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Heritage and Identity Politics
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Heritage is a distinctive concept involving objects and customs which exists in a particular socio-political, economic, cultural and historical context. Moreover, it refers to various kinds of institutions, relationships and interactions formed around these ideas, objects and customs. Generally speaking, heritage is the phenomenon arising in a specific historical circumstance. UNESCO adopted the "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" in 1972 and "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" in 2003. China announced two lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage at a state level in 2006 and 2008 respectively. These demonstrate how Heritage is created and developed as a specific historical phenomenon.[1] The phenomenon of Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage of many Chinese ethnic minorities, especially their special socio-political institutions and personal and group experience, is valuable for our further discussions, which stimulates our thoughts and research in communities of Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region. This lecture aims to discuss the mechanism of identity politics with a case study of ethnic minority groups in China. It contains four main parts, (1) heritage and identity; (2) heritage and the dynamics of identity; (3) heritage and identity politics, and (4) historical context of heritage and identity politics.

(1) Heritage and Identity

My own research is about a group of "*Ge Jia*" people in the *Miao* and *Dong* Autonomous Prefecture of southeast Guizhou province. In Chinese historical documents, there are various written characters regarding this group. The common character was "*Ge*" which had an animal radical on the left. The term "*Jia*" is a political category because "*Ge*" is not identified as a *minzu* by the state. Groups around them, such as *Miao* and *Dong*, are recognized as ethnic minorities by the state

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[1] See UNESCO, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, 1972; *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003; State Council, *The First Proclamation of Intangible Cultural Heritage at State Level*, 20 May 2006 and *The Second Proclamation and the First Expanded Proclamation of Intangible Cultural Heritage at State Level*, 6 July 2008.

and thus have "*zu*" status in the Chinese national system.

"*Ge*" is usually regarded as a branch of *Miao* in the national system, but *Ge* people have strongly resisted this classification. They state that they are not *Miao* but an individual group. Therefore, they wish to become the fifty-seventh "*zu*" recognized by the state.[2] The early request for an official identification by "*Ge*" was in the 1950s, when the ethnic classification project was implemented by the state. "*Ge*" was categorized as a "minority to be determined" at that time. While over twenty "to be determined" groups in Guizhou applied for their official identification in the early 1980s, "*Ge*" is one of those who have insisted not to be categorized as other "*minzu*" till now. But it seems that there is little hope of success for their request.[3]

In the early 1990s, I conducted my research in a "*Ge*" group of southeast Guizhou. I lived in a farmer's home at that time. The farmer's younger sister made a batik book-bag for her elder brother. On the bag, the girl featured her self-portrait and some characters including "*Ge zu*," "*Zhongguo* (China)," "*nu ren* (woman)," "*renmin* (citizen)" and her name, which all reflect different identity categories (see Figure 1). Those Chinese characters contained all kinds of identities, which represented, the way she defined herself and the group she belonged to. This girl represented herself as a woman, as belonging to China and her institutional and political identity as a citizen. But the most obvious category was "*Ge zu*" which was the most prominently articulated aspect of her identity on her bag.

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[2]   Siu-woo Cheung, "Representation and Negotiation of *Ge* Identities in Southeast Guizhou," in *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan*, ed. Melissa Brown (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1996), 240-273.

[3]   Concerning the Chinese official identification of ethnic groups, Fei xiaotong 費孝通, "Questions about Ethnic Identifications in China," *Minzu yu shehui* 民族與社會 *(Ethnic Group and Society)*, Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1981, pp.18；Huang Guangxue, Shi Lianzhu 黃光學、施聯朱, *Zhongguo de minzu shibie* 中國的民族識別 *(The Idenitification of Ethnic Groups in China).* Beijing: *Minzu* chubanshe, 1995.

Figure 1: The batik book-bag made by a "*Ge Jia*" girl

Compared with the personal identity, "*Ge*" is not a *minzu* but a branch of *Miao* in the state's classification. The embroidery of the Guizhou *Miao* and the batik of Anshun city of west Guizhou were listed in the second directory of 510 items of Intangible Cultural Heritage at national level announced in 2008.[4] For the "*Ge*," these two items are both disputable. The embroidered clothes of "*Ge*" were called embroidery of *Miao* in the book *Embroidery of Guizhou Miao* and many batik features of "*Ge*" were regarded as the batik of *Miao* in *Batik of Guizhou Miao*. These two authoritative books were published by the Beijing People's Art Press in 1982.[5] According to the "*Ge*" of Huangping County, the provincial government recruited batik experts of "*Ge*" to go to Anshun City to teach batik techniques when it set up a batik factory there in the 1960s, so the craftwork of batik, developed in Anshun, in fact is the tradition of the "*Ge*" people.

