in more detail, the travelers bear witness to the extension of coercive state control and the ordering of Xinjiang streets.

Resistances to Territorial Orderings

So far, I have treated many encounters in long-distance domestic travel as contact with the sacred—with cherished territories, heroes, birthplaces, explorers, and infrastructure. Nevertheless, some spaces do not meet with approbation or positive emotions. These experiences reveal more ambivalent attitudes toward tourism policies and form a different type of consciousness around regulation of territory. Whereas the political control of space engenders emotions of pride and satisfaction in many places, there are episodes where travelers feel constrained and exploited by policy around landscape and infrastructure. Although certainly being moments of resistance, it is ambiguous whether these disaffections challenge the overall nature of state authority.

First, tourists resist systems of traffic law enforcement, both electronic and staffed. Drivers feel entrapped and extorted by the various fluctuations in speed limits and badgering police that accompany cross-country driving, whom they believe unfairly target non-locals. One diarist recounts descending a mountain and encountering a tollbooth that exempted local Sichuan plates from paying, a policy they found unreasonable (Tibet 2012). On another trip, police had pulled over the travelers and cited them for illegally putting a frame around their license plate, an action

the police officer claimed was banned under the new traffic law. The diarist argued that the law was supposed to take effect three months later but discovered that the local protocol was to fine violators preemptively. Disgusted with the treatment, he notes with understatement: "as a common person (laobaixing 老百姓), I did not know whether this was common practice or not" (Dunhuang 2013). His diary displays a photograph of the signed paper ticket.

Parallel with mercenary policing is the unfair extraction of fees at scenic areas. (Many scenic areas are owned by government-private partnerships.) Most in-demand tourist sites in China are tightly barricaded, with access granted only through entering a central visitors' center. In multiple places drivers compare the fee system erected by local governments with separatist movements or out-and-out banditry. The Yulong Scenic Area in Yunnan is castigated by tourists for its entry fee of 400 RMB, a piracy more frustrating given that they do not adequately maintain the main access road (Yunnan 2016). Other tourists grouse about scenic areas for their transformation into luxury districts. For instance, management of the Buddhist holy mountain Putuoshan 普陀山 is excoriated for being converted into a four-star resort, which the travelers find dissonant with Buddhism's true spirit (Putuoshan 2015).

Tourists employ various countermeasures against these interferences. Two drivers mention carrying "electronic dogs," able to sniff out radar detection and alert them to speed monitoring zones nearby (Hainan 2014; Karamay 2017). A young hitchhiker hides herself in a freight truck's sleeper compartment through a checkpoint to avoid being cited for "overloading" (Lhasa 2014). Another group relays a story they heard at their hotel from clever youth who cheat the system at Tiger Leaping Gorge by hiring a local driver who has them duck their heads as they enter the gate (Yunnan 2016). Another diary proudly describes a wife's ruse of distracting the gate attendant while her husband sneaks their car into a scenic area in Tibet (Tibet 8/2012). These examples show a classification of state activity (at least at the local level) as encroaching on personal prerogatives.

These episodes reveal that there is some space for policy-oriented criticism within Chinese travel. Yet it must be stated that this disenchantment with scenery management and traffic regulation may not actually target the "state" per se. Instead, the perceived bad actors might be local officials, profit-hungry management companies, or shady cops—thus impugning local practice without any connection to larger state forces. Paradoxically, these grievances against place management might even sharpen the political legitimacy divide in China, where research shows that the Central Party is generally considered trustworthy, while local officials are considered crooked and feckless (Saich 2007).

Conclusions

In this chapter, I demonstrate the way a nation-state can be constituted through practices of mobility. Unlike many studies of states and state-formation that begin from bureaucratic and upper-level programs, I focus on micro-practices during an activity not primarily framed as political. I argue that tourist practices serve to naturalize and confirm existing knowledge and classifications about the nation-state, making abstract political conceptions into experiential realities.

Tourism offers expansive opportunities to forge imaginaries and assign meaning to space. Nation-states can potentially use tourism to strategically present their version of events and to increase domestic legitimacy. While tourist mobilities may not be as important as direct state

projects (e.g., the census or taxation) in initiating collective action and civil resistance, they nevertheless have important instrumental effects in naturalizing territory, narrating history, modeling cultural boundaries instilled in propaganda, demonstrating the value of economic policy, and building a symbolic reservoir of national emblems. Thus, the fortification of the nation-state becomes an effect of processes of mobility that produce temporal-spatial representations of independent and coherent political units set apart from society and other states.

Even though state institutions may actively lay the groundwork for leisure mobilities, tourists actively reproduce and reconstruct sociopolitical frameworks through banal practices. Travel, similar to Leslie's (2016:171) approach to maps, helps "narrow the gap between the vastness and abstraction of the political community's territory and the everyday, emplaced lives of its subjects." In China, domestic tourism in particular provides an embodied sense of geographic continuity, where maps, street markers, and romantic landscapes form a symbolic sphere that naturalizes territorial scale, wholeness, and international boundaries. Border fences near Pakistan and Kazakhstan that suggest political sovereignty are a source of delightful photographs and even national pride. Media long studied by scholars of nationalism, such as currency and flags, do not remain abstract or stationary but are carried great distances and woven into the mobile experiences of the landscape. The use of the 50-yuan notes in Lhasa reveals how media become props for rituals that involve the traveler within iconic spaces. For China, the content of tourist sites and the routes of movement make heritage easy to consume as a series of scenes chained together in meaningful ways, a playful mimesis of national narratives of a continuous, unified civilization. The past is thereby confirmed spatially and kinetically.

Not just backward-looking, travels often reaffirm the sense of collective mission, as modernization projects in frontier regions are read into trips, in both the material lifestyles of the people witnessed but also their lived-in spaces—their roads, houses, and city plazas. Yet state institutions, particularly local ones, come under scrutiny, with travel practices defining pressure points in the state-society boundary, where corruption, venality, and pollution undermine the organic enjoyment of these spaces. State policies themselves help create publics (Mettler and Soss 2004), as tourists make sense of physical infrastructure (e.g., gated attractions) and law enforcement (speed monitoring), expressing opinions in online fora that organize political thinking around concrete expressions of the state in governing national territory.

It must be stated that not all areas of the national sovereign territory appear in desirable ways, so that the state-building that occurs through tourism is a bit uneven. The tourist mentioned above traveling to the holy Buddhist mountain Wutaishan portrays the coal-dusted landscape of Shanxi in language antithetical to the accounts of reverie vis-a-vis Tibet. Additionally, not much romantic sentiment is attached to Henan or Hebei Provinces, making them very much drive-through zones.

The Chinese case might be unique given its socialist heritage, authoritarian intolerance for divergent cultural interpretations, and the relative lack of worldwide travel freedom of its citizens. Nevertheless, the bonding with sovereign territory and state markers seen here is likely replicated in various places, especially where borders are tense (e.g., Israel), where ideological control of the past is stringent (USSR), or where there is intense internal colonialism (Thailand). Even the United States, with a pluralistic civil society, has long seen elements of patriotism entangled with domestic tourism (Rugh 2008). This can be seen in tourism that revisits presidential boyhoods, replicates the paths of the explorers Lewis and Clark, or even takes the visitor to places like Mount Rushmore National Memorial. One lesson from the Chinese case is that travel practices signal belongingness to a distinct peoplehood linked by a common material

world: what it means to be Chinese is recognizing the expanse of the country, honoring border guards, re-tracing the Silk Road, zooming along elevated expressways, and reporting on economic conditions in Western regions. In other words, analyzing domestic travel in China contributes to our understanding of state-making by demonstrating how within domestic travel material artifacts of the state work to spatialize identities, and how territorial control becomes emblazoned with personal biography through such movements.

Whereas this chapter looks at tourism mobilities mainly through the lens of encounters with diverse infrastructure, territory, and narratives of history, the next chapter focuses more explicitly on tourist encounters in Xinjiang. This chapter has already shown that Xinjiang is one of the only destinations where journeyers justify their trips with political logics. Yet Xinjiang presents an interesting case of mobile stratification. While Han Chinese exult in its untapped, unstained beauty and are finding new pathways into all cornices of the region, Uyghurs themselves have been subject to grievous policies of confinement and mobility restriction. How do these mobile tourists navigate a region best characterized as a police state, with all manner of barricades and forcible means of ethnic control? How do they psychologically adjust to a region characterized by religious extremism and foreignness? How do the types and practices of mobility shape the ethnic divide? These are the questions we will explore in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6

Sun, Sand and Submachine Guns: Tourist Mobilities in a Militarized Xinjiang, China

In recent years, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China has become a police state. Movements across the region are controlled by a dense network of military police, security cameras, facial scanners, police checkpoints and razor wire (Zenz 2018b). Public expressions of Islamic faith by Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Hui peoples have been harshly suppressed, and Muslims are now targets of numerous so-called counter-terrorist interventions that seek to constrain their movements and change their thinking, culture and behavior (Anderson and Byler 2019; Leibold 2020). It is estimated that up to 1.5 million Uyghurs and other Muslims have been incarcerated in the Xinjiang region (Zenz 2019).

Interestingly, at the same time as the region has become intensely militarized, it has also become a popular tourist destination. According to most literature on travel and security, a region's affiliation with terrorism should deter mass tourism (Drakos and Kutan 2003; Enders and Sandler 1991). Yet while Muslim mobility has been curtailed in the region, ethnic Han tourists have begun to freely explore Xinjiang's increasingly accessible landscapes and publicly praise its exotic beauty. By looking at tourist practices, this chapter seeks to explain why, in spite of the increased military crackdowns and suppression of indigenous ways of life, the tourism industry in Xinjiang has boomed. It demonstrates how tourism is used to build political legitimacy in the region, and how domestic tourists negotiate the recent processes of ethnic-based securitization and economic development. Tourist mobilities play a role in valorizing the instruments of securing the frontiers and reinforcing central-level control over the region.

Background on Xinjiang and Xinjiang Tourism

The story of the heightened militarization in Xinjiang combines both an increasing aversion to and suppression of Islam by the Chinese state and new technologies of social control. In response to a string of terrorist attacks, riots, and protests by ethnic Uyghurs, the central state has mobilized its security apparatus to pacify the region and ensure complete allegiance. Islam, once considered by state leaders to be a peaceful religion that was occasionally distorted by a minority of extremists, has in recent years become seditious in the eyes of officials. Islamic piety now connotes ethnic separatism and religious extremism. Chiming with this shift in sentiment, the government has instituted a series of physical controls and indoctrination techniques that mark the Islamic element as deviant as well as implementing various purification programs designed to build loyalty to the Party. Such measures include the removal of the Uyghur language from schooling, shuttering mosques, encouraging the reporting of relatives' religiosity to authorities and the mandatory training of shopkeepers in the arts of resisting terrorist incursion.

The techniques of this kind of "harmonization" have strong historical roots. The same swallowing of pork that signaled loyalty to the Spanish crown for Jews in the sixteenth century now does the same for Uyghurs in Kashgar. The education projects for the American Indian in the U.S. and Canada, separating children from parents and banning native language usage, find

replication in Xinjiang schools, this time with even stricter generational segregation. The Chinese Communist Party's own mode of dissolving Tibetan identity under Mao—forcing Buddhist nuns to marry, using holy scriptures to make shoes, and abandoning monasteries (Chang 2005:456–57)—is echoed in the banning of Korans, the locking of mosques, and the constant vows and obeisance Uyghur detainees must make to the great leader Xi Jinping.

For the most part, anathematizing Islam is a recent process. In general, most religions in China are inscribed, more or less overtly, with a particular essence. These essences are usually blanched in positive terms. The President of China's Religion Institute, Zhuo Xinping, specified Buddhism's essence as consciousness (juewu 觉悟), Islam's as harmony (heping 和平), and Christianity's as universal love (boai 博爱) (Zhuo 2014). Although the state still reserves the right to authentically represent correct practices, it has done so with an assumption that normal religious activities have a tolerated place under Chinese law. These religions would nevertheless have to serve party-set goals, such as Xi Jinping's attempt to realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. Thus, after a violent month in Xinjiang, Zhuo Xinping, argued that the society promoted by religion is one of peace and harmony, but Islamic extremists have twisted this true meaning of religion and that "true religious culture encourages people to do good, establishing universal family and a world peace" (Zhuo 2014). In light of this, he added, "we should strongly encourage the unearthing and propagation of the positive elements in religion, and we should strongly support teachings and interpretations that fit in with the progress of society."

Zhuo's assumption that Islam's essence could serve society would quickly become antiquated. By 2017, by the time Chen Quanguo took over as Party Secretary of Xinjiang, internal documents were circulating that treated Islam as a virus that must be treated and cleansed. He imported his "grid-style" form of policing from Tibet, placing convenient stations of guards at nearly every block in some towns. Individuals were assigned metrics for their potential reliability, based largely on their propinquity to Islamic persons, practices, and objects.

Although the north-west frontier has long been used as an experimental ground for new political techniques (Millward 1998), recent digital technologies have allowed for unprecedented surveillance (Leibold 2020; Mozur 2019). Ethnic policies carve up the landscape and sort populations into those considered reliable (i.e., Han Chinese), who move easily across its deserts and grasslands, and those considered unreliable (i.e., Uyghurs, Hui and Kazakhs), who are constantly tracked and monitored for seditious movements. A vast network of integrated data relays can theoretically pinpoint one's whereabouts and perceived threat level at any moment. Police regularly request identification and facial scans, and some cities have placed sentry stations at nearly every intersection. Uyghur-owned vehicles in certain areas must be fitted with GPS tracking devices (Phillips 2017). Passports are nearly impossible to procure for Uyghurs and other minorities, and foreign contacts in general are grounds for suspicion (Finley 2019; Standish and Toleukhanova 2019). Uyghurs arriving from abroad are subject to special interrogation and health checks that collect DNA, blood type and other biometrics, information which can be used to monitor future activities. As Darren Byler put it, at present the "the principal purpose of Uyghur life is to generate data" (Anderson and Byler 2019).

Officials have also initiated the mass detention of "unreliable elements" in special training centers, where large numbers of Muslims, mainly men, are forced to undergo cultural purification, which involves learning Mandarin, singing patriotic songs, praising Xi Jinping and having their previous loyalties eroded by bodily and psychological techniques (Vanderklippe 2018; Zenz 2018b). Security spending in the region increased ten-fold from 2007 to 2017, with a

93 per cent increase between 2016 and 2017 (Zenz 2018a). Additionally, thousands of plainclothes Uyghur guards have been hired to patrol streets there (Zenz 2018b).

Yet the tourism industry is expanding. From 2011 to 2018, total tourist visits increased by 266 per cent, from nearly 40 million to 150 million, although the year-on-year trend was broken by a dip in 2014, the year of a major bombing in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, and the introduction of a "strike hard" (*yanda* 严打) campaign against violent extremism (Cockerell 2019). According to *People's Daily*, to make up for that decline in visitor numbers, the Xinjiang Tourism Bureau launched a scheme in 2014 that offered a 500-yuan subsidy to each visitor to the region (Wang 2014).

The vast majority (over 96 per cent) of tourists to Xinjiang are mainland Chinese. Communist Party officials view this as a sign of the Party's strategic success in economic and social development. State media frequently extols the tourism boom in Xinjiang as evidence of positive changes in social stability, living conditions and ethnic solidarity (Liu 2019; Xu 2018). Additionally, the symbolic normalization embodied in the arrival of regular visitors supports the Party's vision of the region as a stable pillar and hub in its Belt and Road Initiative – a place safe for investment. The Xinjiang government has sought to portray the region as a place of "prosperity, civilized progress, unity, and stability," using tourism as an engine of growth for the new Silk Road (Xinjiang Tourism Development Committee 2017).

Once part of the Western Regions (*xiyu* 西域) conquered by the Qing Empire in the 18th century, Xinjiang, literally "New Frontier", contains a host of contradictions and layered pretensions. Conquered mostly in the 18th century by the non-Han Manchus, it is called an integral part of the Chinese nation by Han Chinese. In return for the loyalty of its warlord, Mao Zedong granted the region "self-governing" (zizhu 自主) status before defeating Chiang Kai-shek and taking control of his government; this agreement lasted less than a decade, when Han Chinese poured into it to enact the Cultural Revolution. Even today it is called a Uighur Autonomous Region (zizhiqu 自治区) despite Uighurs having little say in its governance.

There is no doubt much to attract a visitor to Xinjiang. It has long stood apart in mainland eyes as a restive and remarkable place filled with alien ways of life, majestic scenery, and valuable natural resources (Perdue 2005). Stimulated by improved infrastructure and positive portrayals in such media as *Chinese National Geographic*, its landscapes and folkways are contemporary objects of tourist desire. Visitors to Xinjiang form one part of the increasingly important tourism industry in China where the expanding transportation and sanitation infrastructure, rising incomes and the installation of standardized traveler facilities allow multi-day access to most regions (Airey and Chong 2010).

The majority of tourists to Xinjiang are domestic tourists; foreign tourists are closely monitored and often turned away at various points. Some foreign visitors find they may only be allowed to explore and take pictures of the "positive things," which hints at the existence of less attractive images (Martin 2019).

Approaching Tourism to Restive Regions

There are a couple of interconnecting branches of research that can shed some light on the puzzling nature of Xinjiang travel. They are focused on how tourists interact with security apparatus and different ethnicities.

Scholars have long noted that pacification of a territory is one of the prerequisites for leisure travel, with perceived risk to life and limb one of the surest deterrents to tourists (Hall, Timothy,

and Duval 2012; Richter 1980). A reputation for being the site of terrorist activities has been shown to negatively impact tourist arrivals (Drakos and Kutan 2003; Enders and Sandler 1991; Saha and Yap 2014). Politicians and businesspeople work hard to frame regions known for recent political turmoil as peaceful and safe areas for travelers (Lepp and Harris 2008; Rivera 2008). While some literature addresses "dark tourists" – those drawn to places of trauma and danger (Lennon and Foley 2004; Light 2017) – these are usually a minority of thrill-seekers. In Xinjiang, tourism is a mass phenomenon, with many of its destinations pre-packaged in the same way as more ordinary tourism destinations. Although tourism to Xinjiang is undoubtedly negatively correlated with recent violence, the "forces of repression" – the police and its weaponry – do not seem to have the same deterrent effect that we would expect according to the literature. This raises the key research question: what role do tourists play in the pacification of the spaces of Xinjiang?

Another body of literature addresses ethnic relations in tourism, showing for example how ethnic groups on the Kenyan coast mobilize cooperatively and competitively against threats to tourism (Jamison 1999), how minorities in China dramatize culture to attain capital (Oakes 1997), and how racial relations are sustained by backstage and frontstage performances to foreigners in Cuba (Sanchez and Adams 2008). Typically, these works presume a durable host community with some strategic choice in the cultural deployment of its most marketable face. Yet the ethnic project that operates in Xinjiang is much closer to cultural erasure in which open displays of Islamic culture lead to persecution. The ethnic tourism – that is tourism concentrating on experiencing peoples with putatively unique cultural identities (Wood 1984) – in Xinjiang is qualitatively different than that typically studied by scholars. Many Uyghur religious practices are now considered to be radical and antithetical to Chinese norms. Islam has been metaphorically described as a "virus" and a "cancer" by internal Party documents (Thum 2018). To officials, Uyghur culture is something that must be cleansed, even as it beckons tourists with its distinctiveness. This raises another key research question: how does tourism affect ethnic boundaries in a militarized, apartheid context?