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[4]   State Council, *The Second Proclamation and the First Expanded Proclamation of Intangible Cultural Heritage at State Level*, 6 July 2008.

[5]   Shao Yuzhu 邵宇主, *Guizhou Miaozu cixiu 貴州苗族刺繡 (Embroidery of Guizhou Miao), Guizhou Miaozu laran 貴州苗族蠟染 (Batik of Guizhou Miao)* Beijing: *Renmin meishu chubanshe*, 1982.

So what is a *Miao*? And what is a *Ge*? The classification of Chinese minorities is approved by the authority; their categories depend on the state. The *Miaozu* groups of different regions are all regarded as the branches of *Miao*. Some of them, like the *Ge*, have complained to the government, as a single *minzu*, but failed. They eventually are assigned to other different ethnic minorities.[6] The most important function of the concept "*minzu*" in China is to maintain the national unity. Every ethnic group recognizes its social position and belongs to a category. Furthermore, the identification of *minzu* heavily depends on kinds of knowledge such as features and statistics which is established by administrative mechanisms. The statistics on the distribution and the population of every *minzu* takes considerable time within the state system. There are also other classifications to discern the culture of different minorities. For instance, *Miao*, *Zang* and *Li* have different costumes. And there are subtle classifications within each system of classification. For example, the characteristics of the headdress, costume and language of each *Miao* branch are clearly described. Scholars, centering on the identity of *Miao*, study the ethnicities' history, culture and language. *Miaoxue yanjiu*, a so-called subject study, has come into being, and a *Miaoxue* association was established at the same time.

The identity represented in the Intangible Cultural Heritage may have different levels of concern. A *Ge* village, located in Huangping County of north Kaili City, is regarded as the oldest and most traditional single surname community of *Ge*. It held an ancestor worship ceremony in the early 1990s, which had been stopped since the revolution of 1949. This ceremony is called "*Harong*"（哈戎）in *Ge* language, needs three years to prepare, is carried out for a continuous seven days and seven nights. The rituals of the ceremony lead all ancestors' souls into a sacred wooden drum worshiped by all lineage members. The importance of the resurgence of the traditional ceremony of the lineage is to reconfirm the status of the lineage elites and other members, and thus reconstruct the local social order and the authority system after the collective production system was disintegrated in the 1980s. However, ethnic identity played a principal role in the ancestor worship ceremony as if focused on the identity of lineage members. Two banners in the ceremony square displayed "*huangping xian gezu harong jie*" (*Harong* Festival of *Ge* in Huangping County) and "*tuanjie qilai wei guanche zhixing dang de minzu zhengce er fendou*" (unite together to strive for the implementation of the Party's policies). The ethnic policies were recovered after the

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[6]   Huang Guangxue, Shi Lianzhu 黃光學 施聯朱, *Zhongguo de minzu shibie 中國的民族識別 (The Idenitification of Ethnic Groups in China)*. Beijing: *Minzu chubanshe*, 1995.

Cultural Revolution; *Minzu,* as a political identity, reemerged in the forefront of the state's policies. The cadres from *Ge*, working at provincial, city and county levels of Guizhou, knew this tendency. They kept trying to request the government to re-investigate the *Ge*'s case and admit *Ge* as an individual ethnic minority group. These cadres brought this information back to the village and wanted to show the traditional culture of *Ge* through the ceremony, therefore they actively returned from the city and arranged the ceremony. They invited a number of officials from various minorities and different levels of Guizhou Governments to be honored guests. This ceremony became a stage to perform two sets of shows to represent two different identities.