Untangling the puzzle of why tourist mobilities continue into restive regions could be greatly supplemented by an investigation of Xinjiang, where the spatial scale, mode of travel (the automobile) and ethnic composition shape tourist expectations in ways inconsistent with other major destinations. In addition, security measures put in place to keep travelers safe permeate into the demand side of a site. The technostructure of security, while giving Han travelers a sense of ownership and belonging, might also deprive the local scene of the sincere public expression of cultural content that make for satisfied viewing. Cultural tourism might thus be compromised by the repressive forces. It is worth investigating how tourists psychologically navigate the militarized, contested terrains of Xinjiang in terms of desired authenticity.

While the study of Xinjiang tourism addresses these fundamental questions, it also raises more. What role does tourism play in the formation of Han Chinese political consciousness? How do Han tourists interpret and make sense of encounters with the police regime of Xinjiang? A few journalists and foreign writers have written of their own movements within Xinjiang, but we know little about the subjective experiences of Chinese people themselves, particularly how they assess the region's securitization and system of mobility controls.

To do this, this chapter draws on novel materials which have not previously been used to investigate contemporary Xinjiang. Owing to the relative inaccessibility of Xinjiang to outside researchers, scholarly knowledge of its situation has been difficult to generate and fraught with

ethical concerns. Travelogues are one means to produce new insights on the ongoing sociopolitical processes of this important region.

Data for this chapter are mainly drawn from three major sources: travelogues, online reviews, and official documents. From the master dataset of travelogues, I use 45 travel diaries by Han Chinese who visited Xinjiang between 2010 and 2019. The majority (31 of 45) of these diaries appeared between 2017 and 2019, a period when re-education camps were being used to detain large numbers of Muslims. Most were created by mainland Chinese, although I include two by Taiwanese travelers. Almost all (approximately 87 per cent) of the diarists travelled by automobile, although four mainly travelled by train and two used buses.

To compare ethnic relations, I use another set of travelogues: those written by Han Chinese tourists travelling to Tibetan regions (22 diaries written between 2006 and 2018). I use these travelogues mainly to compare Han–Tibetan interactions with ethnic interactions in Xinjiang.

The majority of the diarists who travelled to Xinjiang hail from China's largest cities, including Beijing (12 trips), Shanghai (4), Guangzhou (3), Urumqi (3), Nanjing (2), Shenzhen (2) and Xi'an (2). Many are car owners and so are likely to be fairly affluent. The Ministry of Public Security statistics show that as of September 2021, there were about 297 million Chinese owned cars (Xinhua 2021b), or about 1 vehicle for every 5 persons.

The second data source comprises online reviews taken from travel booking sites for major Xinjiang attractions. These reviews are used mainly to substantiate public opinion on certain destinations.

Finally, where relevant, I examine official media, government reports, magazine articles and online automobile advertisements relevant to Xinjiang travel.

Background imagination on Xinjiang

In tourism, the narrative arrives before the traveler. This is particularly true in China, where numerous thousand-year-old sites thrive in collective memory – in novels, textbooks, news programs, movies, and guidebooks. This also applies to Xinjiang in part. As mentioned earlier, *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西游记), the novel tracing the monk Xuanzang's numerous travails to retrieve sutras from India, is constantly referenced by travelers. Compared to other regions of China, however, travel to Xinjiang is still embryonic and narratives are still being developed. Furthermore, many sites have yet to be formally included as scenic sites, so there are no entrance gates and fees.

Xinjiang offers tourist a huge space to explore. In the Taklamakan Desert, for example, drivers can randomly park on the side of the road and trudge up and down sand dunes. What gratifies many travelers about this kind of un-demarcated space is its lack of artificiality. One female visitor to Xiata Canyon (Xiata xiagu 夏塔峡谷) describes entering a foreign national park where the original ecology is retained (Tekes 2018).

The main means of travel in Xinjiang is by motor vehicle (either personal vehicle, rental car or by hired driver), so that one architect of the imaginative consumption of spaces is automobile advertising. While advertisements do not automatically express the belief systems of consumers, marketing materials do speak to psychological impulses of empowerment and finding the self (Frank 1997; Popp 2012). Of those who drove their own vehicles and I could determine the type of vehicle, 64 per cent travelled in sport utility vehicles.

While few if any marketing materials mention Xinjiang specifically, many feature the isolated landscapes found in frontier regions like Tibet and Xinjiang. One Nissan Navara

advertisement on *xcar.com* in September 2018 shows a large SUV splashing off-road through water (something drivers attempt in Xinjiang) with the tagline: "wherever you want to go, there's no place you cannot reach" (see Figure 6.1). In another advertisement, for the BMW X5 in autohome.com in February 2019, a white SUV is parked in front of an unmarked glacier in the Kashgar (Kashi 喀什) region), instructing viewers to "break a thousand boundaries, establish new boundaries" (po wanjing, li xinjing 破万境, 立新境). Thus, there is a prefabricated notion of automobility, particularly among SUV drivers, that one will not follow prefabricated notions. While Xinjiang tourists are by no means pattern-less in their movements, they interact with a consumer ethos that suggests they travel off the beaten path.

Figure 6.1: Online Nissan Navara advertisement from 2018. The bold text reads: "Wherever you want to go, there's no place you cannot reach."

Interacting with Spaces of Militarization

Preparing for a Xinjiang trip

There are many online travel guides that advise on when to visit Xinjiang, where to go and how to get around. A widely viewed introductory article on the website *Mafengwo* describes Xinjiang as being China's largest province (*shengfen* 省份), bordered by six countries and marked by remoteness and exoticism (*shenmi* 神秘) (Anon 2017b). Although Xinjiang is administered at a provincial level, it is technically an autonomous region, or *zizhiqu* 自治区. In general, Xinjiang vacations tend to cover large swaths of latitude and longitude and advice tends to center on dealing with the great distances away from the normal, comfortable routines of mainland China. Because the roads in Xinjiang are generally new and smooth, any vehicle will

generally suffice. However, because closer contact with nature will require traversing through mud and ruts, some guides favor the raised suspension of an SUV.

Most guides recommend packing dried food because of the great distances between places of re-supply. They suggest filling luggage with both warm and cold weather clothes, as the temperature changes rapidly. However, the most important item to bring is an official identification card, which is necessary not only to cross security checkpoints but also to accomplish mundane tasks such as re-fueling vehicles and entering restrooms. For example, at most petrol stations, all passengers except the driver must exit the vehicle and wait outside a razor-wire fence. The driver must first show identification and offer the trunk for inspection before taking the vehicle to the pumps.

There is a general consensus among the online guides that north Xinjiang (north of the Tianshan Mountains 天山) has more natural beauty, while south Xinjiang (south of the Tianshan Mountains) has more interesting culture. Most guides start journeys in Urumqi, the capital and the only place where visitors can hire vehicles. One post on *Mafengwo* sums up the essential places to visit: "If you don't go to Xinjiang, you don't know how big China is. If you don't go to Ili (Yili 伊犁), you don't know how beautiful Xinjiang is. If you don't go to Kashgar, you haven't arrived in Xinjiang" (Anon 2018e). The last phrase echoes the tourist slogan of Kashgar, which is displayed prominently throughout the city. Yili features the alpine Lake Sayram (Sailimu Hu 赛里木湖) and panoramic views of grasslands, providing tourists with the opportunity to photograph Kazakh herders tending to horses in green fields. For Han visitors, Kashgar is a city whose cultural bloodline links it to Aladdin and Afghanistan; some describe it as the least Chinese place in China. Tourists capture folk images of Uyghur pottery, fabrics, musical instruments, playful children, and the wizened faces of old men. Other well-travelled sites in Xinjiang include the Flaming Mountains (Huoyanshan 火焰山), the film location for the 1986 television serial *Journey to the West*, Bayanbulak grassland, Lake Kanas, and the Pakistan border at Khunjerab Pass (Hongqilafu).

As for routes, there are two roads commonly enjoyed for their unique scenery. The first is the Duku 独库 Highway, which connects Maytag (Dushanzi 独山子) and Kuqa (Kuche 库车). Offering superb high-altitude views while crossing the Tianshan Mountains, tourists yield to herds of cattle and sheep, and park off-road to scrape ice off mountainsides and dip their feet in clear streams. On the way, many stop at the Qiaoerma 乔尔玛 Martyr's Monument (see Figure 6.2). Memorializing the 168 members of the People's Liberation Army who sacrificed their lives to construct this roadway in the 1980s, the route has been heavily promoted by official and unofficial media as the "road of heroes" (*yingxiong zhi lu* 英雄之路).

The other "must-do" route traverses the Gobi Desert along Route 315. Nicknamed the "Tarim Desert Oil Road," it is considered to be a close analogue of segments of the ancient Silk Road. In this arid stretch, travelers typically get out of their cars to frolic among the sand dunes, rolling around, jumping, and stomping in the sand. Alongside sand and water wells, the landscape is dominated by oil wells and the slogans of the China National Petroleum Corporation, which trumpet its extraordinary resilience in harsh conditions. As can be seen in Figure 6.3, one prominent sign popular with tourists snapping photographs reads: "Triumphing over a sea of death" (zhengzhan "siwang" zhi hai 征战"死亡"之海).

Figure 6.2: Qiaoerma Monument near the Duku Highway in Xinjiang

Figure 6.3: Sign promoting oil production in Xinjiang. The horizontal text reads: "Triumphing over a sea of death" (from Lvyou Zhi Shjie 旅行知世界 2021)

Militarization and tourism

Black uniforms, submachine guns, riot shields, facial scans and metal spikes feature in most tourist commentaries of Xinjiang and are photographed frequently. Some visitors are very direct in setting the scene:

In Xinjiang, security checks are an everyday thing. Every day we went through multiple checks. In addition to physical checks, the roads have electronic monitoring. The more remote the country road, the more electronic monitoring there is. No matter where your car goes, there will be a safety check, at gas stations, at hotels, information will be collected forming a complete record (wanzheng de jilu 完整的记录). You could say that the safety departments know all about your trip, even clearer than you do (Taxkorgan 2017).

For travelers arriving at the airport or train station in Urumqi, they are immediately confronted with People's Armed Police (*wujing* 武警). But whereas dread might be an assumed response, Chinese tourists instead feel reassured by the panoply of technologies and soldiers. Many travel diaries background their decision to enter Xinjiang with a debate between themselves and their anxious friends and relatives:

Many of my mainland (neidi 内地) friends will not dare go to Xinjiang, especially to the south, mainly because of safety concerns. In fact, there are many ethnic groups in Xinjiang, and Han are the majority. Various cities have a well instituted set of security personnel. Many Han Chinese have lived there for years. Terrorist attacks are quite rare, you are unlikely to be involved in one (Taxkorgan [Tashikuergan 塔什库尔干], 2017).

This traveler situates himself in distinction from those who do not really know the facts.

The conventional wisdom about Xinjiang being an unwelcoming place is refuted by personal touring experience. Almost no diarists downplay the security apparatus as invisible or unremarkable; rather, they see themselves as empirical validators who go into the field to relay on-the-ground truths back home and test common viewpoints:

I looked at travelogues and guides before and they said that Kashgar does not seem like a place in China, and the people there do not look Chinese. If we go to Kashgar, we would be treated like foreigners, and South Xinjiang is chaotic (luan 乱) and dangerous (weixian 危险), etc. Although this makes some sense, if you don't experience it personally, you can be mistaken. Actually, there is probably some danger, but many people live here. Will I really encounter riots at any time and place (Khunjerab 2017)?

A more patriotic testimonial also emphasizes the reassuring ubiquity of security institutions:

At Kargalik (Yecheng 叶城), the security check was especially strict. All the town entrances have armed police (wujing 武警) and traffic police stops. Not only do you present your official identification, they inspect your luggage, and you have to open your hood; they inspect the interior of the vehicle and all your belongings. Entering lodgings, stores, restaurants you have to go through a metal detector, get a simple frisk and open your bags ... People urged me to go past Yecheng straight to Kashgar, saying it wasn't safe. There was a recent revolt here. But I believe in the Party! I believe in the government! To exaggerate a little, every three steps is a guardpost (gang 岗), every five steps a sentry (shao 哨). People's armed police vehicles, traffic police vehicles and armored cars are everywhere, really tight security ... It gives those trying to go about their everyday business a sense of security (anquangan 安全感) (Kashgar 2017).

Another writer not only normalizes the policing but admires its comparative excellence in broader perspective:

> *Friends who want to go to Xinjiang worry about the safety issues. To this, let me say in all seriousness that Xinjiang has the best public security in all of China. It is said the amount of police in Xinjiang is greater than the total police force in the United States. I had heard before I left that it was chaotic, but after going it's no big deal ... I have been to many crime-filled cities, like Manila, Naples and Brussels, and so-called dirty cities like New York and Paris. Xinjiang is far above them. The streets are filled with police, with 24-hour patrols. The supermarkets, hotels, markets, buses, gas station and ticketing halls all require ID and a security scan ... In any bad situation, you can find the police, who not only have a good attitude but are also handsome!* (Tekes 2018).

These narratives counter the commonly perceived risk of travelling in Xinjiang. They assert that the dangers are overstated; the people are not out to get you; there are large populations (especially of Han Chinese); the security levels ensure safe movement; and it is safer than many other areas of the world.

Securitization provides both a prior rationale for visiting and a post-hoc justification of their visit. It provides Chinese visitors with a dose of patriotic pride to see the region so safe and a sense of personal pride for relaying the message back home to others.

Xinjiang tourism as an ethnic classification project

When travelling in Xinjiang, especially in south Xinjiang, tourists transition into spaces where Han Chinese are in the minority. Here, value is given to manageable degrees of difference, where tourist practices form public representations of membership and draw group boundaries. In general, tourists interacting with Uyghurs feel occasional unease, a tension which is less obvious in their interactions with Tajiks or Tibetans. I examine three series of practices to show how tourism reflects ethnocultural distinction: mobility configurations, personal exchanges, and intra-ethnic sharing.

Inequality in movement and space is integral to the political regime in Xinjiang. Han tourists reveal these privileges but also participate in them. One way this is demonstrated is through their fear of sharing vehicles. For example, after landing at Kashgar airport, one visitor describes a feeling of "apprehensiveness" (*fachu* 发怵) after being overwhelmed by a large number of bearded men offering taxi rides (Tekes 2018). Although some Han tourists occasionally pick up Tibetan hitchhikers (Lhasa-Namucuo 纳木错 2014; Lhasa 2016),[21] no diarists mention allowing Muslims in their vehicles, the main cited reason being the language barrier. One married couple state that they had a pre-existing policy to refuse hitchhikers but were nonetheless charmed by a Han soldier, whose combination of "gentle refinement, along with being Han, and having no barriers to communication" led them to shed their principles and offer him a ride (Taxkorgan 2017). Pragmatic reasons are also given for the lack of cross-ethnic contact when travelling. As one rider explains, when sharing cars, police will conduct a more stringent inspection if Uyghurs are in the backseat (Khotan [Hetian 和田] 2018).

Although mobility restrictions such as having to present identification on the street, facial scans, security checkpoints, etc., are clearly aimed at Uyghurs, almost none of the mainland

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[21] This is not to imply that travelers were completely at ease around Tibetans. Some refused to accept invitations to enter Tibetan houses and others mentioned extortions that could occur as one drives in isolated, rural areas. Nonetheless, most of the discussion around wrongdoing seemed to involve property and monetary damage, not physical harm.

Chinese travel diaries makes overt reference to it as standard practice. Compare this to one of the travelers from Taiwan, who acknowledges that Xinjiang is safe to travel through yet is struck by its disparities:

In fact, travelling in Xinjiang all this time you'll discover that the police and security personnel treat Han and Uyghurs very differently. Uyghurs will have to produce more documents and undergo deeper inspections. Whereas us Han, they will sometimes just quickly wave us through (Hami 哈密 2018).

It is probably no coincidence that the only mainland Chinese travelogue to mention separate standards is written by a gregarious family of three who met a pair of Uyghur students on the train to Urumqi. The students spoke fluent Mandarin and studied in the family's hometown (Kashgar-Altay [Aletai 阿勒泰] 2017). Their shared backgrounds led to an invitation to eat with the local family and provided the Han family with a richer experience. A road trip by car inevitably will provide a more solitary experience and segregation than a journey by train, but it is the combination of openness, language parity and contact sites that likely explains such opportunities for fellowship.

Other opportunities for meaningful exchange are also more constrained on vacations in Xinjiang. For instance, there is a widespread custom for road travelers to deliver school supplies and clothing to needy schools in Tibetan regions (Labrang Monastery [Labuleng Si 拉卜楞寺], 2015; Kashgar–Lhasa, 2017) Some car clubs, often based around loyalty to a particular make, will take caravans of similarly decorated vehicles on long-distance treks to deliver donated goods. I found no evidence of such practices in Xinjiang. This may not be entirely down to the tourists, who are unable to pass on anything hand-to-hand in Xinjiang. Many diaries point out how schoolyards in Xinjiang are tightly barricaded against public access. In contrast, road-trippers in Tibetan mountainous areas often cooperate directly with school administrators, driving along dirt roads to visit isolated elementary schools and handing out gifts personally, an informal charitable act not feasible in a context of militarization.

Reading the diary texts, it appears that none of the travelers added Uyghurs to their personal contacts in social networking applications. Compared with their interactions with Tibetans, they are less likely to use the inclusive term *tongbao* 同胞 (compatriots) to describe Uyghurs. Of the 22 Tibet travelogues, seven (32 per cent) use the term directly for Tibetans; of the 45 Xinjiang diaries, just three (7 per cent) do so for Uyghurs.

While some travelers to Tibet use phrasebooks and speak a few commonly used phrases, no tourists in Xinjiang attempt to tackle the language barriers. Even prearranged communication is reduced in Xinjiang. Although Uyghurs are often depicted singing folk songs on CCTV broadcasts, the tourists studied here actually saw few folk performances. This contrasts sharply with tourists to Tibet, who are almost always serenaded at some point. In areas of southern Xinjiang, many exchanges consist of just smiles, gestures, pointing, and so forth. At times, such exchanges can feel one-sided as tourists, despite their unease, attempt to capture images of ethnic daily life through photography. Tourists in Tibet express sensitivity about wantonly snapping shots of pilgrims and monks, yet tourists in southern Xinjiang are even more circumspect, with multiple tourists envisioning scenarios of having to flee for their lives in old town Kashgar while taking pictures (Aqsu (Akesu 阿克苏), 2015; Khunjerab, 2017). Hinting at this concern, one man travelling with his wife and young daughter dispenses advice on how to win over the children in Kashgar:

If you want to engage with these children, it is simple. If you see a group of kids playing, you can sit down beside them and slowly work your way closer; this way they won't feel uneasy.

You could put on a smile, take a photo for them, or hand them some snacks, to build good feelings. Children are all quite curious, especially about visitors, so it is easy to get close to them (Taxkorgan, 2017).

A few travelers in old town Kashgar used black-and-white photography to capture images of local residents, adding a greater sense of social distance and otherness to even the mundane tourist practice of taking photographs (Kuqa, 2017; Khunjerab, 2018).

Tajiks elicit a more favorable response from Han tourists. One of the less populous ethnic minorities in China, Tajiks are heavily engaged in tourism. On the Pamir Plateau, tourists will often stay in yurts with a Tajik family or attend a Tajik wedding. Most of the travelogues describe Tajiks in similar terms – as being pastoral, surviving in demanding environments, as the only "white" ethnic minority in China, and as being friendly towards the Chinese state. Travel sites note that Tajiks practice secularized Islam. Unlike Uyghurs, they are occasionally added to personal contacts. Thus, while contact sites and deep connections with Uyghurs seem limited, Tajik–Han relations appear to be brought closer through tourist practices.