Besides the ceremony, the costume craft is also a hot subject of the minorities' Intangible Cultural Heritage. The maker of the batik book-bag is the *Ge* girl. The feature on the bag is her self-portrait. The background of making this bag involved her participation in a provincial dance competition held in Guiyang in 1986. She was nineteen years old at that time and that was her first time she visited the provincial capital, Guiyang. She was excited to register in the competition with the *Ge* representative team. However she felt terribly ashamed when she was teased by the reception staff because she was illiterate and could not sign her name. She was very upset when she returned home and asked her parents to send her to school after telling her family the experience. She was rejected, however, because one of her brothers was studying in a middle school and the family did not have extra money send her to school. After that, the next few days, she devoted her time to make the batik bag. The self portrait and the representation of different identities obviously express her exploration and the reflection of her identity. Although she had no chance to go to school, her brother who took the batik book-bag with her self-portrait to school seemed like the she was also going to school too. The identities of the girl, which were represented through the craftwork, could be seen as a powerful accusation against the society: why could she not, a rural woman, get the chance to be educated like any other citizen should?

Obviously, "*Ge*" is the most prominent identity represented among those on the batik book-bag. The understanding of this representation should be related to the background of the ethnic system and the political request of *Ge*. In this social context, the girl, as a member of the village tourism reception team, often saw her brother, the team leader, disputing with the tour guide because he did not agree with the guide introducing *Ge* as a branch of *Miao*. She saw a lot of arguments regarding the

identification of "*Ge*" when she went to Guiyang to participate in the dance competition. It was said that the *Ge* team's performance was awarded the highest score, but the team failed to receive the first prize because the *Ge*'s status was not officially approved. Even the local newspaper reported them as *Miao*. Thus, the team members followed the *Ge* cadres working in Guiyang City, and required the newspaper correct the term and apologize for their faults. Moreover, when the *Ge* team decided to perform for foreigners in a hotel of Guiyang, to make extra money, they were scolded by the sponsor of the competition, because they were told that their ambiguous *minzu* status would disrupt the foreigners' understanding of the Chinese ethnic system. Obviously, a series of personal experience enabled the girl to construct an understanding of her *Ge* identity as well as help her identify the importance of being a *Ge*.

This story illustrates the multiple characteristics of identity. Firstly, identity may be both personal and collective. For instant, people usually differentiate themselves from others based on their personal characteristics. The *Ge* girl, for example, spends a lot of energy and emotion to represent her discriminated personal identity and deprived rights. Meanwhile, she chooses different identities. *Ge*, woman, citizen and so on to synthesize her social role and to represent her identity. Yet, the meaning of the identity depends on the social context. For example, the disputes of the minorities' identities are related to the transformation of the political system from 1949 to the Cultural Revolution era and then to the 1980s. Thirdly, individuals strive to be identified with a social group, and as members of a group, hold the same attitude, accumulated and constructed in daily lives, toward the external. The struggle for the ethnic identification, led by *Ge*'s elites working in cities, shapes various experiences of the *Ge* girl's life, and generates her self-identification as *Ge*, which ont only cannot be forgotten but also shapes her attitude to outsiders.

In the UNESCO convention, the Intangible Cultural Heritage comprises (1) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; (2) performing arts; (3) social practices, rituals and festive events; (4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (5) traditional crafts Regarding to the debates of *Ge*'s group and individual identity, characteristics such as language, legend, music and dance, festive rituals, religious ideas and practice, in particular, embroidery and batik, have been adopted as a boundary to represent and

identify the identity.[7] The case demonstrates that heritage is usually used as a medium of identity representation and a tool of identity construction. The role of heritage in identity politics stems from the dynamic mechanism of identity.

(2) Cultural Heritage and the Dynamics of Identity

To understand identity, it is important to treat it as a dynamic process. We need to consider identity as a diverse, ever-changing social experience, and also a product of historical process. The formation of contemporary *Ge* the ethnic identity is an example of this point. Under imperial oppression, *Ge* and the neighbouring *Miao* competed with each other during their migration and settlement process. In the process of building a modern nation-state in the republican period, both *Ge* and *Miao* were the object of national assimilation. After 1949, the state established a "*shaoshu minzu*" (ethnic minorities) system and it caused controversies in ethnic identification. The *Ge* identity emerged and changed throughout these historical contexts.

Mechanism 1: Identity and Marker

The above case treats identity as a process. In particular, identity refers to a process in which certain characteristics of an individual or a group are recognized and interpreted by oneself/themselves or others. On one hand, an individual selects those characteristics to build his self-consciousness and associates himself with a group or others through those characteristics. On the other hand, a group distinguishes itself from other groups by some of its characteristics. Due to competition for resources to ensure survival, in the past, the *Miao* and the disadvantaged *Ge* were hostile to one another. In the process of the official ethnic identification project (*minzu shibie*) after 1949, the *Ge* objected to being labeled as a sub-branch of *Miao* by claiming its unique language and culture to distinguish itself from the *Miao*.