It appears that travel in Xinjiang is also a reinforcer of intra-ethnic solidarity. One Taiwanese backpacker says openly what likely goes unstated by mainland Chinese:

We found a sedan driven by a [Xinjiang] Han to drive us … They told us that seeking a car like we were was really dangerous. If a Uyghur picked us up, it would not be safe. Then, they proceeded to complain about how the Uyghurs made their everyday lives so inconvenient, why they had all the strict safety inspections (Hami 2018).

Hence, local Han Chinese share their grievances about the "other" to perceived members of their own group.

Concurrently, tourists greatly cherish the sacrifices that (Han) soldiers made to open up and develop the region along the Duku Highway, near national borders at the Khunjerab Pass and Korgas (Huoerguosi 霍尔果斯), and in the oil industry. These infrastructural developments serve as symbolic achievements marking national strength. For example, signage in the First Oil Well scenic area and the Tamir Basin alludes to the tireless martyrdom of those working to develop Xinjiang. One tourist driving a sedan through southern Xinjiang exults in his diligent compatriots: "Building a road like this in an uninhabitable area is a magnificent feat; I'm amazed by the hardship endured by them, the engineering will and the strength (*qiangda* 强大) of the country" (Kuqa 2017).

Meanwhile, some tourists (although only a few go this far) insinuate themselves into national projects with subtle ways of identification. A father poetically alludes to the great Han explorer of the 2nd century BC: "In ancient times it was Zhang Qian travelling to the west, now it is [father's name] travelling to Xinjiang" (Kashgar-Altay 2017). Near Bayanbulak Grassland, without a cell phone signal, another group connect their experience to that of their socialist predecessors:

[In the Gobi] on both sides, there are barren hills, with few plants growing, alongside broken, closed trains and half-cut mountain caves. We felt like those youth in the 1950s and 1960s sent down to Xinjiang to offer aid, a really unique feeling (Yining 伊宁－Lake Kanas, 2017).

Road-trip travelers incorporate tropes of bodily struggle and what Nelson Graburn calls "pioneer endurance" (Graburn 1977). This is enhanced by the sense of "extremity" that their travel in Xinjiang evokes: they experience extreme climates, at the extreme limits of Chinese territory, among extremely intrepid compatriots who have built roads and oil wells against extreme resistance.

Authenticity and commercialization

How do the massive spatial and socio-political changes in Xinjiang affect tourists' evaluation of their experience? As I have shown, the huge infrastructure projects and webs of surveillance have permitted increased consumption of landscapes and local culture by allowing feelings of safe mobility for Han Chinese tourists. Furthermore, the achievements and surveillance form part of the region's distinctiveness and make great social media content. Yet, connected to developmental policies are tourist concerns with authenticity. There are two side effects of state policy that tourists regard as antithetical to their desires: devitalized atmosphere and over-commercialization.

Han tourists are to some extent aware that minority populations are being moved around and that foot traffic is unusually low. They allude to nomads leaving Chinese territory, the relocation of Uyghur residents, and deserted markets. Some reviewers of Kashgar Old Town are underwhelmed by the lack of atmosphere caused by empty stalls and the absence of people.

In general, Han tourists in Xinjiang are not looking for a true backstage experience of ethnic life; they are content with what the frontstage can provide. They do not seek spiritual fulfilment from pure contact with opposing cultures, as so many theories of Western travel assume (Cohen and Cohen 2012). If their middle-school textbook or the Xinjiang Museum says that an ethnic group wears X costume and eats Y food, they expect to witness or bodily engage with X and Y. They are not like writer Edith Wharton touring Italy, fervently trying to detach her experience from Turner paintings (Decker 2009). Rather, Han tourists in Xinjiang hope to attach themselves to the popular image. For example, when visiting the Flaming Mountains, they will generally take a picture next to the most symbolic image, the Monkey King Statue. A site does not necessarily lose charm by having other tourists there; a certain number of visitors simply validates its common value. When touring cultural sites, they, like so many travelers, presume that what they see going on is an immobile social form that is always as they see it (Pratt 2007; Salazar 2012). There is no need for unmasking when no masking is presumed.

Even so, all else being equal, they *prefer* to experience different lifestyles with some depth and sincerity, for instance by staying in a Kazakh yurt to "understand the details (*diyun* 底蕴) of full-on grassland culture" (Altay 2017), or circling a mosque to "genuinely experience (*zhenzheng tiyan* 真正体验) the lifeways of the local ethnic minorities" (Kashgar–Kazakhstan, 2016). The adverb "genuinely" here implies there are lesser versions of experience. Similarly, Kashgar promotes itself as the only place where you are "genuinely" considered to be in Xinjiang.

Although a night of pre-arranged camping or circling a mosque might not qualify as true travel in Western middle-class eyes (as in the travel philosophy of *Lonely Planet* guides), it is enough to substantiate and validate many a journey for Han Chinese visitors. Moreover, elements of surprise – unplanned happenstances – loom large in these diaries. Having a vehicle stuck in the mud and then pushed out by several locals was a thrill for one couple in Wensu 温宿 Canyon (Taxkorgan, 2017). Another group took a wrong turn and ended up at a nuclear test research facility, where they excitedly paid homage to famous physicists (Kuqa–Kashgar, 2017).

Many authors have explored how Chinese tourists differ from ideal typical Western ones in their different conceptions of authenticity (Li, Sharpley, and Gammon 2019; Nyíri 2006a; Shepherd 2009), but few have analyzed how Chinese tourists adamantly despise "commercialization" (*shangyehua* 商业化). For Chinese tourists, commercialization signifies the use of prefigured, procrustean styles of site management that detract from the native,

unmediated, and unfettered enjoyment of a place. It is not so much the idea of charging entrance fees that irks tourists, given that most attractions in China already require payments for access, rather tourists resist the intensification of activities that center on the pursuit of profit and that cover up local ecologies and cultures (Sun et al. 2019). In this, they can be said to follow the classical Marxian division between use value and exchange value. Where exchange values take over (as some believe has happened in Xinjiang tourism), the use values – the human needs that are supposedly fulfilled – become qualitatively diminished. In the case of tourism, this means that the ontological experience of the native, genuine destination is replaced by something that can only be mediated by money.

The over-commercialization of a site can be characterized by fixed pathways, the inability to drive a car inside, high ticket prices, raised walkways for photo opportunities, charges for photographs and barricades around lakes. In Karamay, two male travelers in the scenic area of Black Oil Mountain (the supposed site of the first post-liberation oil well) are outraged at having to pay 40 yuan (about $6) to see a hill and a black pool: "what was flowing here was not oil, but money" (Karamay 2016). Tourists disdain plastic, factitious, mercenary replicas of indigenous cultural items. At an exhibit in Turpan (Tulufan 吐鲁番), one tourist group describes the replica Uyghur living spaces as somewhat fake, so they just took some pictures to prove they were there and left (Lake Kanas 2017). Bazaars are only as good as the people in them, and places, such as Urumqi Market, receive negative reviews for being lifeless (*lengqing* 冷清) and lacking in popularity with locals. Conversely, the bazaar in Kuqa is applauded for not being "overly opened for commercialization" and as a site where you can "see the folk customs in their original form" (Kashgar 2018).

Particularly with young tourists, scenery delights in inverse relation to the degree of management. A young female travelling in a group of five effuses about Lake Sayram's touristic immaturity:

> *Sayram gave me a feeling of "Wow!" I never expected a lake in the interior to be this clean, clear and free of impurities … This is not some manmade, opened-up place, and it has no management and protection. Rocks and abandoned fishing nets sit randomly (suiyi 随意) on the lake shore. There is no jumble of things piled together, there is just the awe of seeing this lake that looks like an ocean. I don't want to stop looking* (Yining 2017).

Because development spoils the organic scenery, some are thrilled at getting there before the aesthetic decline:

> *Even though the road now connects to the entrance of the Maytag Valley, right now it has not been commercialized. Other than a footbridge, there is no protection (weihu 维护). So, if you want to come, you should seize the day, because I feel in the future there will be many people. After commercialization, its sense of beauty will be impacted (Maytag 2018).*

Thus, although visiting a scenic site can provide an opportunity to tick something off a list, tourists still value the freedom to explore an organic place unsullied by money-making. Xinjiang tourism often fails to satisfy these preferences.[22]

Tourism and political legitimacy

A final question is the extent to which tourists acquiesce in or endorse the package of policies governing Xinjiang. Construed broadly, tourism provides political legitimacy by naturalizing

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[22] This is not limited to Xinjiang tourism, though, as many places featuring ethnic or historical content are expected to hew to traditional patterns and not conspicuously emphasize their commercial nature.

people's right to a certain geographic space through perception and bodily contact. Many diaries explicitly state that a visit to Xinjiang helps one to understand how "big" China is. Like Joseph Conrad's Marlowe curiously staring at a map, one tourist relates that Xinjiang's area equates to: 1 Iran, 2 Turkeys, 3 Frances, 4 Japans, 5 Italys, 6 New Zealands, 7 Englands, 16 North Koreas, 40 Taiwans, 99 Beijings, or 280 Shanghais (Tekes 2018). Border gates are now almost guaranteed stops on trips to the region and help to confirm state geographical sovereignty. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Kazakhstan border at Korgas displays a carved monument with a large map of China in relief, the islands claimed by China in the Pacific Ocean sandwiched into the bottom-right corner. Tour groups gather together holding Chinese flags and singing the national anthem in front of the map (Korgas 2017). As such, tourism in Xinjiang anoints the land into an enduring, integral whole known as China, the tourist body incorporating itself into this whole through personal perception and ritual.

Yet, there is certainly much cognitive dissonance with regard to the specific securitization policies in the region. With bodily security, there are countervailing forces of anxiety owing to the number of Uyghurs and assuagement given the number of soldiers. Although almost all travel diarists state explicitly that Xinjiang is safe, many construct phantom situations of dread, similar to the photography encounters outlined above. A young male travelling in a tour group through the alleyways of Kashgar has contradictory thoughts about his experience:

I thought that if a group of locals came charging in to extort me, there would literally be nothing I could do about it. But that clearly did not happen. In my mind the whole time I did not think anything dangerous would happen to me. Kashgar is such a charming city in the western region (Khunjerab 2017).

Another diarist travels with a party of people he just met, including a young guy from Taiwan. In Kashgar, he pairs up with the Taiwanese traveler, but they have a bit of a falling out. First, the Taiwanese traveler believes the sheer amount of PRC flags spoils the scenery of the town, for which the diarist fruitlessly tries to give him a "patriotic education." Second, the Taiwanese traveler wantonly takes pictures throughout Kashgar, forcing him to keep his distance, just in case he must run for his life. For the diarist, meandering through the alleyways of Kashgar there was "curiosity, excitement, fear, nervousness—all kinds of thoughts mixed together" (Aksu [Akesu 阿克苏] 2015).

These accounts containing imagined random violence contrast with the accounts of travelers in Tibet, who approve of the presence of security forces but rarely hint at any fear of violence or retribution. Freedom seems a fair trade to one diarist entering a night market in Xinjiang, who enjoys the advantages of confinement: "It felt like being in a cage. But from a visitor's perspective, it felt much safer" (Korgas 2017). In general, tourists present boldface taglines that state that Xinjiang is safe, but the fine print reveals their fear, unease, and frustration.

Some tourists reveal an understated ambivalence about the securitization: the traveler who misses the bustling bazaars of yesteryear, the van driver annoyed at having to wait in long lines for petrol, or the nature lovers who have their tripods seized at the train station. A few make oblique references to the absence of a critical mass of charming locals: "It's been said that because of security controls (*zhian* 治安), street markets (*minjian jishi* 民间集市) have been suppressed" (Kuqa 2017). The writer then immediately explains that Xinjiang is indeed safe, no matter what others say. Another diarist notes that the Kazakhs have been fleeing China, which he hopes is simply a seasonal, pasture-related phenomenon. Thus, it is clear that tourists are cognizant of some drop in public cultural life in Xinjiang, but few acknowledge or will admit to the prejudicial treatment of Uyghurs in transportation and policing, nor to any type of forced

relocation policies that depopulates the once alluring folk districts. Unfortunately for Uyghurs, Xinjiang is probably too replete in natural wonders (Sayram Lake, Duku Highway) and patriotic punctuations (border crossings, oil wells) to make preservation of authentic, spontaneous Islamic cultural life a sine qua non of its tourist industry.

A final note is necessary here on the nationality work that tourism might perform. Even though official rhetoric situates tourism as a tool not only for economic development but also for cultural transformation and discipline, few tourists bring in such discourses. Compared to Tibetan travelers, they are less likely in general to attribute great gains in livelihood and prosperity to developmental policies. While some diaries mention the contentment among the ethnic minorities, this is more their assumed steady state rather than a dynamic response to recent political change. There are two diaries that go a little further to approve bodily discipline of locals. One female writer applauds not only the policing in Xinjiang, but specifically the shopkeepers donning bullet proof vests, armed with truncheons, who undergo mandatory daily anti-terror drills (Tekesi 2018). The other is the only one to address minority thought level. After wondering where all the male Uyghurs are, he answers himself by positing that they have become guards and security personnel. As quoted in Chapter 6, he contends that "even if they quit, their thinking has improved. In their everyday lives if they encounter someone suspicious, they will immediately report it to the authorities, not giving any cover to terrorists" (Taxkorgan 2017). But this is the only occurrence of such statements. Thus, while the social stability of the region earns constant approbation in these travel diaries, the potential of the tourist as carrier of civilization is not much a part of the ideology.

Conclusions

Tourist mobilities have largely been overlooked in the story of state repression in Xinjiang since the late 2010s. Tourists visit Xinjiang for many reasons including its open landscapes, exotic cultures and ability to stoke feelings of adventure. Recent improvements in its infrastructure have also aided tourism and are indeed attractions in and of themselves.

Tourism to Xinjiang cannot be separated from politics. The regional government looks to tourism as a source of both economic and symbolic capital, as a way to improve the investment climate, particularly as a cornerstone hub of the Belt and Road Initiative. For officials, increasing tallies of visitors prove the wisdom of maintaining stability, and for visitors, stability proves the wisdom of their decision to journey there. Based on the travel diaries analyzed here, I contend that tourists perform "rituals of reassurance" by correcting their social network's misapprehensions about its dangerous situation (Gorsuch 2003). At the western extremities, they learn "how big China is," venture off the beaten track, brave harsh terrain in SUVs, and implicate their own bodies in the grand project of controlling the contested spaces of the west by honoring soldiers and great explorers. The language of contact with Xinjiang's visual tableau orients visitors to the numerous sacrifices of the region's constructors, similar to how oil workers and long-term residents of Xinjiang are indoctrinated into the idioms of Han sacrifice (Cliff 2016). Through their reactions, they indirectly participate in the central-level administration of the northwest frontier, symbolically affirming the Party narrative of creating order out of chaos.

Here, tourism performs a role of informational filtering, personally resolving discrepancies and discordant elements through narrative. Xinjiang is certainly not an informational black hole. Whereas Uyghurs and Kazakhs find their positionings relentlessly monitored, and their cell phone photos occasionally deleted by authorities, Han tourists are **encouraged** to circulate

imagery, with the government even partnering with the live-streaming application *Douyin* to relay visitor impressions (Liu 2019). As such, social media is used not to expose corruption or Party failures but to lend credence to Party propaganda – in this case to affirm a secure, well-ordered Xinjiang.

Certainly, online travel diarists are under pressure to self-censor their content and remove any language that might appear critical of the Party's narrative of Xinjiang's security and prosperity. While it is difficult to gauge the extent of the suppression of content, it must be said that diarists often furtively take pictures of military equipment, checkpoints, and soldiers, all of which they acknowledge should not be done openly. They do not abide by principles of censorship in that regard. Furthermore, given that many writers offer effusive praise of the police and military, they are likely either sincere in their impressions or strategically signaling support for the government, or a combination of both. At least with the impressions of securitization, many tourists sidestep issues of repressive censorship to report on and openly express admiration for the situation in Xinjiang. However, it is more difficult to assess the sincerity of the opinions on issues of ethnic relations. Future research on travel writing in China will be needed to determine how self-censorship operates and shapes what impressions are shareable.

Part of the repertoire of wonders, the state technostructure of control gains credence as another crowning national achievement. While a few travelers use their freedom of mediation to document specific surprising policing practices, these never counter the travelers' overarching presumption that securitization is improving the region. In fact, travelers evince an absolute trust in police and legal institutions in Xinjiang far and above what they would likely demonstrate in their home province. Hence, while most research on mobility and security concentrates on how negative images deter tourists, the data presented here show that tourists themselves actively perform impression management and reframe stigmatized destinations.

However, it is an overstatement to contend that domestic visitors to Xinjiang are completely oblivious to cultural changes. One way to comment on the forced removal of conviviality is to call a place dull or lacking in popularity. Many of the travelers point out that people are being moved out and that the replacement – a type of renovated tourist zone – is generally unappealing to them.

Even though tourists proclaim the region to be safe, they still carry affective reactions of fear and anxiety when among Uyghurs, especially in comparison to their reactions to Tibetans. For sure, tourists treat Tibetans as timeless curiosities caught up in feudal religion and as unsophisticated but seemingly happy, in the way puppies might be considered happy. Yet, the Han tourists in Tibet often gift school supplies to local students, offer rides to Tibetan farmers, commend the spiritualized culture, admire the pilgrims, practice occasional Tibetan phrases, and consider the Tibetans to be compatriots. And as we saw in Chapter 2, there was a belabored romanticism of their anti-commercial simplicity. Moreover, tourists had many face-to-face moments with them and did frequently visit their villages and learn their names. They were noble savages, but noble at the least.

In contrast, this chapter demonstrates that tourists in Xinjiang, especially when in the southern part of this region, consider the local people to not look Chinese, not be safe to ride with, and to be prone to sudden bursts of violence. Unlike in Tibet, there were very few moments when the Uyghurs were applauded for taking a slice of modernity or for being happy. These patterns of mobility and affective responses struggle to draw an inclusionary circle around Uyghurs based on anything other than their residence in Chinese-designated territory.

The developments in Xinjiang that do appall Han tourists involve the corruption of native charm and ecologies with fake, money-grubbing displays and the commercialized form of tourism beholden to "scenic area" models. To travelers, a line is crossed when a site that should be enjoyable-as-is becomes over-signified and over-commodified. While much tourism is still characterized by the visit-photograph-leave model, there is growing disenchantment, especially among road trippers, with the avariciousness of organized tourism. For Xinjiang's tourists, this frustration and resentment lies not so much with those who profit – tourism companies, locals, and officials – as with how commercialization changes the encounter with the ecology and culture. Too much profiteering spoils the distinctive character of artifacts and events, or what Ning Wang (1999) calls "object-related authenticity. This analysis provides a corrective to the literature that regards Chinese tourists as unmoved by authenticity concerns and as mindless stampers of sites (Nyíri 2006a). They reprove the moats built around natural scenery, the transportation monopolies, the high entrance fees, the myriad demarcations, and the forced beautifications. Ironically, the visitors here employ Marxian-style critiques of commodities long abandoned by the Communist Party. Thus, the space for political commentary is based on aesthetic taste, inscribed in the act of consumption. In Xinjiang, the state monopoly on force is welcome; the monopoly on beauty is not.

In sum, Han tourists to Xinjiang believe that commercialization is unwarranted, but soldiers are not. With respect to the future of Xinjiang, ethnic policy aimed at Uyghurs, Hui and Kazakhs will likely only impact the sensibilities of Han Chinese tourists where it intersects with their antagonism towards tawdry profiteering.

Domestic travel to the northwestern regions of China has had important implications in its domestication as a secure, stable part of China, and to establishing social boundaries. Yet defining the Chinese nation-state as a phenomenological reality does not just occur in domestic mobilities; it also emerges in the practices of international travel. Few scholarly works have addressed the nation within the context of outbound travel. Hence, the next chapter will address how outbound travel is politicized in China. Specifically, it interrogates how travel experiences of Chinese outbound tourists align with or dissent from prominent geopolitical tropes about the world.

Chapter 7:

Outgoing Tourism as a Nationalist Practice in China

Scholarly literature on the importance of travel to nation-building has mainly focused on either domestic tourism or incoming tourism. Few works have addressed the nation within the context of outbound travel, i.e., outside of the territory of the source country. I argue in this chapter that extraterritorial does not mean extra-national. Foreign travel engages with what Said (1995) called 'abstract maxims' of meaning that shape our sense of belongingness. Concepts such as civilization, progress, and morality are brought into concrete practice through outgoing mobilities. In the process, geopolitical scripts about inside-outside and forward-backward are communicated and reproduced. The Chinese nation-state, as internationalized actor, infused with collective meanings, becomes integrated within the process of foreign mobilities. This chapter uses public media and travelogues in China to argue for paying closer attention to how national positioning and geopolitical scripts are enacted in the domain of foreign mobilities.

Because of its importance to the global travel industry and world economy (at least pre-2020), China is a useful reference country for investigating the connection of outbound travel and nationalism. This chapter takes up the questions: How is outbound travel politicized in the People's Republic of China? In what ways do the travel experiences of Chinese outbound tourists align with or dissent from abstractions contained in official propaganda? The previous chapters investigated state-making in domestic travel. This chapter instead uses outbound travel to demonstrate how practices of mobility operate through mental categories set up by the nation-state. Nevertheless, as we will see, with outgoing travel there is more of a reflective element and looking-glass self that positions travelers as myth-busters and critics of certain official positions.

Existing work on Chinese tourism has mainly investigated the political institutions and foreign policy logics behind the Chinese state's control of outgoing tourists. These works are major contributions to a tourism field that places more of the locus of control and initiative on the destination side and tends to be biased against studying governance on the sending state side. What distinguishes the current chapter from these analyses is that I will concentrate more on tourist practices and engagement in the cultural sphere and in mundane practices, a view more in line with cultural geography approaches. Outbound travel operates in the cognitive and symbolic sphere, requiring sense-making of micro-encounters with foreign spaces and peoples. Despite the political management and diplomatic maneuvers that shape Chinese outbound travel, tourists may or may not bring in politics into their travels, and there is no certainty that this political content will square with official rubrics. Travel writers "engage (intentionally or not) with a much larger geopolitical discourse about the constitution of differential states and citizens" (Henry 2021:823–24). A focus on encounters and practices manifests how geopolitics and national sense-making involve ground-level experience and routines of mobility.

My goal in this chapter is to show the instrumentality of extraterritorial travel to nation-building. I locate the politicization of travel in both official positions and vernacular perceptions that emerge from interactions of Chinese travelers with foreign spaces. From a top-down viewpoint, we can observe how outbound travel is directed at outside nation-states and how it appeals to a domestic audience, particularly the burgeoning middle-class. From a bottom-up

perspective, I uncover how representations of the nation appear in practices of foreign travel by PRC citizens. Using travelogues of outgoing travel, I find in many ways that extraterritorial experiences support the developmental temporalization that characterizes official discourses, along with support for China's role in accelerating this process. However, other discourses, like language of suzhi, do not fit well and even contradict developmental logics. Hence, while representations of globality take a strong cue from official binaries of modern-backward, intermixed is a skepticism of the ways official sources derogate various peoples. Geopolitical tropes for some areas are sharply refuted, even positioning the tourist as independent fact-checkers who move beyond conventional understandings.

Connecting the Nation to Outbound Travel

While much has been written about how domestic and incoming travel connects to the nation, we know far less about the connections in context of outgoing travel. Here it might be useful to think of tourists as active geopolitical constructors. Recent scholarship in the areas of critical geopolitics, cultural geography, and everyday nationalism have highlighted the means by which mundane and intimate practices engage with texts, images, rationales, symbols, and ideologies that demarcate the global nation-state system and macroscopic power relationships. Instead of viewing geopolitics as elite strategizing, they treat geopolitics as lived, practiced, and dependent on modes of knowledge (Dittmer and Gray 2010; Hall 2017; Said 1995). Although travel can become a means of rapprochement and reconciliation (Dowler 2013; Gelbman and Timothy 2010), it usually operates through diagrams of power, including bipolarities of "here" and "there" (Gillen and Mostafanezhad 2019), "East" and "West" (Sum 2019), and "us" and "them" (Hunter 2015). Travelers produce a form of popular culture, particularly online, that makes sense of the international and provides a lens for interpreting space, territories, and citizenship (Bhandari 2019; Henry 2021; Lisle 2006).

A few authors have brought political analysis to outbound travel. In her history of Victorian travel, Marjorie Morgan traces how distinct British identities were triggered by different travel itineraries in Europe, and how the fluctuating alliance-structures of Great Britain with continental powers influenced foreign representations (Morgan 2001). Debbie Lisle (2006) and Patricia Gorsuch (2013), the former using bestselling travel writing, the latter Soviet documents, both consider outgoing travel as integral to perceptions of empire and ideologies of progress and backwardness. Christopher Endy (1998) interprets American travel to France as conducive to bonding the two nations in a common civilization and demonstrating the effectiveness of the Marshall Plan. Each of these works shares an emphasis on how national identities are constructed and adapted through visits overseas.

This chapter examines the importance of the nation and geopolitical schemas for a contemporary example: outbound travel from the PRC. As China has become the largest tourist source market in the world, there has been intense consideration of the economic ramifications of these massive outflows and how to improve destination competitiveness to win over Chinese tourists. Simultaneously, there has been steady attention to the political institutions behind the surge in travel and the importance of the Chinese state in regulating tourism flows and enacting diplomacy through it (Airey and Chong 2010; Lim, Ferguson, and Bishop 2020; Mak 2013; Tse and Hobson 2008). Most work on the politics of Chinese outgoing travel concentrates on the policies and potential impacts of state-level documents, regulations, and advisories on overall tourism flows and foreign relationships. While I agree with Tse and Hobson (2008) that studying

top-level policies are indispensable to understanding China's approach to tourism, I feel there has been a corresponding lack of attention to the cultural sphere.

For one, the symbolic importance of tourism as adjunct to perceptions of "national greatness" needs more elaboration than has been provided. Part of the impetus for the growth in outgoing travel is not simply improvements in standard of living and simplification of bureaucratic procedures, but rather includes broad emotions about global access and national success, something Nyíri (2006a) hinted at in the 2000s. Underappreciated is the means by which travel has infiltrated official messages and become a paraded element marking changing lifestyles. Secondly, the way that tourists themselves react to national positioning is not pre-ordained or totally subject to top-level political control. Ideas about the world are to some extent pre-packaged in vacations, but they are not totally determinant—through exploration of the actual practices of tourists we can better understand how political discourses work in non-official settings (An et al. 2020).

Similarly, travel uses trans-local experiences to narrate the nation itself (Hughes 1992). Although national cultures are explicitly communicated in official media and discourses, they are also infused by banal nationalisms (Billig 1995) and everyday nationhood (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). National power and national understandings performed in various spaces through varied materialities (Rowen 2014)—which include encounters outside the national state territory. With respect to the Chinese case, national legitimacy and foreign policies might be intertwined with hierarchies of difference and civilizational overtones (Nyíri 2006b).

Tourism is a highly ritualistic phenomenon (Edensor 2007), using various stagings to enact markers of belongingness and difference. By considering tourism as an ordering process (Franklin 2004) that makes use of rituals of belonginess and exclusion, we can shed light on how the nation and its geopolitical position emerge through bundles of practices in extraterritorial spaces. In sum, inspired by these approaches to how political constructions are practiced in everyday life, my goal is to look at national performances outside of formal national borders, to assess what geopolitical assumptions are heightened and challenged in the context of leisure travel.

The analysis that follows is divided into four parts. The first part briefly reviews China's dynamic architecture of outgoing travel regulation. This diagrams hard politics. The second part highlights the symbolic importance of travel for contemporary politics in China using official narratives. I claim that travel access and the rise of outbound Chinese tourism perform a symbolic role in evidencing improved livelihoods and a more imposing Chinese presence within the world. The third part uses travelogues to show the patterns that link outgoing Chinese travel to the nation-state, including the emergence of such themes of developmentalism, civilization, and modernity. Finally, the discussion summarizes the findings and conveys the complexities of outbound travel from China, at one time a medium for Party legitimacy but also a medium to express reservations about development.

Outbound Travel Regulation in China

During most of the era under Mao Zedong (1949-1976), tourism in the PRC was derogated as something that members of the bourgeois classes did. Only highly ranked members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), diplomats, and athletes were allowed to travel abroad, tourism being linked to foreign affairs and not commerce (Arlt 2013; Mak 2013). Ironically, while many well-known CCP members (Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping) were inculcated into the tenets of

Marxism while abroad, this foreign contact would later be held against them. Many of those with foreign travel experience were presumed to be capitalist spies or irreparably tainted by bourgeois ideas.

Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping (1977-1997), tourism gradually liberalized and grew in absolute terms. Deng himself wanted Chinese people to access the scientific and technical knowledge that was available abroad, encouraging students and enterprises to undertake foreign travel. For consumer travel, a combination of rising incomes, fixed holidays, and the rise of a markets contributed to expanding demand for domestic and foreign travel. Non-governmental foreign travel was allowed in 1983 with the opening of Hong Kong to mainland tourists. From there, the accessibility of foreign destinations gradually expanded, with subsequent agreements allowing for Chinese visits to, among others, Thailand (1988), the Philippines (1992), South Korea (1998), Australia (1999), and Japan (2000). Most of this expansion has been underpinned by the Approved Destination Status (ADS) System, a series of bilateral agreements which allow for tour group travel within host countries by Chinese-sanctioned tour agencies. Nevertheless, independent travel has also increased for many destinations, though visas for independent travel are not as reliably procured as through the ADS touring companies (Mognoni 2020). According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of countries with visa-free or visa-on-arrival policies for Chinese citizens had reached 67 by the end of 2017 (COTRI 2018).

As Arlt (2013) observed, state direction has shifted from a policy of containment (keeping people in) to one of promotion (using tourism as an engine of social and economic development). Travel-friendly policies have intensified, including simplifying passport procedures, adding more passport procurement sites (Mak 2013), and opening tour operators to foreign investment. However, given its socialist legacy, China is one of the few states with an articulated outgoing tourism policy (Tse 2013).

Probably more so than any nation-state, China regulates its outgoing tourism flows selectively based on bilateral relationships, operating as either coercion or inducement depending on the context (Lim et al. 2020). Since one of the requirements of ADS approval is a good relationship with China, it is a significant instrument in foreign policy, especially with regard to territorial recognition. Tourism-dependent economies are under pressure to abjure Taiwan to curry favor with China. It is believed that Costa Rica and Panama both received ADS designation for withdrawing recognition of Taiwan (Paradise 2022). The island of Palau, which has maintained normal relations with Taiwan, was targeted by China's tourism officials for not recognizing the One China Policy, pressing tour agencies to withdraw travel packages (Lyons 2018:20). Canada was delayed in getting ADS implementations because former Prime Minister Stephen Harper criticized China's human rights and met with the Dalai Lama (Reuters 2008).

China also induces tourism abroad to favored places. A subtle means to reward foreign destinations is front staging them in official media. This entails showing joint meetings with top leaders or emphasizing the importance of Chinese tourism to their economies (e.g., South Africa or the Maldives). In a few cases, tourists underpin a form of aid, much like food, vaccinations, or medicine. At a special ASEAN Leaders Meeting in January 2005, China vowed to encourage tourism to the damaged areas of the December tsunami. After the Japanese earthquake and tsunami of 2011, Chinese tourism companies were encouraged to market more tours to Japan. Dai et al. (2017) cite post-disaster aid and tourism support after major international economic recessions as attempts to build China's reputation as a responsible world actor.

More common than the granting of tourists is the more coercive withholding of tourism flows. China has multiple modes of weaponizing its tourists to manipulate travel flows: issuing

travel warnings, canceling package tours managed by state-run travel agencies, and banning permits for independent travel. As tensions worsened over jurisdiction of Huangyan Island, the China National Tourism Administration urged tour operators to suspend tours of the Philippines. When New Zealand's government blocked a deal with telecommunications giant Huawei, the Chinese government issued a travel advisory against the island nation. In the classic ploy of harming tourism by citing vague security issues, as penalty for Japanese actions claiming islands in the Pacific, the Chinese state issued a travel warning for Japan in 2012, citing potential safety threats to Chinese visitors.

Similarly, state media may adjust its tone and emphasis, censuring nation-states with negative stories of violence and discriminations endured by Chinese people. After Australia denied Huawei participation in its 5G network, Chinese media and embassies began issuing safety warnings concerning touring the continent and cautioned students about attending college there (Paradise 2022). This process was repeated again in summer 2020, with Chinese media warning of repeated discrimination against Chinese people during the COVID-19 epidemic in Australia (Doran 2020).

Outbound travel has few blanket restrictions in China. Moreover, travel is considered more a reward for individual economic success than political fealty. Nevertheless, China currently operates a strict socioethnic regime of mobility stratification. Islamic minority groups—notably Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and increasingly Hui—along with Tibetans face travel denial in the name of counterterrorism and repression of dissent. What long-distance movements are allowed are usually part of highly circumscribed and supervised political activities such as schooling, industrial labor, and ambassadorships. One of the cornerstone restrictions of Xinjiang's securitization has been the denial of foreign travel privileges (Finley 2019).

Even when Uyghurs leave the country, they hardly escape the Chinese state. While abroad, they reportedly are put under surveillance, having their phone conversations monitored, their digital devices tampered with, and their behavior watched (Taylor 2021). If they decide to return to China, they face what might be described as 'political quarantine,' surrendering their cell phone data for inspection, answering for foreign activities and potential Islamic ties, and yielding their bodies for analysis and subsequent tracking. Those who abide by the policies and show appropriate rehabilitation might be granted travel privileges, but these appear to be rare. The association of foreign contact with political subversion hearkens back to Bolshevik and Maoist practices.

Tibetans have long had difficulty acquiring the paperwork to travel abroad. A traveler outside of China is a traveler with a potential wide-ranging communication platform, mostly outside the censorship regime. Fearful of what it deems the "Dalai Lama Clique," an international movement to return Tibet to full independence, the Chinese government has withheld travel documents for many Tibetans. There is fear Tibetans abroad might link up with pro-Tibet organizations and do harm to China's image. Foreign contact may lead to reprisal. When a group of Tibetans returned from India after receiving a blessing from the Dalai Lama in 2012, they were placed in improvised reeducation facilities (Khatchadourian 2021). As with many socio-ethnic-based mobility restrictions, the majority Han population has been unaware, indifferent, and even defensive about such restrictions on minority groups.

In aggregate, there have been vast gains in foreign mobility for most Chinese citizens, stirred by the rising economy, foreign policy, and administrative simplifications. This opening up has not been extended to many ethnic minorities, who are denied foreign mobilities. At times, Chinese outbound tourists have often been weaponized, serving as carrots and sticks in various

disputes. But beyond its role in statecraft, foreign travel has become symbolic of national power and a focal point for national feelings.

Official Cultural Discourses of Travel in China

In this section, I will provide an overview of the symbolism buttressing travel in PRC political discourse. As an authoritarian Party-state justifying itself on continual gains in prosperity and rejuvenation of China's preeminent place in the world, travel plays an instrumental role in countenancing changed material circumstances and international stature. Using a few exemplary items in the public sphere, I show the exaltation of outbound travel in official discourses, particularly under Xi Jinping.

Admittedly, investigations of foreign travel from the PRC predisposes one to take the activities of a tiny minority of the population as emblematic of broader, possibly more heterogeneous, processes of national identity-formation. Excluding trips to Hong Kong and Macau, a 2011 survey found that only 1.65% of Chinese had gone abroad (Dai et al. 2017). Of these, the majority of tourists seem to be of entrepreneurial, white-collar, management occupations, or university students. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that the CCP has legitimized its control through constant appeals to the middle-class. The urban educated class has grown rapidly and are a constant concern of Party leaders, who hope to thwart middle-class pressures for liberalization that brought down authoritarian regimes like South Korea, and later ignited revolutions in the Middle East. Thus, a steady diet of improvements in welfare and economic indicators are constantly fed to the population—in GDP, living space, access to amenities, durable goods, and, as I argue further below, travel. Maintaining the appearance of a high standard of living is essential to currying favor with the middle class.

Over the course of the past few decades, China has become the largest spender on outgoing travel among all countries, experiencing growth rates higher than GDP growth rates. Many infrastructural, economic, and bureaucratic factors have promoted such rapid expansion: rising disposable incomes, proliferation of airport connections, simplification of passports and visa acquisition, fixed holiday periods, a spreading Chinese diaspora, access to information online, and liberalization in marketing and advertising. In general, central level policies have been highly favorable toward granting the majority Han ethnic group greater access to both domestic and foreign travel.

However, not only have the material conditions for travel changed, but also the symbolic infrastructure, what fits in with common sense. China Central Television (CCTV) now features a channel dedicated exclusively to travel, while travel websites, such as Mafengwo and Qunar, attract many users. In the lead-up to the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, state media released a list of the 100 words everyone should know. These included Party slogans, such as "Chinese dream" and "supply-side reform," but a surprising number (20 terms by my count) involved travel, both local commuting and tourist travel (see Table 7.1). Among these were bullet train, multiple-entry visa, independent travel, self-driving tour, peak season, and car-sharing. The upshot here is that travel is taken seriously by state leaders; being up-to-date and orthodox means being conversant with the mobile lifestyle.

Table 7.1: List of words related to travel from the 100 must-know terms for the 19th National Congress in October 2017

- one-hour commuting circle (yixiaoshi tong tongqin quan)
- rail traffic (guidao jiaotong),
- bullet train (dongche)
- inter-city transport (chengji lieche)
- new energy vehicle (ke tidai nengyuan qiche)
- passenger-carrying drone (ke zai renwu renji)
- multiple-entry visa (duoci wangfan qianzheng)

- individual traveler (sanke)
- independent travel (ziyou xing)
- package tour (gentuan you)
- in-depth travel (shendu you)
- self-driving tour (zijiayou)
- duty-free store (mianshui dian)
- peak season (wangji)
- offseason (danji)
- taxi-hailing app (dache ruanjian)
- designated driver business (daijia fuwuye)

- traffic restriction based on alternating plate numbers (danshuang hao xianxing)
- car-sharing (gongxiang qiche)
- online car hailing (wang yue che)

Worldwide mobility is an immense source of pride for Han Chinese and frames part of the Communist Party's internal and external narrative of legitimacy. State media frequently run articles showing the purchasing power of Chinese tourists and their importance to various world economies. Headlines in *Xinhua* have included "The number of Chinese tourists to Belt and Road countries keeps increasing" (2019) and "S. African tourism eyes Chinese tourists for recovery" (2021). The propaganda video "Amazing China," released in 2017 to celebrate the Xi government's accomplishments, points out 4 subjective states attained by the administration: a sense of achievement (shows student graduations), a sense of security (shows police saluting), happiness (shows farmers and other people smiling for photos), and pride. For "pride" (zihaogan 自豪感) the video shows photographs of crowds of Chinese huddled near the national flag in front of Sydney Harbor, Australia (CCTV 2017). As shown in Figure 7.1, this implies that political success, at least in imbuing national pride, is partially gauged by opportunities to go abroad.