In the process of identification and differentiation, identity negotiation is an important interaction among individuals. Identity is not only something attributed to an individual, but also the consequence of negotiation among an associated group, its opposite group, and the state. In the interactive negotiation process, an individual or a

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[7]   For reference about Intangible Cultural Heritage, see UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003.

group displays or even performs its identity characteristics through various markers, which leads to the consolidation of its identity.

Markers of ethnic identity include architecture, language, dress, behavior, craftwork, festivals, rituals, origin of ancestors, legends of migration, and so on. The effect of identity negotiation depends on whether these markers are recognized by other social mentors and the official authority. Referring to our *Ge* case, the Chinese officials did not recognize the *Ge* as a singular ethnic identity, saying that the dress, language and customs of *Ge* were similar to the *Miao*. In a general way, the culture and customs of the *Ge* do share much similarity with the *Miao* and its other adjacent peoples. Yet at a local and specific level, there are a lot of differences among them. For example, *Ge* language and *Miao* language are not intelligible to each other; however, according to the abstract classification by linguists, the *Ge* language is a subbranch of *Miao* language. Therefore, identity negotiation depends on what perspectives and standards are used to examine the similarities and differences of the markers, and whether all the parties share the same understanding of those markers' meanings.

Mechanism 2: Identity Boundary

Another mechanism of identity is to establish boundaries. Fredrik Barth, in his approach to ethnicity, advocated the critical focus of investigation on the ethnic boundary that defines the group rather than the cultural stuff and markers it encloses. Because markers are just tools to represent ethnic boundaries. As the cultural stuff, markers are ever-changing with the transformation of interpretations and choices.[8]

Identity markers are conducive to group cohesion, while identity boundaries are based on the contrast and interaction among groups. One of the boundaries is an inclusive boundary. It means that the marker of one group could be adopted by outsiders, and these people are able to become a member of the group. An example of this point is the Han Chinese. They often think that they have rights, and therefore higher civilization than the peripheral ethnic minorities, and if the ethnic minorities choose to adopt the lifestyles of Han, such as by practicing and Confucianism, they can become Han, too. Another kind of boundary is an exclusive boundary. It is the use of a marker that others will never have, for example, race and some religion, affiliation therefore,

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[8]   Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969).

other people can never become members of these groups.

Mechanism 3:
Identity as culturally attributed, instrumentally utilized and socially constructed

There are three approaches to understand the concept of identity:[9]

1. Primordial approach

Identity takes the sense of self and belonging of a collective group as a fixed thing, defined by an objective standard, such as common ancestry, common biological characteristics and common cultural markers, and so on. It emphasizes the group sentiment and consciousness based on a common culture. Therefore, on the basis of common language, legend, dress, artwork, music, dance, festival and rite, the *Ge* people have a showed sentiment. This approach treats identity as innate, with objective standards, and self or group consciousness dependent on fixed characteristics and objective standards.

2. Instrumentalist approach

Identity is developed and utilized to achieve economic or political goals. Social elites make use of common markers to evoke collective identity. In the debate on official identification of ethnic minorities, the motivation of the *Ge* elites to obtain official recognition was suspected to be seeking a position in the government and to advocate favorable policies particularly for ethnic minorities. Therefore, this kind of identity consciousness and their common markers is situational and changeable rather than persistent.

The above two approaches are not necessarily contradicting: different approaches are required to understand different participants' behaviour in identity politics. For the ordinary *Ge* people in the countryside, they treat common identity as persistent natural consciousness based on the common living habits and markers. For the leaders in the capital city of Guiyang, they are aware of the political benefits of the status of

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[9]   Cora Govers and Hans Vermeulen, *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1997).

becoming a single independent ethnic minority group. However, no matter which type of the participants, the factors of sentiment and instrumentality are usually mixed together and are hard to differentiate clearly.

3. Social constructionist theory
It takes the view that the characteristics to define identity, either affirmed by self or enforced by external forces, are usually formed by social construction and choice. Both the primordial and instrumentalist approaches can be related to this approach, since the sentiment and the instrumentality can be understood as forms of social construction in a particular social and historical contexts.

Both identity markers and boundaries cannot be separated from the interpretation, utilization and construction of cultural heritage and traditions. The *Ge* example shows us that this process is always related to social political relations and interactions.

3. Heritage and Identity Politics

Various perspectives had been developed on social movements of identity politics and their effects. Social movements of identity politics are actions to gain identity recognition in a framework of states or interstates, then to advance the interests of a group whose members are oppressed by virtue of a shared and marginalized identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc. As for the *Ge* people, it is actually a kind of repression not to be recognized by the state.

By emphasizing a group identity, social movements have sought to strengthen politically oppressed groups both by improving members' sense of confidence and dignity, and by familiarizing the external society with the existing social group. Since the 1970s and 1980s, the aim of identity politics has been changing. Their goal was no longer the redistribution of political and material benefits, but shifts to a collective identity, in which one obtains respect and recognition from society.[10] What many minority groups such as, women, gay communities in Western society are seeking is not only more allowance from the government, but equal pay for equal work and other forms of equality, and also to gain recognition from state system and become a

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[10]   C. Off, "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics," *Social Research* 52 (4) (1985): 817-868.

member of it. Such changes on social movement have caught the attention of academic research.

Scholars developed various explanations to explain these movements. Some critics of identity politics claim essentialised, arguing that some of its proponents assume or imply that group identity has distinctive essence; gender, race, or other group characteristics are fixed or biologically determined traits, rather than social constructions.[11] Critics argue that essentialism ignores the internal varieties, changes and blurred boundaries. Actually there is great variety within *Miao* people; the image of *Miao* changed a lot throughout history; there is frequent mobility between *Miao* and other ethnic peoples, and therefore a blurred boundary such as through intermarriage.

Other theorists describe some form of identity politics as strategic essentialism, because external hegemonic narrative is per se essentialism. For example, under the official ethnic identification project and ethnic classification system, the ethnic boundaries are clearly artificially constructed.[12] So the disadvantaged groups take strategic essentialism to be in concert with the hegemonic narrative, and obtain political benefits through merging into the mainstream narratives; in other worlds, they challenge the hegemonic essentialism of classification system.

Another discussion pertains to the aim and effect of politics, queries the aims pursued by these groups can really be attained. For example, some critics have argued that groups based on shared identity, other than class, can divert energy and attention from more fundamental issues, such as class conflict in capitalist societies.[13] In their points of view, national governments are often merely an expression of power and benefit of a ruling class, but identity politics goes the wrong way which will never resolve the

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[11] Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, (Boulder Colo: Westview Press, 1993); Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (New York: Rouledge, 1999).

[12] Concerning "Strategic Essentialism," see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[13] Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001); Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," *New Left Review* 3 (2000): 107-120.

problems of repression and resource distribution.

No matter "essentialism" or "strategic essentialism," cultural heritage and cultural traditions are important bases of collective identity. We should situate them in their particular historical context to understand the cultural foundation of identity politics.

(4) Historical Context of Heritage and Identity Politics

The concept of heritage, a historical phenomenon, can be seen as a kind of modern consciousness, containing various meanings. On the one hand, contemporary heritage is different from those personal collections which belong to and are only enjoyed by the ruling class. The significance of modern heritage exists in its public display. All common people theoretically have the chance to access it. This is related to a very fundamental political system change in human societies and the development of modern nation-state and the citizen society. The British Museum was established in 1753 when the political system began to change.[14] The emperor centralism ended and the citizen society developed, and the emergence of today's concept of cultural relics appeared thereafter. On the other hand, heritage, as a modern consciousness, is connected with how we differentiate past and present through heritage appreciation. It is in accordance with the emergence of the citizen society, the change of the technology and religion; the expansion of colonial rule and the establishment of the concept of development and so forth. It makes people distinguish modern society from the previous world which is regarded as obsolete, or what is previously seen as uncultured, is now developed. The idea of being obsolete was constructed through heritage.