For many Chinese people, being equal on the world stage of nation-states means having equal access to these global encounters, a form of political power articulated through tourist performances (Rowen 2014). Alongside the increasing depictions in Chinese films of globe-trotting elites (e.g., in *Tiny Times 3*), and military heroism in distant lands (e.g., *Red Sea Operation* and *Wolf Warrior 2*), there has been an expectation that the span of Chinese action will emulate other powerful nations. Imagery of international travel thus naturalizes China's achievements among other nations.

Figure 7.1: When the propaganda video "Amazing China" mentions national pride (zihaogan), it features crowds gathered at an Australian university.

In the final sequence of the movie *Wolf Warrior 2*, there is a tight symbolic link forged between foreign travel and national power. One of the few truly beloved patriotic movies produced in China, *Wolf Warrior 2* depicts an ex-PLA soldier doggedly trying to evacuate Chinese citizens from a civil war occurring in a place referred to as "Africa." (Subsequently, the term "Wolf Warrior" has come to denote a style of Chinese foreign policy that is brusque, jingoistic, and less beholden to international institutions.) After much gruesome violence and the rescuing of most of the Chinese citizens, the fable concludes with a clear lesson. The final shot is a mock-up Chinese passport juxtaposed to a body of text on a red background (see Figure 7.2):

To the citizens of the People's Republic of China:

If you find yourself in danger while abroad, do not give up hope!

Remember,

China's strength will always support you!

The juxtaposition of national strength and passport possession conflates geopolitical stature and travel, reminding viewers that security abroad is underwritten by a formidable, paternal state.

In the contemporary Chinese case we see a tight fusion of travel and beliefs about national strength. Access to spaces across the world play off the theme that China is no longer a lesser world actor and that touring is a natural accompaniment to the sociopolitical progress of the Chinese nation. The next section will tease out more carefully how tourists themselves cooperate with, coexist with, and challenge official ideas of the Chinese nation-state.

Figure 7.2: Final shot in the movie *Wolf Warrior 2* featuring a mocked up Chinese passport

Unofficial Discourses in Travel

Having connected tourism to official political discourses in China, now I turn to unofficial scripts expressed by the tourists themselves. Using travel writing, I seek to investigate how official discourses are inscribed into travel practices. The key questions are:

- **How do official discourses of development influence representations of travel?**
- **How do tourist writings interpret China's global position and trajectory?**
- **How do tourists counteract common stereotypes of foreign spaces?**

To investigate tourist perceptions of the Chinese nation while abroad, this study uses purposive sampling of online travelogues, followed by content analysis involving coding of appropriate themes. In total, 52 travelogues were extracted from online travel websites posted between 2009 to 2020. The chief website drawn from was Mafengwo, followed by Qunar and Xcar.

Demographically, most travelers were younger (below 40), more likely to be female, traveling independently (not fully organized into tour groups), and journeying in small groups (less than 4 persons). Most diarists were from top-tier, major cities in China. In fact, approximately 31% of diarists were from Beijing and 13% from Shanghai. In their study of Chinese travelogues, Wu and Pearce's (Wu and Pearce 2016) also found relatively high social status in those posting full-length travel blogs online.

Table 6.2: Destinations sampled in the travelogues (n = 52)

Destination	Count
Southeast Asia	12
Africa (exc North Africa)	14
Middle East (incl N Africa and Turkey)	10
Other Asia	10
Other	6

Political Themes in Outgoing Tourism

Before addressing some of the political content of outgoing travelogues, it must be emphasized that the primary goals of travel are generally to escape, have a good time, post good social media content, learn about the world, spend time with family, etc.—not to undergo a political education. Thus, many travelogues have little explicit discussion of politics, focusing more on mundane matters like hotel quality, getting around, paying fees, finding food, and enjoying scenery. The following discussion is not intended to imply that all travelogues are demonstrative of geopolitics and nationalism; rather it is intended to skim out some of the major elements of politics that color reactions to foreign spaces. Because implicit cultural constructions can unwittingly reproduce power constellations (Said 1995), it was important to tease out the subtle ways that geopolitics are enacted through the knowledges and feelings expressed in travel.

Temporal Developmentalism

Based on the travelogues, outgoing travel seems to forcefully reflect political ideologies in China built around an ontology of progress, a belief system that regards history as a compulsive, linear cultural process from poverty to riches, from backwardness to development (Duara 1996). Tourists are attuned to economic gradations that hierarchize societies by prosperity, the same developmentalist basis that the CCP uses for its own legitimacy at home and especially in Western regions (Jeong 2015; Yeh 2013). Travelogues make constant analogies and comparisons to levels of development, typically using road traffic and the built environment as measuring sticks:

- *Kazakhstan's roads are filled with last centuries 'old uncle's vehicles' (laoyeche 老爷车)* (2018)
- *The ride from the airport gave me a sense of Peru; ads for LG Coca-cola, worn down houses on the side of the road with ads stuck to them; cars crowded on the streets, is this the 3rd world we heard about* (2019)?
- *Because of many years of war, the Burmese GDP at the beginning of the century was about as poor as mainland Africa* (2020).
- *As for downtown Nadi [Fiji], it is not worth shopping, it is as backward as India* (2019).

The studied travelogues lay down a classificatory grid, arranging nations sequentially into evolutionary timelines of progress. Frequently, developmental comparisons draw from tropes of China's own spatial hierarchies, where cities are ranked from elite first tier to lower tiers based on ostensible development:

- *This city [Mangjie, Vietnam] is like a 1990s early 2000s Chinese 2nd or 3rd tier city. Most of this is limited to the port area. The further you go in the worse it gets* (2019).
- *Antalya [Turkey] was like a 2nd or 3rd tier city in China* (2020).
- *The economy here was not great. The whole of Accra did not have the feel of a city, it seemed like a county-level city (xiancheng 县城)* (2017).
- *What we passed in Laos was beautiful, with many animals, like cows; children playing, women working. Here there were almost no private cars, with motorcycles the only thing with a modern sensibility (xiandaigan 现代感). It was like passing through the Chinese countryside in the 1990s* (2017).

One traveler to Africa during 2018 is probably most emblematic of this pervasive evaluation of how far along each cultural unit is on the historical timeline. At various destinations, he defines each with chronological analogy. Some of the descriptors include:

Tanzania = one of the UN-designated least developed countries
Alusha = "looking at the streets, architectural plan, businesses, hygiene, the look of residents, you can tell this is not a developed city."
Zimbabwe = was very developed until the 1980s. "Most of the big buildings were built before 1980."
Botswana = it had a modern air, and the cars were a higher level than Zimbabwe and Tanzania.
South Africa = "Although the buildings of Cape Town and Johannesburg were pretty, they had the look of 30 years ago; we had not seen the completely modern look."

This traveler frames nearly every destination as lodged within a fine-grained timeline of progress, either rising or falling.

It is hard to argue against the idea that outbound travel acts under a framework of temporalizing world societies, placing social processes within a progressive, linear framework. It also corresponds various landscapes to China's own trajectory. The privileges of place are assessed in part by a developmental ideology that reckons its value by its modern characteristics, producing what Ghertner (2015) calls a "rule by aesthetics." Cities like Addis Ababa do not feel like capital cities; streets like those in Kolkata (Calcutta) lack crucial elements that make for normal space. The implicit codes governing space requires a certain formal adherence to aesthetic principles of what meets standards of a modern sensibility and what lies in waiting for visual transformation.

China as Builder

Africa is an especially targeted recipient of Chinese aid in official media. For this reason, and the fact that China projects are salient in Africa (China is after all the largest state investor in the continent), many trips include glimpses into China-led transformations. These accounts hew closely to official accounts of China as a beneficent catalyst of development.

Bearing witness to the infrastructural contributions of China, tourists in Africa are particularly drawn to physical markers of influence. In East Africa, most trips include photographs of the Tazara Railway, constructed with Chinese support. Taking a photo of a "China Aid" sign on a train door, one stated that upon the train, I "saw China flags; I was proud and had my chest puffed" (Tanzania 2019).

Other infrastructural developments are acknowledged in travelogues:

- *[In Laos] The building of the new, high-grade road shows that various government levels care about the Kunming-Bangkok Highway. As the most important route to Southeast Asia, it has great potential in the future. This is an immediate change brought to us by the "Belt and Road" initiative* (2017).
- *China has a long relationship with Namibia. There has been a lot of Chinese assistance. Our tour guide who had lived here for 4 years said that all the tall buildings were built by Chinese companies. The presidential palace was built by a Qingdao company. Ports and roads were built by China* (2018)

Meetings with fellow compatriots reinforce the tireless tenacity in the building of civilization. One pair of tourists in Namibia meet some fellow Chinese who had resided there for a few years as part of a lending aid (yuanjian 援建) program:

Thinking of the benefits these construction aides do for the economy and governance, and the significance of this help for the local people, I must sincerely thank them for using their youth in building the world (2017).

On a more subtle level, there is a general equation of safety, wealth, and orderliness with Chinese presence and influence. This could be a sensory reassurance from eying familiar faces, as in these two cases.

- *Relatively speaking Zambia is a safe country. There are many Chinese who work and do business there* (Namibia 2018).
- *Those from powerful (qiangda 强大) countries already occupy the markets of SE Asia. All around you will find foreigners who speak Chinese; don't fear, compatriots are there with you* (Thailand 2018).

Or it could be an expectation that the rising tide in China is lifting adjacent boats:

Although [the city of Mangjie] seems ordinary in its construction, this is one of the wealthiest areas of Vietnam. The average income is 20,000 US dollars. I don't know if it is because it is next to China, but to see a nice car is not at all surprising (2019).

Public spaces and infrastructures brought on by Chinese aid are assumed to be auspicious, safe, clean, and desirable for locals.

We saw new Cairo, which was built by Chinese companies according to the [fellow Chinese traveler] on the plane. This was more 21st century than old Cairo, with new glass walls, wide streets and bars and shops, an ordered plan; completely different than old town…Amin [our tour guide] wanted to live here (Egypt 2019).

Pride is expressed a few times to mark national achievement. Paralleling the quote above about witnessing the China-made railway, one family meet Egyptian youth who are interested in studying in China then returning to build their country. After dispelling some of their misgivings about living in Beijing, they speak of international relations, culture, food, and geography. In the end, "their hopes regarding China made us feel an incomparable pride (zihao)." Another female backpacker has multiple encounters with other tourists that modulate her feelings of national pride and inferiority. Finding out that she is the only one in the campground in Tanzania without a shot or preventative pill for malaria, she felt bad and that "our country has a real deficiency." But later on, other campers speak of how great Huawei is and recognize other Chinese brands like One Plus, leading her to relate that "the paleness I felt earlier had suddenly become pride (zihao)." Later, they ask her where she got her bug repellent, and she earnestly shows them Taobao.

Thus, expressions of pride seem to be associated with Chinese commercial, infrastructural, and educational influence. As Nyíri (2006b) remarked, economic development is a nearly

unalloyed good in both official and unofficial discourses; few cite misgivings about the bringing of modern infrastructure and ways of living. Tourists underscore developmental time and the advances that China has made to accelerate it for the rest of the world.

Ambivalence to Developmentalism

Although development and advancing society through progressive stages is apotheosized as an incontrovertible process, and bolstered by Chinese investment and builders, there are intersecting lines of thought that paint a more mixed picture within geopolitical framings. These reactions appear under two major domains: reactions to perceived civility and perceptions of cultural relativism.

Civility

First, forms of civility and behavior, often brought under the rubric of suzhi (person-quality), follow a divergent axis of determination from mere development. As related in Chapters 3 and 4, suzhi is a term originally linked to population control but has taken on meanings related to personal cultivation, bodily comportment, appropriate public behavior, and fit within a modern environment. While almost all research on suzhi views it through the lens of domestic tensions in China (Anagnost 2004; Kipnis 2007; Murphy 2004; Osburg 2013), it is nonetheless applied internationally to evaluate group habits and behavior. Numerous descriptions of economic-level factors are contrasted with judgments built around cultural or behavioral factors:

- *I felt that [Bishkek] was not particularly prosperous, and there were not many people, yet they had high suzhi* (2016).
- *Leaving the stands of the carnival things are very orderly. There was not much trash left in the stands. During Carnival you can see the suzhi of the Brazilian people* (2016).
- *At any moment on the street here, you can find a child, give him some candy, and he will happily eat it right in front of you. And they'll come up and take pictures with you. In China, from youth we are taught that you should not eat things given to you by strangers. This is definitely progress of the country, but it is also a step back in interpersonal trust* (Kenya 2018).

Other entities accorded high suzhi include Windhoek (Namibia), Uzbekistani youth, and drivers in Abu-Dhabi. Interestingly, suzhi is almost never used negatively for disparagement the same way it is domestically (e.g., for peasants, Tibetans, and other uncultured persons). In fact, throughout my entire dataset of travelogues from domestic and foreign trips, the only time a deficiency in suzhi is brought up is to deprecate the hygienic habits and infrastructure of Tibetan life:

Most of the counties on the Qinghai-Tibet line have no running water. Shops rely on wells to deliver water. Small hotels have only one public bathroom. None of the restaurants have restroom. The hygienic situation is evident. And most Tibetans are accustomed to urinating and defecating anywhere, whether men or women, whether offroad or on the street, they solve it then and there; they don't feel ashamed at all…

The main reason for not installing plumbing is that the altitude is too high, the temperature is low all year round, and it freezes. Even if the water pipe is installed, it cannot be used. I am really worried all the foreigners going to Tibet. Seeing such backward infrastructure and

such low-suzhi Tibetans, how will they view China? In fact, apart from Tibet, there are not many places like this in China (2014).

While Tibetans are not regarded by Han Chinese as appreciably modernized anyway, what really drives her outrage is the possibility of having the national image in the eyes of foreigners represented by such benighted Tibetans.

Nonetheless, for many, the civilized habits of visited people exceeds those of China in regard to street habits, where the police are considered neither as mercenary nor as necessary to traffic order:

- *They are self-centered abroad, but they have an order to achieve their self-interest, so people follow it; it saves time. China has the worst traffic chaos. One is flourishing and without disorder, the other flourishing with disorder. One thing we do really well in China is catch speeding. We are lax with right-of-way management and with driving ethics, but we have radar and speed detectors throughout the country* (Thailand 2017).

- *The drivers were very skilled, and followed the road laws (In fact, they obey them better than Chinese drivers)* (Tanzania 2018).

- *When heading to the desert, there was a lot of steep slopes. There were many traffic slow zones. Our driver was obedient to traffic. There were no traffic cameras, yet people obeyed the law* (Morocco 2020).

It is also not a forgone conclusion that the Chinese going abroad are expected to be beacons of suzhi. A backpacker emphasizes the types of habits and cultural competencies demanded of cosmopolitan travelers, like those to Africa:

In this [safari tour] the participants must cooperate and be responsible to each other. Your comrades are foreigners, you have to use English to communicate, you must have overall good suzhi…You can't be lazy. In such a group you must pay attention to your words and actions, to be aware of your image and influence. Because I am recommending [this tour company], I hope everyone does their country proud, thanks (Tanzania 2019).

In a separate internet post in 2016, one writer chides fellow travelers for actions that led the Thai government to restrict car trips into the country.

The Thai government has finally had enough of your troublemaking. They have introduced a series of traffic policies to control the entry of foreign vehicles into Thailand. It is said that this is a quite stringent new regulation. For Thais, they like Chinese to travel they, but they like to have Chinese with suzhi (Anon 2016c).

Although key Party concepts like suzhi and moral civilization are applied in outgoing travel, they do not always align with beliefs about national greatness, nor do they simply reinforce a development-first mentality. These contentions could stem from an intellectual separation already present within official thinking, namely that material progress does not necessarily lead to cultural progress (see Y. Yan 2011). But the usage of tropes of suzhi and moral quality are loosened from national grandstanding and reinserted into travel narratives as tools of self-reproach. Perhaps there is a lurking class conceit: we have earned college diplomas, have achieved cosmopolitan mobilities, are able to communicate in English, and have adapted to global standards—then why must we be represented by so many boorish compatriots? This is possibly less an assessment of "we Chinese", as in commentary from the Little Yue case, than a diatribe against "those Chinese."

Cultural Relativism

Another axis of evaluation that ruffles the idea of a pure developmentalism is cultural relativism, usually framed around contrasting the modern to the primitive. While these observations no doubt adumbrate an ontology of development time, they are more pessimistic toward its desirability. When native peoples change their economic condition and improve living standards, tourists feel an underlying tension between material betterment and cultural depletion:

- *Is the development of tourism in Kenya a double-edged sword? One on end, the simple, honest (chunpu) life of the Masai is being disturbed by outside forces, but on the other, but it provides new opportunities to make a living. Whether it is right or wrong, we cannot judge; it is only something they can experience* (2018).
- *Material deprivation doesn't mean we should negate their lives. They follow old ways, living and multiplying; it is the lifestyle they are comfortable with* (Kenya 2019).

Perhaps most perceptive are those who recognize that tourism requires a purity that tourism development tends to efface, resulting in a paradox. For them, modernity produces a cultural homogenization that eliminates cultural livelihoods and liveliness:

They [Simba Tribe] already have popular poses for photos. They are curious about the outside world. One day they will leave the village and enter the modern world. The old village will disappear. We travelers come here to see the original environment, so there is a contradiction here (Namibia 2018).

A few other travelogues note that with tourism and economic development, things will change and cultural traditions will erode.

One reason there is an implied tragic dimension to development is the pervasive myth that those considered behind-the-times are more genuinely happy. Just as Tibetans in China are considered insured against alienation by their Buddhism and their rural lifestyle, so many other groups in the world are tagged as felicitous for their supposed ignorance of modern life.

- *The kids here were poorer than in India, making me heartbroken. But hearing the laughter of the kids, the way they get along with other people, I felt they really understood the idea of having enough (zhizu 知足) and happiness. With their smiles, I realized there is something worthwhile here* (Kenya 2019).
- *You can make fun of their backwardness, but the smiles and placidness on their faces will easily touch your soul* (Laos 2017).
- *The life of the people here is like the camel, not well-off. Getting up early, life is full of dullness. But each person has their own lifestyle choice; in my eyes the life is simple and happy (kuaile 快乐)* (Egypt 2017).

Thus, this general myth of the noble savage is an interpretive lens that counteracts the simple equation of modernity with good living. As in the Tibetan case in Chapter 2, photographing smiling faces, particularly children, is a powerful practice articulating a shared understanding of spiritual attainment.

Finally, some tourists rebel against previous suppositions and counter their own expectations:

- *But [Africa] it was not nearly as backward as I thought; the big supermarkets were abundant in products; phone payment is widespread; you can use Uber to order food. The standard of living was far higher than I imagined* (Kenya 2018).
- *Before the trip, there were always friends and families telling me Israel was unsafe, but after visiting myself, Israel is a developed country with an undeserved reputation, with*

advanced national security system (xianjin de guofang xitong 先进的国防系统*), superb science and technology, and a stable public security. As far as the combat in Gaza, I feel that has nothing to do with this country* (2019).

- *Many people of my friends tell me, the India you show in your friend circles is not what I had in mind. India seems pretty nice. I don't know how to respond. If you haven't been, then where do your ideas come from? If you are prudent, you won't presuppose what things will be without understanding. Stepping out and taking a look, travel helps slowly change your view of the world, and is an attempt to understand yourself* (2020).

Many tourists do in fact inveigh against some of their destinations (particularly in the Middle East), yet they are often defensive in countering widely held claims about the places they visit. In researching trips to India, for example, I noticed a remarkable number of travel diaries had titles centered around contradicting extant notions, e.g., "Taking you to the India you will not see on the news" (Anon 2019) . This could very well be a matter of class distinction—the traveler sees what those who rely on TV alone cannot—but it is still premised on a suspicion of widely circulated conventional viewpoints.