Heritage has different representations and significance in different historical periods. Coming from the colonialism, most exhibitions in the Great Britain Museum are collected during the period of imperial territorial expansion. Therefore, for the British, the heritage is very important. It is both a reminder and affirmation of their status in colonial hegemony. The British distinguished its background from other developed regions through the exhibition of the cultural relics that separate them from the rest of the world. A European-centralism comes into being and is usually represented via the

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[14] Neil Chambers, *Joseph Banks and the British Museum: the World of Collecting, 1770-1830* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007).

cultural relics.[15] When modern nationalism emerged, the heritage being publicly displayed became the symbol of the nation-state; cultural relics of different ethnic groups in a nation-state were exhibited in a national framework which constructed a singular history and culture.[16] During the anti-colonialism movement, nationalism became the model of the aboriginal groups who strived for an individual state. The cultural relics, as symbols of the nation-state hold other special meanings in this context, struggling against anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism.[17] For example, the Chinese removed the negative aspects such as uncultured feudalism and ethnic conflicts leading to the process of the decline of the Qing Dynasty and the emergence of nationalism. It became a relic to represent a unified Chinese identity of China during the movement of the anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism.[18]

Some ethnic movements are related to cultural relics, that is, during the construction of the nation-state in the post colonial period. Heritage is a badge of ethnic boundary and identity for many ethnic groups. In contemporary Taiwan, the Hakka plays a key role in the political scene, but this is a result of a special historical process. Professor Luo Xianglin recognized the status of the Hakka through plenty of archive research in the period of the Republic of China.[19] During the formation of the modern nation-state, *Miao* elites such as Liang Juwu, Shi Qigui and Yang Hanxian tried their best to re-consider the ethnic status of *Miao* through writing the history and culture of the *Miao* people in Han Chinese characters, and they eventually got the state's approval that *Miao* is in fact a minority.[20] Different ethnic groups define their identities and the relationship with the nation-state through various forms of cultural traditions and relics. The political movement for the recognition of *Ge* minority status and identity after 1949 was the product of the division of the ethnic boundary and

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[15] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[16] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983).

[17] Ana Maria Alonso, "The Effects of Truth: Representations of the Past and the Imagining of Community," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1 (1) (1988): 33-57.

[18] Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: from History to Myth* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990)**.**

[19] Luo Xianglin 羅香林, *Kejia yanjiu daolun* 客家研究導論 *(The Introducctory to Hakka Studies).* Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1992.

[20] Cheung Siu-woo, "*Miao* Identities, Indigenism, and the Politics of Appropriation in Southwest China during the Republican Period," *Asian Ethnicity* 4(1) (2003): 85-114.

approval by the further consolidated state authority. However, the biggest challenge of the contemporary nation-state and the citizenship is the independent movement of ethnicities. Those movements, such as the independent movement of Tibet and the independent movement of the French-born group in southern Quebec of Canada, also employed the discourse of heritage and traditions to rationalize their separate identities and thus creates boundaries from the major ethnic group.

The idea of multiculturalism emerged in Western countries in the 1980s. It emphasizes the coexistence of different ethnic groups under a style state.[21] Many ethnic groups have their own cultural symbols and distinguishing identity markers, so identity movements emerge to declare that ethnic differences exists which needs to be accepted, recognized and respected by mainstream society. Today, we are facing globalization; some research suggests that globalization is a homogenization process of cultural particularity and an outside culture instead of embracing local culture. However, a book, edited by James Watson, states that McDonald has been localized well and integrated into the local cultural tradition after it enters different societies.[22] The globalization of information, the population and the flow of capital generate a new mechanism to help certain groups connect more easily with related groups, and enhance the representation of its cultural tradition through the use of specially selected symbols. For instance, when the Chinese all over the world celebrate the Lunar New Year, performing the Dragon Dance is a necessary activity. Another example is the Hakka community of Taiwan. It connects the Hakka groups in the world through the internet which showcases a globalized Hakka culture.[23]

The development of the concept of cultural relics and its protection in Hong Kong also has its special historical context. After the 1968 riots, different factors have caused the development of identity consciousness among Hong Kong people, which had became the context of the preservation of cultural relics in the early stage. The discussion concerning the reunification of Hong Kong with China in the mid-1980s

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[21]   Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism : Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Basingstoke [England]; New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Paul Kelly, *Multicultural Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

[22]   James L. Watson, *Golden Arches East : McDonald's in East Asia* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1997).