Conclusions

This chapter connects international mobility with nation-building in the source country, showing how political statements about middle-class success, development, state power, progress, and morality are enacted through tourism. Given that geopolitical understandings of the world are held together by nest of perceptions, narratives, and images, this chapter addresses the discursive power of tourist mobilities in the PRC to shape worldviews. Tourism is symbolically deployed to legitimize socioeconomic performance and geopolitical strengthening of the Chinese state. But even though the state has preeminent power in establishing meanings (Bernal 2014), its meanings are not invulnerable and can be openly contested, particularly when such resistances ally with class distinction and feelings of belonging to the rarefied cognoscenti.

I illustrate how top-level state leaders use tourism for strengthening national power, adapting travel flows for the purposes of international recognition and pushing models of sovereignty, as in control over the status of Taiwan. Additionally, in the mundane performances of foreign travel, geopolitical imaginaries and binaries of forward/backward are sustained and brought into focus. Outbound tourists play an active role in positioning themselves and their nation into categories of belongingness and exceptionalism. Places such as railways, streets, housing complexes, and supermarkets are implicated in a global ordering and hierarchized into symbols of development and/or civility. Travelers draw heavily from official geopolitical understandings but also draw lines of independent valuation based on their own supposed privileged standpoint as potential unmaskers of reality.

This chapter details official discourses of what travel means and how these official rubrics are squared away with travel realities. Not enough research has looked at tourism as demonstrative of the achievements of the Communist Party. I argue that tourism is an important political project because it is at the forefront of justifying both economic success and geopolitical engagement. Featured in both CCTV propaganda and state-backed films, travel abroad is a visually stimulating means of seconding gains in GDP and quality of life, dovetailing with proving China's growing recognition worldwide. National strength and tourist access are cognitively tied, such that having "strong-country" status equates with heightened physical mobility and appearances in international spaces.

For their part, tourists relate back the specific context and details of national infrastructural, educational, and mercantile development, almost always with enthusiastic approbation. City tiers simultaneously project hierarchies of urban civilization on foreign destinations and back onto domestic ones. This underscores the temporal developmental distance traveled by China but also the very lack that invokes China's economic expertise to intervene abroad. On the whole, tourists reinforce an idea that China is an upholder of the global march of progress, which elicits expressions of pride in the Chinese nation.

However, inserted into the travel narrative, particularly to developing regions, is skepticism of received wisdom, to be discounted with in situ reporting. Whereas individual Chinese abroad earn encomiums as builders and projections of economic strength, Chinese in China are often considered lacking in the civic virtue found abroad. The perceived moral stultification of society frames experiences of foreign traffic and city life, serving as a frame for introspection. Thus, a strong distinction is made between economic and cultural-behavioral excellence, the former for which China is assumed to improve, the latter being more ambivalent. In other words, both geopolitical confidence and national cultural diffidence become interlaced in the vernacular practices of tourist mobilities.

Conclusion: Technological Frontiers in Mobilities

One of the more curious videos that disseminated across the internet in recent years was the remodeling of a train station in Fujian (Grabar 2018). Entitled "China Speed: Workers Change Railway Station in 9 Hours" (Anon 2018b), the CCTV clip claimed that 1500 workers were able to complete train station rebuilding in mere hours. Viewers marveled over the flurry of digging, stamping, grinding, and assembling that quickly made a new node for cross-country travel. It demonstrated the clear effectiveness of Chinese engineering and industrial organization. Commenters compared this to the construction of infrastructures in their home area, where such projects would take months or even years. Yet intermixed with this awe was a subtext of dismissiveness, that behind such alacrity must be a pharaoh's whip. Only through destructiveness of freedom could such constructiveness occur.

As I have tried to show throughout this dissertation, there is no one-to-one correspondence between transportation mobilities and liberty. There is no instant programming of people that occurs through the building of such gateways as the train station in Fujian, nor can we conclude that the magnification of travel leads directly to a broader, more inclusive set of mobilities. Through the expansion of transportation infrastructures and spans of geographic action, the state project—in its control of territory, monopoly of violence, assignment of ethnicity, centralization, and foreign policy—takes on new forms that work more through autonomy and beckoning than coercion and fear (Donzelot and Gordon 2009). Since the Maoist days there has been unprecedented expansion in the mobility of the Chinese public, especially its urban classes. But the greater freedom of movement that transportation infrastructures afford has required the state to transform its approach to controlling populations and maintaining the safety of public spaces. As roads and rails were constructed, traffic codes were also promulgated, security checkpoints installed, identification systems enhanced, driving schools opened, and policing practices developed. This newfound mobility was thus mirrored by innovations in the legal and political sphere.

The practices of mobility, while certainly more personalized than before 1977, still tap into and reproduce the model of the nation-state as the final arbiter of territorial and cultural control. I agree with Shapiro (1997) that "the geopolitical map of states remains the primary model of space. Despite its increasingly active competitors for identity and affiliation, it continues to dominate the determination of how things are valued, actions are interpreted, and persons are assigned identities" (16). This is not merely because it is a repressive force, but also because it works through what Foucault (1995) called the "humble modalities" of power, emerging through a bundle of practices (Acuto and Curtis 2013).

Transportation mobilities, and the performances that accompany them, are important vectors for understanding the nation-state as institution and what (or who) properly appertains to it. Long-distance travel often introduces assignations with political texts and materials—borders, fences, guard posts, maps, tickets, etc.—that are interpreted and experienced through bodily senses. Urban traffic introduces hierarchies of civilization that stigmatize mass character as provisionally deficient, and demand amelioration of conduct, especially for peasants and ethnic minorities. For its part, the practices in international travel align the travelers with the state mission of moving development forward. This is not to minimize the many resistances that emerge against the nation-state and its unitary view of sovereign power. Transportation mobilities, and the infrastructure on which they rest, are spaces where people fight for privileges and platforms to express their own social positions. There are frequent resistances, as we have

seen: sabotage of national highways in Tibet, gate-jumping on road trips, holding up traffic in protests over land rights, outwitting speed detectors and surveillance cameras, and negating state media stereotypes of foreign locales. While it may seem simply about hauling people and things, transportation encompasses social interaction, symbolic exchange, power plays, and embodied feelings—all of which can be mobilized to form collective bonds. However, the most powerful bonding is still the nation-state. By circumnavigating national territory, and even the world, citizens circumscribe themselves.

Throughout this dissertation, I generally argue that tourist mobilities work to the advantage of nation-states, which leverage their symbolic control to convince travelers of the reality of borders, founding myths, economic mission, and stories of belongingness. Nevertheless, tourism could equally instigate alternative group affiliations built around either broader or narrower identities. For China, this could mean cultural recognition for, and hence consolidation of, regional identifications. Tibetans, for example, are diverse in their ways of life and religious beliefs. Yet as scenery in the Himalayas is fenced in for ticket sales, there emerges a type of enclosure movement for culture, gathering the true properties, or at least those that conform to tourist expectations, into one unified, cozy, accessible façade, the "uncharacteristic" elements cropped from view. While some tourists do carefully make intra-group distinctions, most want to see one of the 55 officially listed ethnic minorities in almanac-form, thus calcifying a set of ostensibly primordial cultural traits that consist of being "Tibetan" or "Uyghur" and that subsequently are refracted in internal Tibetan and Uyghur discourses. As these Tibetans and Uyghurs, like many ethnic minorities around the world, are drawn into state spaces through tourism, they are nonetheless drawn in with newfound political consciousness.

As a matter of principle, it is important to dismiss outright beliefs that mobility is a matter of generating equality. While indisputably integral to economic growth, global trade, and upward social mobility, the mobilities in the Chinese case have greatly segmented society. I have dubbed this mobile stratification, a feeling of all-embracing potential belied by all-pervasive barriers. Where the self is idealized as infinite in scope, the gap of achieved distance actually widens. In Tibet, desire and self-fulfillment abound. The motoring class pats itself on the back for having braved the elements, steered around obstacles, outfoxed the tollkeepers, and earned their spiritual refreshment. Meanwhile, the nomadic way of life contracts, and a tourist-based economy, based on dramatizations of the picturesque in ethnically defined spaces, encircles the Tibetan way of life. This is not to romanticize Tibet pre-tourism, for certainly many improvements in life will not be regretted and forsaken for agricultural traditions, but rather to suggest that the happiness visited upon Han sojourners in their peregrinations of Tibet will not be visited upon Tibetans in Beijing. The range of Tibetan life, though expanded, is still precipitously beneath the cross-country traveler. Their cultural value lies in their immobility—their spiritual connection par excellence to mountains, yaks, and the earth.

In Xinjiang, mainland tourists are generally unattuned to the inequalities in mobility and life chances: they are more concerned about being barricaded out (by entrance gates) than by the local peoples being barricaded in (by ethnic surveillance and mass incarceration). As they are placed on camels to replicate desert livelihoods, Uyghurs are placed in confinement to delete Uyghur livelihoods. Their encounters with Muslims other than Tajiks are either fleeting or obstructed by transportation apartheid and a culture of fear. At present, meaningful relationships remain unattainable through long-distance mobilities like tourism. Han tourists are unable or unwilling to have deep interaction Uyghurs through their travels in the northwest. The everyday lives of Xinjiang residents remain inaccessible to them, reinforcing social distance.

Similarly, the gap between the urban educated and rural migrants has widened. Under Mao, neither one had, for all intents and purposes, advantages in transportation. The rural person could not easily enter the city, for sure, but urban classes were often forced into the countryside for re-education. The peasants suffered immensely under the Great Leap Forward, but urbanites were tormented during the Cultural Revolution. Whatever simmering prejudices there were against the countryside was not institutionalized until both became more mobile after Reform and Opening. Once this happened, urban life became highly stratified by markers of suzhi and civilization. When the cultural adjudicator was revolutionary zeal, the rural could compete with the urban, but when it became bodily habits of sophistication, the boundary lines thickened. Although China has done an admirable job in retaining transportation diversity, not offering up its cities to the boundless desires of automobilists, and retaining strong public transport and limited parking, it has nevertheless, in the interests of what appear to be modern flows, discriminated against electric scooters, the chief transit mode of rural migrants. When traffic engineers speak of the hazards of traffic mixing, their tendency is to imply that it is the electric bicycle which is invading the main stream. Although readily assigned blame for lack of legal consciousness, the many fatal crashes that are incurred by scooter drivers elicit little social or governmental support for reorganization of space for lower speeds. The mobility of rural migrants must come about apologetically, as interferences, and they must render up identification papers to show that they belong on the wide avenues of these globalized cities.

Yet the mobile stratification also presents opportunities for unification within social groups. As mobility shapes the conflicts within China, it further defines a national culture—representing the people as one that gets things done infrastructurally. The vacationing Chinese are emblematic of China's rise to a prominent role on the world stage. For its part, the middle-class has a better sense of itself through its cross-country philanthropy in Tibetan areas and its wanderings through Africa off the beaten path. While I focus mainly on Han travelers, ethnicity is also begotten from within through comparative mobilities. Uyghurs have much preferred the coach bus over the train for their travels. The former, with a high Uyghur-to-Han ratio, is considered much more festive and less bound by the rules of quietude (Joniak-Lüthi 2020). It is likely that the mode of vehicle-sharing in parts of Tibet, where hitchhikers are given free passage by Tibetan drivers, enters into the social imaginary, as part of a cooperative tradition uncorrupted by market logics. For many social groups, who they are depends on how they move.

In sum, both national assimilation and class/ethnic distinction rely on transportation subjectivities. The dialectic of individualization and differentiation, inclusion and exclusion will continue to be borne out by the structures and practices of mobility.

Technological Linkages for Social Ordering: Transportation Spaces Meet Virtual Spaces

In this final section, I want to think more deeply about the character of the regime of mobility in China and relate it more closely to recent trends in the promotion of internet technologies and social media.

When writing about transportation and travel, it is inevitable that one will encounter the myth of the liberated mind. This discourse runs nearly parallel with any published trip. The character arc goes like this: a person with limited horizons goes off to recover or refurbish themselves; they take a long-distance instrument of travel, e.g., a car, airplane, or train, explore regions inverted from their everyday world, have dramatic, eye-opening experiences, connected with

distant others, and then return changed, improved. The journey shoves off their moribund coil, thereby reviving their energy and enlightening their mind. Conversely, the person who rarely does this is to be pitied and shamed, condemned as hidebound and stagnant. The sheer number of forces promoting this viewpoint are staggering: novels, magazines, travel agents, films, travelogues, automakers, airlines, trains, etc. The website CouchSurfing, for example, uses the motto "creating a better world, one couch at a time," hearkening to mended fences through distant lodging. Many of the published travelogues on the Chinese website Mafengwo will explicitly define the meaning of travel as learning about the world and yourself. In brief, there is a vernacular tendency to equate geographic flexibility with cognitive flexibility.

Scholars of transportation simultaneously face a very different premise. Besides Dwight David Eisenhower, who inaugurated the American interstate system, and its ideology celebrating the "freedom of the open road," history's great roadbuilders have been Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler, and Hu Jintao. It has been in rather autocratic polities that the circulatory systems that allowed for mass mobility have been most sophisticatedly elaborated. Perhaps because the Stalinist/Maoist regimes so rigorously limited personal exploration, we associate authoritarianism with the negation of travel, but we are left explaining how the liberties of travel on open roads can be reconciled with tight social control in the historic cases of France, Italy, Germany, and China.

I will leave the actual cause-and-effect trail that answers this question to historians and other experts. Suffice it to say, the ability to mobilize labor and the will to chase modernity through grandiose infrastructures of ego play a part in the explanation, but here I simply want to trace in the contemporary Chinese case some of the threads that explain transportation as consanguine with social ordering. Let me clarify upfront that it is important to recognize that the state is not above people, contrary to the true nature of people. Instead, our very choices, skills, identities, and behaviors are shaped by public powers and their initiatives (Jeffreys and Sigley 2009:6), in this case by infrastructures of movement. The myth of the state as an inevitable enemy of the people is far too simplistic, especially for China. As I have tried to show, one of the things the modern state has done is foster capabilities (Hindess 1993), granting platforms for self-expression but within clear channels.

In linking social ordering to transportation within contemporary China, we can begin with the flourishing of technocratic control at the macro-level. Mass movement and transport have, for decades, become more predictable, formalized, and rule-based. In China, this closely mirrors the political system. To borrow from Weber's (1978) types of authority, there has been a clear removal of charismatic authority, specifically Mao's cult of personality in Party politics, in favor of bureaucratic authority. While Xi Jinping has reversed this somewhat, revealing a greater willingness to carve a forthright persona than his predecessors, contemporary China is nonetheless highly governed through bureaucratic structures. There is far less political spontaneity and personality and there are more techno-rational mechanisms of rule. In fact, many of the Party leaders since Reform and Opening have had engineering backgrounds (Brar 2021). Owing to this engineering mindset, governance has been more predictable and stable, and it has been more deliberate in forging a healthy, ordered, and civilized population. With this form of Foucauldian governmentality, the people have been cross-stitched into datasets, proving their vitality and productivity in their contribution to GDP, national stability, education, quantity of patents, and international recognition.

At the micro-level, there is much more interaction with strangers—ranging from brief encounters on the street to long-term vocational projects. As the Little Yue case showed, people

from various provinces have found various spatial intersections in the fast-growing metropolises. The interdependencies of life are much deeper. According to the sociologist Norbert Elias (2000), the glue that held modern societies together stemmed from the constant signaling that occurred as social interactions grew in density and interactive spaces became more open to public viewing. When discussing the growth in early modern Europe of civilized manners, such as the use of the fork for eating and handkerchiefs for nose-blowing, Elias attributed them to the tight interaction space of court life. Responding to signals, people developed sensitivities—to taste, smells, and sights—that kept bodily functions and rude behavior confined to separate places, and out of public view. It is to the growing chains of interdependence that we owe greater self-discipline and habits of restraint. What Elias misses, though, is that these chains are no longer smithed in the intimate contact of the national palace but are rather more mass-produced and riveted to material and virtual artifacts. What people confront is no longer discipline toward other people, but discipline toward impersonal forces, particularly technologies, which though shaped by human hands and guarded by human eyes, exist more as an objective force, adjustment to which forms a new social hierarchy and system of practices. Morse (1998:5) outlines this process: "The paradox of the development of the media generally in this century is that as impersonal relations with machines and/or physically removed strangers characterize ever-larger areas of work and private life, more and more personal and subjective means of expression and ways of virtually interacting with machines and/or distant strangers are elaborated." We have partly subcontracted out our tools of social interaction.

Chief among these depersonalizing technologies is information technology. The popularity of the printing press, telegraph, filing system, personal computer, and internet have led to the vast collection and storage of human experience, moreover, inspiring its very creation. Soon, what has been said and written about a thing displaces the very thing for which the record exists. Thus, it is almost impossible to have an unmediated experience. For example, travel through a UNESCO heritage site or 5-A attraction produces meanings directed by their labels as national parks, by travel guides, by pictures of friends posted on social media websites, and by cinema, among others. As JG Ballard averred, these informational matrices preempt our "original response to experience" (2019) , such that episodes like a car crash are one of those unique moments of real interaction and bodily entwinement. Otherwise, it has been difficult to form a language of authentication and affirmation that is somewhat prior to the objects and scenes themselves. Morse (1998), remarking on the work of Dean MacCannell (1999), argued that "the picture postcard and its legend become not so much a way of framing and capturing the natural world as a way of producing and a set of connotations, which the natural world, when visited, is expected to respectively resemble and evoke. That is, the landscape is no longer blanketed with signs; even naked before the eye it virtually is a sign" (201).

Institutions governed by objectification and depersonalization are stuffed with symbols. In order to navigate roadways, common, time-saving gestures are introduced. When the bicycle was introduced in the nineteenth century, it took time for people to devise communicative patterns to reconcile diverging road users. Probably the first standardized hand signals for routing traffic in the United States was developed between bicyclists and horse riders (Smith 1972). China still has no solid institution of right-of-way, a heuristic of when to make left turns for instance, to the dismay of its traffic engineers. But China has for the most part standardized its signage according to international standards. Maps, road signs, and stop signals encode the landscapes, preface and caption our scenes, and provide directions. With centralized databases in many cities, the automobile is constantly relaying information to processing towers, which collate the

information and then respond back with formatted information on traffic, weather, and road conditions.

The confluence of the engineering mindset—of reconciling flows to ordered patterns—and the impersonalized forces of symbolism effect powerful configuration of mobility and sociation. Where an over-signified system overtakes the social meaning of mobility, we have what Monderman called the "traffic world" (Vanderbilt 2008). In brief, Monderman posits that traffic engineering can be based on two models of interaction— the traffic world and the social world. The former is dominated by signage, impersonality, and efficiency, the latter by custom and personality. Traffic engineers, he posits, have foisted the traffic world onto the social world. They have made spaces homogenous, hashed out, and linear—divorced from the organic life of the preexisting communities. A fervent champion of the roundabout over the traffic light, and sharp critic of endless signage, he believed that drivers were safer when they were responding to social contexts (such as seeing a bright red brick school) rather than generic warnings (seeing an orange school zone sign). The roundabout, he argues, requires drivers to look at each other and respond, a direct form of communication that makes for better traffic interaction (McNichol 2004). Hyper-regulated, hyper-disciplined, transport abides by too many technical laws instead of basic human sensitivity to context. Based on technocratic approaches, it forms one of the disembedding mechanisms of modernity (Giddens 1991) that elevate system imperatives over engaged, conscious consensus.

The traffic world is further complicated by the union of social media technologies and transport technologies, something China has excelled at. Too often, technologies are considered in isolation, with their own separate histories and development cycles being traced vis-à-vis society, as if the innovators and society dual it out over who is stronger. However, it is essential to consider how transportation technologies synthesize with other media. When the automobile was popularized in North America, it rose alongside other technologies of narrative, particularly the motion picture and the radio. Their nexus formed a particular car culture, one with lightning frames, with independent heroes, youthful rebellion, the open road (always better on film than congestion), and chases between the good guys and the bad guys. Movies such as American Graffiti repeatedly linked the automobile with autonomy and escape from constraining social norms.

As the automobile became prominent on Chinese roads in the 1990s, its massification paralleled the rise of two different technologies, the mobile phone and the surveillance camera. With mobile technologies, almost all Chinese automobile drivers will operate a vehicle for the first time with built-in GPS and navigational software; there will be less scraping for maps and asking for directions.[23] Drivers will need less and less of Elias' self-control. Their sensory apparatus will be enhanced by a host of digital instruments; the 2018 H7 SUV comes standard with adaptive cruise, front collision warning, automatic braking, blind spot monitoring, reverse side warning, lane departure alerts, line assist, and fatigue detection. Automotive reviews stress a vehicle's comfort, power, roominess, look, and sportiness—traditional virtues in automotive cultures—but there is added emphasis on what is called a sense of technology. In these reviews, as many words are spent describing the interior center console as exterior design. The Nissan Qijun has a "dual 12.3 inch LCD [liquid crystal display]" (Yang 2021). Beiqi's EX3 New-Energy Vehicle has a "9 inch touch screen which is very effective and responsive"; it supplies music, navigation, air-conditioning, radio services, and supports Baidu's CarLife (Shen 2019). CarLife, operated by the major search engine company, connects vehicles with smartphones and

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[23] In some far western regions with fewer interstitial roads and weaker mobile signals, informal guidance systems still prevail.

provides in-car entertainment and navigation. For glamor, motors must compete with operating systems. With mobile payment systems like Alipay, Chinese drivers will carry less cash in their vehicles, yet be subject to Alipay's credit monitoring system, which assigns them a credit score that may determine whether they can travel in the first place. Cities will appear as squiggles of lines and directional arrows on quartz panels.

Moreover, many of their driving activities will be filmed, not so much for entertainment but simply as part of the vast, dense footage network that now covers many Chinese cities and whole regions such as parts of Xinjiang. As Sheller and Urry (2006) noted, the movements of people leave behind traces of data and information points in bank accounts, sensors, cameras, etc., and how they are defined as persons in society depends on this assemblage of virtual space. Electric vehicles now relay dozens of data points to manufacturers, which are in turn relayed to government-funded research centers (Kinetz 2018).

What Zuboff (2015) calls "informating"—taking social events, actions, processes, ideas, and objects and turning them into observable, calculable, and shareable quanta—is part of the status of citizenship, especially in so-called smart cities. While data suppliers, both individual and corporate, have some control over sharing of data on their movements, in many cases being a data producer is mandatory. Dump trucks in Shenzhen use a driver supervision system to monitor driving habits, a system that once disabled also disables the vehicle itself from starting (Shenzhen Traffic Police 2018). The ride-hailing company Didi, in response to cases of driver violence and harassment, has said it would share more information with the government, including routes, driver information, and car position (Shen 2018). In Xinjiang, merely turning off or deactivating your cellular phone is grounds for detention, as the state is less able to track one's movements and speech habits (Thum 2018).

This production of self-information can have direct implications for the possibility of political mobilization. To retain their positions, local officials must meet targeted goals in "social stability." The metric of social stability is in part calculated using public demonstrations, especially actions that occur in Beijing. Therefore, provincial governments have often sent "retrievers" (jiefang 截访) to nab those who leave for Beijing to petition, who are often imprisoned and forced to labor (Nathan 2008). When Falun Gong was labeled a cult, the informal police hovered like hounds around the train stations, both outgoing and incoming, sniffing out potential protesters and locking them up for indeterminate periods (Johnson 2004). But detection techniques have evolved with information technology. The preemptive snatching of protesters has been facilitated by real-name online railway booking (Larson 2018), which requires booking using government-issued identifications and makes it easier to locate potentially troublesome persons. Protesters in Hong Kong in 2019 were in fact leery of using their Metro cards for fear their movements would be revealed to authorities (Hui 2019). In keeping with using virtual technologies to control mobilities, real name booking spread to the purchase of long-distance bus tickets in Xinjiang in 2014 (Reuters 2014).

In the past, traffic crashes were depicted in newspapers, sometimes with pictures. Journalists had to go to the scene and seek information. Today closed-circuit television footage provides graphic, extended, veritable evidence of collisions, and governments release information online. On one hand, this provides alluring material for media fables. Popular news portals such as Sina and QQ feature almost as a matter of course lurid traffic crashes from around the country: jealous lovers, rich snobs, foolish joggers, and unlucky celebrities caught in compromising positions with steel bodies. Cabin cameras capture bus drivers doing bad things like abusing passengers and doing good things like assisting disabled passengers. The Little Yue case is one of a long

train of cases that have drawn attention to moral crises through video footage. In many places of the world (e.g., the UK), CCTV footage is highly controversial and limited to cracking down on antisocial behaviors like rowdiness, drunkenness, and disorderliness (Williams and Johnstone 2000). Yet as I argued in Chapter 4 there is an added dimension of acceptability for surveillance in China grounded in the desire to create new norms of prosocial, civil behavior. Filming of street scenes, both by traffic police and regular citizens, works both to quash disorder and reward micro-civilities.

This reward structure has an affinity with an ongoing, haphazard project known as the social credit system. Although at this stage it is far too early to confer upon its ad hoc, intermittent nature too many adjectives, it is certainly cast in the same mold as the civilizational project seen at crosswalk and ambulance lanes. Comprehensive experiments for assessing citizens for trustworthiness and courtesy have been attempted in places like Suining 睢宁 county in Jiangsu and the city of Rongcheng 荣成 in Shandong. In the Rongcheng scheme, everyone started with 1000 points—losing points for violating things like traffic laws and gaining points for charity work or government awards (Larson 2018). Survey results find rather high approval of such projects, as they are seen as improvements to quality of life that spur more honest and law-abiding behavior (Kostka 2019). The metrics of personal reliability are inextricable from the regulation of mobilities. Such listings and sortings assess people partly on their actions on public streets and then provides rewards and punishments in the form of mobility adjustments. For instance, policies in Ningbo have listed people for fare-skipping on public transport, while those who jaywalk in Shenzhen have been threatened with demerits from their social credit (Creemers 2018). In theory, for many of the systems, those with high scores receive discounted plane and train tickets; those with low scores are blacklisted from such travel. In terms quite explicit, the sorting of the hierarchy of trust among strangers rests on everyday mobilities, substantiated by virtual tracking.

Computerized driving, using sensors and data systems to monitor drivers, is a rapidly burgeoning field. Worldwide, insurance and freight companies have been at the forefront in implementing in-vehicle driver monitoring systems. The telematics system that UPS uses on its drivers has 200 sensors on each delivery truck that track backup speeds, seatbelt use, location of packages, time door is open, and so forth (Kaplan 2015). Initially used to ensure seatbelt use, it extended into the total production task, a form of Taylorism at odds with the traditional sentiment of the truck driver as free-wheeling and independent. While I am unaware of such micromanaging instruments in the Chinese insurance and freight industries, big data has appeared at the municipal level as mechanisms to apprehend criminals and enforce traffic rules. Because its mobile network is new, centralized, and without much competition, China is quite advanced in building the infrastructure of regulated movement. It has the advantage of rolling out integrated traffic management on a large-scale (Sheehan 2019), placing millions of people into a field experiment. This includes the centralized data relay towers essential for driver-less vehicles. Even smaller cities are using A.I. and overhead cameras to form "nervous systems" for keeping track of movements in a type of predictive policing (Hollingsworth 2017).

Facial scanning software in particular has ballooned in China and is now used to detect jaywalking and errant drivers. Using facial recognition, police can get text messages when a person of interest enters their area of patrol (Grossman et al. 2020). Some cities are trying out means to expedite collection of subway fares through facial scans linked to payments systems (Liao 2019). This is part of wider entrepreneurship with facial scans that have been used to monitor student moods in high schools, the attention level of train conductors, and the morale of

factory workers. In Xinjiang, the facial scan is more-and-more fundamental to the monitoring of so-called extremist behaviors.

The rise of anonymous spaces means we must constantly prove ourselves. Identification documents still work, but vehicles and mobile technologies are shouldering more of the burden of inscribing trustworthiness and merit. Presently, government operations in China would fall apart without mobile APPs. Social benefits and bureaucratic services are routed through computerized city government portals. Looking at Shenzhen's Traffic Police we can trace such changes. Due to a push from the Ministry of Public Security directives to simplify and automate the police administrative process, Shenzhen has tried to open up new ways to handle routine police business online. First, paperwork has been moved to web services, so that drivers no longer need to carry a paper driver's license or submit copies of registration and other items at service windows. More and more, the identification and processing of driver claims, ticketing, and registration rely on a mere facial scan, with multiple levels of identification centered on that singular piece of evidence. Second, the processing of non-severe traffic crashes can be handled directly through a mobile application. In this process, drivers follow online directions to provide photographic and video evidence of the damage to the vehicles. The police then provide a response by text message with the assignment of responsibility, information that can then be relayed to insurance companies for adjudication. Third, the means of service has shifted from in-person to computer mediation. In this vein, Shenzhen Traffic Police have set up 24-hour ATM-like service machines throughout the city for citizens to conduct police business.

Certainly, the use of APPs opens up greater risk of data breaches, scams, and abuse, but it must be remembered that personal information is universally necessary to access government benefits. As Lyon (1994) points out, the most sophisticated database of citizens in the world is kept up by Sweden, which requires integrated dossiers on its citizens to allocate social benefits. It is to be expected that by simply rolling out more social protections, more personal information is enrolled in the art of governing.

During the pandemic, the mobile phone became the consummate tracking device. Initially, many cities set up applications that solicited health information through a form, but later a person's health was able to be linked to geocodings provided by cellular providers that allowed a person's movements to be tracked and evaluated for potential viral exposure. These apps adopted the ubiquitous 3-color system, where green signaled permission to travel, yellow caution, and red full prohibition on travel. In this way, a person's status was perfectly linked to their mobility history. Alibaba's Alipay Health Code looks at symptoms, travel history and location to classify as red, green, or yellow. Despite the many flaws and frustrations of the system, it was an effective tool of inhibiting COVID spread. Moreover, one survey reports that what consumers most appreciated from these apps was the information they provided (Zhou et al. 2021). They could assess the risk from proximity to other people, revealing the significance of interpersonal regulation within the information web of digital technologies. Even so, the actual methodology and algorithms that outputted the color categories were shrouded in mystery and inaccessible to the public (Tan, Chiu-Shee, and Duarte 2022).

Such a reliance on APPs for governance has introduced problems. When mobile APPs are working, they can be of immense convenience in handling disputes. But when they have problems, solving even routine problems becomes difficult to figure out, as many visitors to the Beijing Olympics in 2022 learned. When they needed their health verified the most, amidst a global convergence of potential COVID cases, the APPs were sluggish and tempestuous (Kaiser 2022) . The other major issue is that they have widened the digital divide, effectively excluding

many older persons from multiple forms of participation. This has been a source of anxiety for government leaders (Curran and Smart 2021), especially during the pandemic. Also, worldwide research demonstrates that adoption of information and communications technologies is related to user education (Cruz-Jesus et al. 2016; Roblin et al. 2009), introducing disparities in the effective outcomes of digital governance. Indeed, because they are more avid users of such technologies, the inputs into local governing from mobile collection (e.g., online surveys) have a prominent selection bias toward those with higher education.

Not too long ago, digital technologies were expected by many analysts to chase away authoritarian tendencies in China. They were supposed to be disruptive in a way that fostered free choice and assertion of individual rights (Han 2018). Today, digital technologies are not just regularized parts of China's governance, they are nearly indispensable for existence. If the Russian, to Vladimir Medem, was composed of "body, soul, and passport" (cited in Lyon 1994:1), a Chinese citizen in the 2020s is "body, soul, and cell phone." It can be argued that this is a form of what some have called "compulsory consumption" (Sanne 2005) , a form of expenditure where you do not consume based mainly on desire and social status, but instead are enjoined by the environment and material circumstances into purchasing something on pain of ostracism. Many scholars have applied it to the automobile in the United States and Western Europe (Hans Jeekel 2016; Soron 2009), where a vast network of state infrastructure compels one to invest in cars; not investing positions one at an extreme social disadvantage. As a dominant unit of consumption, speed becomes a radical monopoly (Illich 1974), such that the factor that is used to help control your life becomes controlling, and you must consume more and more speed to avoid being left behind as a pariah. Similarly, the mobile phone has become required to confirm belonging in China: the possibility of digital expression eventually leads to an inability to NOT express yourself via such technology.

The style of governing that has made compulsory the consumption of mobile phones has reached its apogee in Xinjiang. Under what is called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), sensors have been placed outside of religious buildings and entertainment venues, and people are tracked in where they go and how they get there. A massive dataset of behavioral patterns has been generated, where one's risk level hinges on such metrics as entering mosques, long-term foreign travel, spikes in electricity usage, and one's social networks (Grossman et al. 2020). Uyghurs are forced to install APPs on their phone with backdoors allowing constant monitoring of usage. The APPs search for 'ideological viruses' like Arabic script (Andersen 2020). At police checkpoints, cellular phones are inspected. One of the signs of suspicion is not actively using the phone. New regulations require that new phone customers register themselves with facial scans. Although how widespread this practice will become throughout the rest of China is still debatable, it is clear in this new experiment with mobility that Xinjiang is the laboratory, cellular phones the equipment, and Uyghurs the mice.

Democracies use citizen grievances borne of free speech to track discontent and form responses. With so much data and data packets upwelling to the surface, it has become relatively easier for authoritarian governments to skim through information for disturbances or collective frustration (Larson 2018). Moreover, it is easier to assign persons positive identities, granting them scores of trustworthiness. The sorting of loyalty and dissent has been made easier by the incessant, often voluntary, informating by citizens. Transportation technologies, combined with digital technologies, has regularized people. The population is no easier to corral, but it is easier to nudge; with the preponderance of ready-made symbols and color-coded bodies, symbolic control by the state is advantaged. So much of what social media and transportation technologies

have done is an allowance of visceral feelings of unlimited reach that root people firmly into furrowed ground for harvesting. In Chapter 4, I use the metaphor of viticulture to describe the intensive cultivation of historical beings that makes subject positions in China akin to grape for wine—role players in a long-term project of bearing civilized fruits. But another metaphor, this one from Xu Zhangrun, is that the people are treated as garlic chives, easily reaped by the 'blade of power' (Xu 2020). Made to grow in measured grids, it is much easier to aggregate them for pruning.

More speculatively, in the cultural domain, some of the changes in mobilities and communication technologies have reshaped how individuals relate to meaning structures.

For one, it is difficult to form a sense of public-spiritedness and public virtue with the vast amount of cynicism that has permeated much discussion online. As we saw in the Yao Jiaxin case and with the refuse collector who saved Little Yue, in the public discourse there was a creeping presumption of illicit gains. For the Yao Jiaxin case, it was Yao Qingwei's wealth that was inflated, endowing him with irrefutable power over the court system and the justice of the little people. In the Little Yue case, though to a much lesser extent, Chen Xianmei was assumed by some to be mercenary in her tactics, puffing herself up through media tours and celebrity-chasing. Both cases show the power of the "norm of self-interest" (Miller 1999) in an increasingly marketized Chinese society. In the social imaginary where such a norm prevails, people do not simply do things out of the goodness of their hearts. Rather, altruism is just a cover for other, ulterior motives. Consequently, heroism is needed to transcend the equation of life with rank avarice, but then heroism is itself tainted by accusations of rank avarice, requiring an even more glaring, unstinting heroism, which creates a treadmill of continuously recycling pedestals. In some sense, the first passerby's logic in the Little Yue case contained wisdom; platforming oneself by even good actions can stir up all kinds of consequences. If not enduring accusations of guilt, as in the Peng Yu case, then you might be regarded as a false saint as in Chen Xianmei's case. There is a parallel here to the Cultural Revolution. At that time, one was afraid of extending one's neck for fear of having it chopped off. For contemporary China, bodily harm is less likely to result from standing up for another, but one's reputation is greatly at stake. In both time periods, there is a bit of truth to the assumption that the most prudent thing to do is stick to one's lane and one's innermost social network and not deal too drastically with strangers. It is difficult to practice the type of public virtues needed for collective mobilization when there is such an ever-lurking adhesive of self-promoting sanctimony that attaches to one's actions.

Second, from the micro-perspective, it seems to me that the image of what you do is increasingly more important than what you do. As a character in Tao Lin's novel concluded: "It's not worth doing at all if it's not filmed" (Lin 2013:243). Most crucial is the viewpoint, not the point. Again, what your life means must be summed up in an increasingly miniaturized block of time or space, if not the dimensions of an art piece or movie, then a transposable, disposable meme; there is less personal revolution around a consistent internal meaning. Social media offers guaranteed personality, but what form of person? One answer was hinted at by Sontag in her prescient assessment of photography:

The nature of modern communication systems is that anything can be said, any context is equivalent to any other context, so that things can be placed in many different contexts at the same time, like photography [and this is why categorization is equally ruthless]. But there's something profoundly compromising about that situation. Of course, it allows for a liberty of action and consciousness that people have never had before. But it means that you can't keep original or profound meanings intact because inevitably they're disappointed, adulterated,

transformed, and transmuted. So when you launch an idea for a fantasy or theme or an image to the world, it has this tremendous career that you can't possibly control or limit (Cott and Sontag 2013)

There is more power to circulate, but the core is denatured in the process. Because of the detachment of meaning, the nation-state's control of master narratives and symbolism fills in much of the cultural substrate piecing together such a pluralistic, refractory number of dispersed connotations. It is fitting that one of the key buzzwords of Xi Jinping's pitch for Party legitimacy is a concentration on never forgetting "original intentions" (chuxin 初心). In a time when the commentary is more important than the statement, what gives the Party its justification is its first move in the narrative game, to be the sounding board from which all must tune their voices. In this virtual space, all are seemingly created equal, but the state is more equal than the others. With the flurry of mobility, physical and virtual, the nation-state still operates the main transmission lines for social identity.

I do not intend to imply there are not civil society resistances to data collection and governing through digital technologies. There are many movements, more or less organized, to prevent data breaches and retain privacy. But more and more, China's government is done by mobile application, tightly packeting individuals in large datasets, where citizens itemize themselves for analysis through data doubles (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). Throughout their divagations across the vast transportation infrastructure, and in the many benefits which national membership provides through precise identifications, they are generating the raw materials that help sustain social control. Other great road-building regimes, like Napoleonic France and inter-war Fascism, did not last long, but the resilience of China's regime depends on different constellations of mobility technologies and governing techniques.

This rapid assessment of personhood that apportions social position by geolocation and trustworthiness by mobility is one of the more interesting trends in China's regime of mobility. China has done on a large-scale what smart city designs have also done in Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, giving it great leverage in proving its model of regulating transportation. For most of the past 120 years, China has been an able student of modern transportation technologies, adopting and adapting them in innovative ways. This evolving regime of mobility both conformed to and conditioned the norms of interaction across society. Yet as a rapid developer, its transportation system offers a replicable pathway for other nation-states, regions, and cities to catch up and forge a social order that is simultaneously more individualized and more collectivized. Whereas China has many mechanisms of exporting its authoritarian political model—including propaganda, economic pressure, support for other authoritarian states, and dethronement of international institutions (Nathan 2016)—perhaps one of the more subtle influences occurs through its policy prescriptions around sorting mobilities.

Already many of the companies that manufacture advanced surveillance technologies like facial scanning and camera tracking are winning contracts abroad. In one Belt and Road project, Shanghai-based Cloudwalk has partnered with the Zimbabwean government to offer facial recognition technologies to security forces (Chutel 2018). Hangzhou-based Dahua is putting overhead cameras in Ulaan Bator as part of an Intelligent Transportation System (Dahua 2018). Shenzhen-based Huawei has implemented a 'safe-city' initiative in hundreds of cities around the world, including in Serbia and Uganda (Briganti 2021; Chin 2019). Mongolia, Malaysia, Singapore, Egypt, Serbia, Ecuador have all purchased surveillance equipment or policing software developed in China and that utilize closed-circuit television cameras (Rahav 2021).

With Chinese-led development models, Chinese expertise and professionals heading to Africa and Asia, and bank loans conditional on using Chinese technologies, we could see the diffusion of the types of mobility controls we see in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Shenzhen. Chinese leaders already envision their future economic prospects as incumbent upon leaping ahead in digital technologies like A.I. and big data processing. Instead of stigma, China's street regulations could attain prestige and be seen as compelling (particularly to authoritarian governments). Chinese models would then represent the peak of modernity—virtual, data-driven, automated, and wired directly into users' devices—serving as blueprints for how to maintain social order. This leaves us with the important question for future research: what new possibilities and constraints on political action are opened up by the model of transportation mobilities currently being established in China?

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Appendix A: Methodological Approach

Section 1

The first section includes case studies of three widely reported traffic incidents. I use these cases as windows into larger social issues occurring in contemporary China, showing how various forces intersected to create the events and how such events reflect vast transformations in Chinese mobility and modernization.

As case studies are valuable in uncovering the 'how' and 'why' of complex phenomenon that occur over time (Yin 2003), they are able to connect multiple variables and show connections across wide-ranging domains. Generalizability is not the priority of this methodology—rather the goal is to make surprising connections using unique pieces of information and historical events that reveal interactions and potential causes that are normally not brought to light (Hays 2003). For theory building, multiple-case studies typically provide a stronger base for theory building (Yin 1999), so I use three separate cases from recent Chinese history. The three cases were selected to illuminate different domains of mobilities: the crash in Tibet to show the importance of consumer desire and transportation connections in nationalizing spaces on the Western frontier; the Yao Jiaxin case to show disparate treatments of middle-class and rural migrant mobilities; and the Little Yue event to analyze how regulation of street mobilities is used to culture and discipline a national population.

Eric Klinenberg coined the term "social autopsy" for his study of the effects of a heat wave in Chicago in 1995 (Klinenberg 2003). To perform a social autopsy means to take "the death of a set of individuals as its starting point and then critically and systematically examines social and political conditions to explain these deaths and generate awareness and policy change" (Timmermans and Prickett 2021:1). What I wanted to highlight with these autopsies are the constellation of factors that lead to traffic incidents, the multitude of colliding material, social, environmental, and psychological factors that produce such events. Often seen as the result of personal failing or negligence, these events contain numerous traces of systemic and institutionalized decisions dating back years prior to the crash. By skirting the direct one-cause, one-effect logic of problematization, a social autopsy unpacks the many "causes of death" stemming from social, political, and environmental factors.

Within this approach, there is a concerted effort to tell the full story, providing a depth and breadth that makes a theoretical point but without shielding contradictions and complexity. For the central facts of each case, a few sources were used. Chapter 2 takes a government report ("Investigation Report of the August 9th Serious Road Traffic Accident in Lhasa, Tibet") as the guide to the sequence of events. Chapter 3 draws from the Chinese encyclopedia Baike for the general timeline of the trial and its themes but uses official news clips and legal reports to replicate the general tone of the sequence of events. Chapter 4 relies on a short video clip along with a large body of commentary from newspapers, online blogs, and scholarly papers.

Because the goal of the social autopsy approach is to show how problematic events are assembled out of various social factors, a diverse reading of literature related to transportation permits such deeper contextualization. For this dissertation, many of these sources related to the transportation industry and travel culture in China. Relevant primary sources included:

• Laws and regulations (e.g., Road Traffic Law of China; Procedure for Handling Road Traffic Accidents; Regulations on the Administration of Urban Road Traffic in Xi'an)

- Polls and surveys (e.g., online polls, university-administered surveys)
- Propaganda videos and materials
- Records and travelogues from foreign visitors (e.g., *Mosher's Journey to the Forbidden China;* Meyer's *Road to Sleeping Dragon*; Hessler's *Country Driving*)
- Historical documents (e.g., Foreign Radio Broadcasts; Cultural Revolution poster collections; work unit reports)
- Films and television programs
- Government reports (e.g., Blue Book of Ethnic Minorities)
- Official media (e.g., *People's Daily*; *Xinhua*)
- Foreign media (e.g., *New York Times*; BBC; Reuters)
- Textbooks (e.g., traffic safety manuals; guides for new drivers)
- Automotive advertisements
- Automotive enthusiast websites (e.g., Xcar; PCAuto): used for automobile reviews, test drives, summaries of marketplace trends, and to follow internal forums
- Weibo: for news and commentary on current events
- Official Weixin (WeChat) pages (e.g., Shenzhen Traffic Police; Xi'an Traffic Police)
- Baike, a Chinese online encyclopedia, akin to Wikipedia
- Traffic education materials (e.g., sample examination questions)
- Company websites

Secondary sources included scholarly articles and books, press releases from China-watchers (e.g., "What's on Weibo"), organization and consultant reports (e.g., from World Travel and Tourism Council or Rand Corporation) and critical reviews of films. In addition, a total of 10 months of fieldwork, mainly in Shanghai and Beijing, provided an on-the ground perspective of social attitudes toward mobility along with how public spaces are normalized for certain uses and users and not others. By bringing these sources together, I was hopefully able to establish a unique angle of approach on studying social problems resulting from mobility.

Section 2

Whereas section 1 is more focused on collisions and intersections of different social groups in society, section 2 emphasizes more the movement and extensions of bodies across spaces, and the consequent effects on identifications and political categories. While still keeping the documents mentioned above in the background, the three papers in this section rely predominately on a dataset of 152 travel diaries of trips taken by mainland Chinese from 2006 to 2020. This purposive sample of travelogues was extracted from numerous travel and lifestyle blog sites popular in mainland China, including Mafengwo, Xcar, Qunar, Sina, and Pcauto. Web searches were performed by searching for destinations on Baidu, China's major domestic search engine. The first travelogue that fit the criteria of being genuine (non-advertisement), of containing detailed descriptions (not being mainly photographs), and that was within the timeframe was added to the dataset.

Of the sampled trips, 100 were domestic only, selected mainly to includes destinations in Western, less developed regions of China such as Xinjiang, Tibet, Gansu, and Yunnan. The tourism industry in these regions is comparatively less developed and there is more space to explore outside of formally institutionalized tourism spaces. The remaining 52 trips went to outbound destinations. These were primarily selected to represent Chinese travels to

understudied outbound destinations, mostly south and southwest in cardinal direction from China proper. Due to the developmentalist mentality present in much Chinese official media and discourses, there was a special emphasis placed on learning more about travel to developing, non-major destinations like Africa and the Middle East (see Table 1).

Table 1: Primary destinations in the sampled travelogues (n = 152)

China Domestic	Count
Xinjiang	43
Tibet	23
Shaanxi/Shanxi/Gansu	10
Yunnan/Guangxi	8
Other provinces	16
Outbound Travel	
Southeast Asia	12
Africa (exc North Africa)	14
Middle East (incl N Africa and Turkey)	10
Other Asia	10
Other	6

For domestic travelers, the ages varied widely, while gender of the authors was predominantly male (77%). Some trips featured large groups, but the majority were nuclear families or individual travelers. The preponderance of males is unusual for authors of travel blogs but can be explained partially by the number of domestic trips that were posted to automotive sites (32 diaries). Memberships in these sites are primarily male, which is reflected in the gender of the diarists.

The foreign travelers were generally younger (below 40), more likely to be female (58%), and traveling in smaller groups (usually only 1-4 persons). The majority of these were drawn from the travel site Mafengwo. Most travelers were free, independent travelers in the sense that they did not book their entire vacation through organized tour groups.

Overall, most diarists were from cities in coastal China. For example, where the home city was ascertainable, 32% of diarists were from Beijing and 11% from Shanghai. This parallels Wu and Pearce's (2016) synopsis of the relatively high social status of travel diarists posting to major Chinese travel sites. While I could not deduce educational background, it is likely to be similar to Wu and Pearce's assessment that most have tertiary education.

These travelogues formed the basis for qualitative content analysis, which is used to analyze how persons attribute meaning to events, persons, and objects given certain contexts. In other words, content analysis traces the symbolic properties of communication and how it varies across situations (Krippendorff 2019). In travel research it is especially effective in eliciting the subjective worldviews and patterned interpretations of experiences (Banyai and Glover 2012). I

used a grounded approach to elicit categories and themes directly from the data itself, setting preexisting theory aside to gauge the representations directly from the subjects themselves (Glaser 1992; Strauss 1987). However preexisting concepts always influence the researcher. Hence, while themes and patterns that emerged from the data itself formed the groundwork for the analysis, this analysis was also attune to major issues that linked mobility to nation-state formation and national identifications, including: common historical interpretation, common descent, or common mission—and elements oriented to a structural state—such as regulating the economy, marking territory, providing national security, building infrastructure, enforcing rules, and seeking political legitimacy. The process involved line-by-line coding (Daly 2007), followed by theoretical coding (Glaser 2005), which was used to aggregate theoretical concepts for comparative purposes. The goal was to ascertain the general representations and practices of these travelers and then compare them to preexisting frameworks of Chinese tourists. Throughout the dissertation, to maintain anonymity, I cite the travelogues by referencing their main destination (if not implied in the text) and year of travel.

This data source has a few advantages for studying the politics of mobility. Travel diaries are voluntary, so the reactions are not prompted by the researcher directly. Additionally, like public documentation on social media websites, these accounts are meant to be shared among family, friends, and other like-minded individuals. This makes them less a private outlook than a public discourse meant to draw upon and employ collective symbols. Presumably, many Chinese never actually take these trips, but they participate vicariously by reading accounts of those who have.

However, being long-form, edited, public, and created over multiple days and weeks, travelogues allow for great control over self-presentation. Thus, the political content is closely related to performativity, asserting backdrops and rituals that match a broad symbolic sensibility of what belongs to the nation (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Subtle reactions, especially negative ones concerning political grievances, are probably not well-captured by a travelogue, compared to, for example, ethnography. In visiting politically sensitive western regions, tourists are unlikely to express dissonant views in this format, so the appearance of commitment to state policy is likely to be more uniform and solidified than is actually the case. Nevertheless, they are still highly valuable in teasing out how people make public performances of national sentiments and political notions through travel.

Appendix B: List of Travelogues

Destination	Date of trip	Origin	Gender of Author
Aershan, Xinjiang	Oct-20	Beijing	male
Aksu, Xinjiang	Nov-15	(unspecified)	male
Altay, Xinjiang	Jul-17	(unspecified)	(unspecified)
Altay, Xinjiang	Aug-18	Tianjin	male
Australia	Dec-19	(unspecified)	female
Bangkok	Jan-16	Beijing	male
Bangkok	Mar-16	Chongqing	female
Bangkok	Jun-17	Yunnan	(unspecified)
Bangkok	May-18	(unspecified)	male
Beihai, Guangxi	Dec-19	Nanchang	male
Beiji Island, Zhejiang	Jul-20	Hangzhou	female
Botswana	Aug-19	Singapore	female
Brazil	Feb-16	Shanghai	female
Burma	Jan-20	Hangzhou	female
Chiang Mai, Thailand	Jun-17	Yunnan	male
Chongqing	Sep-15	Shanghai	male
Dali Lake, Inner Mongolia	Jan-20	Beijing	male
Daqing, Heiliongjiang	Dec-15	(unspecified)	male
Duku Highway, Xinjiang	2017	Urumqi	male
Dunhuang, Gansu	2013	Chengdu	male
Dunhuang, Gansu	Jul-14	Beijing	female
Duolian, Inner Mongolia	Jun-19	Beijing	male
Dushanzi, Xinjiang	2018	Urumqi	male
Egypt	Nov-19	Dalian	female
Ethiopia-Zimbabwe	Jul-18	Beijing	male
Fiji	May-19	Shanghai	female
Gannan, Gansu	Jul-20	Zhengzhou	female
Gansu, Yellow River	Sep-20	Chengdu	female
Garze, Sichuan	Jun-17	Yunnan	male
Germany	Aug-13	Beijing	male
Ghana	Jul-17	New York	male
Ghana	Jan-20	Guangzhou	female

Guangxi	Mar-19	Shenyang	female
Guizhou	Apr-19	(unspecified)	(unspecified)
Hainan	Feb-14	Shanghai	male
Han Zhong, Shaanxi	Aug-16	Xi'an	male
Hongqilafu, Xinjiang	Apr-10	(unspecified)	male
Hongqilafu, Xinjiang	May-17	Guangzhou	male
Huoerguosi, Xinjiang	Aug-17	Xi'an	male
India	Jan-20	Chengdu	female
India	Jan-20	Wuhu, Anhui	male
India	Mar-20	Guilin	female
Indonesia	Jan-20	Shanghai	female
Inner Mongolia	Mar-20	(unspecified)	female
Iran	Sep-16	Dunhuang	female
Israel	Jun-19	Beijing	female
Israel	Jul-19	Chongqing	male
Japan	Jan-20	Dalian	female
Jiashi, Xinjiang	Nov-17	Foshan	male
Jiuhuashan, Anhui	Jan-15	(unspecified)	male
Jordan, Israel	Aug-17	Wuhan	male
Kanas Lake, Xinjiang	May-15	(unspecified)	female
Kanas Lake, Xinjiang	Oct-17	Urumqi	male
Karamay City, Xinjiang	Jun-16	Guangzhou	male
Karamay City, Xinjiang	Oct-17	Luo Yang	male
Kashgar	Aug-17	Wuhan	male
Kashgar	Jun-18	(unspecified)	female
Kashgar-Altai	Jul-17	Shenzhen	male
Kashgar-Huoerguosi	Aug-17	Xi'an	male
Kashgar-Khotan	Oct-18	(unspecified)	male
Kazakhstan	May-15	(unspecified)	male
Kazakhstan	Jul-16	(unspecified)	male
Kazakhstan	May-18	Hong Kong	male
Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan	Jul-16	Urumqi	female
Kenya	Aug-17	Beijing	female
Kenya	Aug-18	Xi'an	female
Kenya	Oct-18	Shanghai	female
Kenya-Tanzania	Oct-18	Shenzhen	female

Khotan, Xinjiang	Aug-17	(unspecified)	male
Khunjerab, Xinjiang	Dec-18	Urumqi	male
Kunlun Shan, Xinjiang	Dec-19	Hetian	(unspecified)
Kunming	2017	(unspecified)	male
Kuqa County, Xinjiang	Jul-17	Urumqi	male
Kuqa County, Xinjiang	Apr-19	Shanghai	male
Lebanon	Jan-17	Beijing	female
Lhasa	Apr-09	Beijing	female
Lhasa	Jul-12	Xinjiang	male
Lhasa	Jun-14	(unspecified)	female
Lhasa	Nov-14	Beijing	male
Lhasa	Mar-15	Shandong	male
Lhasa	Jul-16	Urumqi	male
Lhasa	Mar-17	Chengdu	male
Lhasa-Yongbulakang	Oct-16	Beijing	male
Liaoning	Jan-18	Beijing	male
Lijiang, Yunnan	2014	(unspecified)	male
Lijiang, Yunnan	Sep-13	Chengdu	male
Linzhi-Lhasa	Nov-16	Beijing	male
Maldives	Jan-20	Shanghai	female
Morocco	Jul-20	Beijing	female
Mount Kailash, Tibet	2014	Beijing	female
Namibia	Aug-17	Shenzhen	female
Namibia	Jul-18	Beijing	female
Ningxia	Aug-13	(unspecified)	(unspecified)
Peru	Mar-19	Washington DC	female
Pingyao, Shanxi	Jun-17	Shanghai	male
Putuoshan, Zhejiang	2015	(unspecified)	(unspecified)
Putuoshan, Zhejiang	Apr-15	Guangzhou	(unspecified)
Putuoshan, Zhejiang	Apr-15	(unspecified)	male
Qinghai	Jun-20	Beijing	male
Russia	Mar-16	Guangzhou	male
Saudi Arabia	Dec-19	Wuhan	male
Shaanxi	Oct-07	Beijing	male
Singapore	Aug-19	Hunan	male
South Africa	Mar-19	Beijing	male

South America	Nov-18	Beijing	female
Taiwan	Apr-18	(unspecified)	male
Taklamakan, Xinjiang	Sep-17	Urumqi	female
Taklamakan, Xinjiang	Jun-19	Hetian	male
Tanzania	Jun-18	Beijing	male
Tanzania	Jul-19	Beijing	female
Taxian, Xinjiang	Aug-17	Ningxia	male
Taxkorgan, Xinjiang	Jun-17	Beijing	male
Taxkorgan, Xinjiang	Sep-18	Yunnan	male
Tekesi, Xinjiang	Aug-18	Beijing	female
Thailand	May-17	(unspecified)	(unspecified)
Tianchi, Xinjiang	Oct-12	Beijing	(unspecified)
Tibet	2013	Shanghai	male
Tibet	2014	(unspecified)	female
Tibet	2015	(unspecified)	male
Tibet	2016	Yunnan	male
Tibet	Aug-12	Beijing	female
Tibet	Sep-12	Shanghai	male
Tibet	Aug-14	Dalian	male
Tibet	Mar-15	Shanghai	(unspecified)
Tibet	Aug-15	Beijing	male
Tibet	Nov-15	(unspecified)	(unspecified)
Tibet	Jul-16	Xining	(unspecified)
Tibet	Apr-18	(unspecified)	male
Tibet, Western Sichuan	Jul-18	(unspecified)	male
Turkey	Oct-20	Shenzhen	female
Turpan, Xinjiang	Jun-14	Beijing	female
United Arab Emirates	Oct-19	Beijing	female
Urumqi	Oct-16	Xining	male
Urumqi	Nov-19	Chengdu	male
USA (New York)	Jul-17	Beijing	male
Vietnam	Dec-19	Shanghai	male
Wutaishan, Shanxi	May-06	(unspecified)	female
Wutaishan, Shanxi	Apr-12	Beijing	(unspecified)
Xinjiang	Aug-12	(unspecified)	male
Xinjiang	Sep-15	Beijing	male

Xinjiang	Aug-16	Beijing	male
Xinjiang	Aug-18	(unspecified)	male
Xinjiang	Dec-21	Yunnan	male
Yan'an, Shaanxi	Apr-16	Hebei Province	female
Yan'an-Kashgar	Apr-16	Shanghai	male
Yangshuo, Guangxi	Jun-06	Shenzhen	female
Yangshuo, Guangxi	Jun-19	(unspecified)	male
Yecheng, Xinjiang	Oct-18	Shanghai	male
Yining, Xinjiang	Aug-17	Urumqi	female
Yining, Xinjiang	Aug-17	Kuqa, Xinjiang	male
Yunnan	Feb-16	Tianjin	male