[23]   *Kejia shijie wang* 客家世界網 *(The World of Hakka)*, available at http://www.hakkaworld.com.tw/.

further prompted of the Hong Kong people to search for their identity. Rubie Watson and James Watson investigated the identity changes behind the lineage ancestral halls in New Territories. They illustrate that the ancestral hall, which originally symbolizes the lineage identity and is an architecture designed for ancestral worship, turns into the historical cultural relic and an attraction as well as a source of identity for Hong Kong people. Needless to say, the reunification of Hong Kong with China is an important background for this development, and at the same time, it puts forward questions regarding ownership and political identity: who is the owner of these cultural relics? For whom are these cultural relics protected?[24]

(5) Conclusion

Several key issues can be discussed: Whose heritage? That is, the construction and display of heritage is for whom? What is the aim? Who is authorized to make heritage interpretations? How do such interpretations become a pool of contest among various parties?

Other than the object itself, and its related concepts, we also have to explore the meanings of the social group. The discourse of heritage, as a boundary of a social group including our identities of being participants, is constructed through objects and living places of the marginal groups. The social groups make use of heritage to represent themselves as a social group. So what is the correlation between us, modern or urbanized people, and marginal groups? Could they be compared with our daily lives? Or could their lives represent our past forms? Does it mean that we all belong to the same group by using heritage of a common history and ancestor? Being an identity symbol and boundary, heritage should be understood from its related social group but not its materiality and immateriality.

Another major issue is the acceptance of an identity symbol. It is important for social groups to know whether their identities are accepted in society, so the heritage, as an identity symbol and an accredited tool of marking their boundary, is also accepted.

Who does belong to collective memory of heritage? What is the relationship between identity construction and collective memory? Heritage, representation of the past, has

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[24]   Rubie S. Watson and James L. Watson, "From Hall of Worship to Tourist Center: An Ancestral Hall in Hong Kong's New Territories," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 21 (1) (Spring 1997): 33-35.

become a channel for specific class group to express their ideal future. The recent example is the collective memory of Queen's Pier where middle class' people of Hong Kong expressed their dissatisfactions and hopes for a different kind of development, opposing to the cosmopolitan trend and monopolization of global capital. Thus, heritage is not about the past, but an expectation of future.

How are the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism expressed through heritage? Heritage symbolizing ethnic identity is obliterated or standardized under nationalism. Yet, there is no existence of symbols if one social group is not legitimate under the state. Heritage is explained in terms of the state classification of ethnic groups. The explanation of most marginal groups' identity and heritage is often obliterated in the process of national standardization.

Heritage also exists in gender and class. Do we pay attention to the suppression of class in lineage heritage , when we explore the New Territories of Hong Kong? The lineage is composed of various asymmetrical family branches, with those with lots of ancestral estates and larger populations while others have less male descendents. The heritage contribute to the identities of non-lineage members, comprising farming tenants and tenants of other surnames in a village, as well female as distinguished from her male counter parts in a patrilineal lineage.

Heritage is also related to regional identity as well. The community identity is constructed through the emergence of local heritage and the re-emergence of social consciousness in society. The recent years, of local heritage has become a part of the mainstream Hong Kong community. The correlation between heritage and regional identity reflects how different areas compete for the most representative heritage to construct their local identity. Intangible Cultural Heritage as an example, includes the story of "*Meng Jiangnu*"（孟姜女）, relics of *Nan Shaolin* Monastery and so forth. Heritage could also cross boundaries to link up different social groups. For example, the identities of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau have been connected when herbal tea becomes the Intangible Cultural Heritage of these three places, while worship of Tin Hou give an impetus for cooperation and common identity in Hong Kong and China.[25] The heritage plans strengthen boundaries of local community

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[25]   "Inter-Application of Herbal Tea as Intangible Cultural Heritage in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau," *Mingpao Daily*, 18 February 2006；Fuquan, "Application of *Mazu* as Intangible Cultural Heritage in Hong Kong and Taiwan" *Lianan guancha* 兩岸觀察 *(Observations at Hong Kong and*

identity and at the same time also produce its own challenges.

Often local heritage becomes an identity symbol of a society without considering the original historical context. In Hong Kong, the Bun Festival of Cheung Chau has transformed from being a local cultural tradition to being the medium for urban people to understand past life and society, as well as being a common cultural symbol of Hong Kong people. A religious festival of the Jing national minority, residing at the China-Vietnam border region in Guangxi, has become an item on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. However, the origins of the myth is Vietnamese. A sensitive cross-border issue has ensured that the myth of the ethnic group continues to be restricted only to China and excludes Vietnam.[26]

Heritage and cultural traditions involve the politics of identity. Here, heritage and cultural traditions are often regarded as common symbols of a social group and the boundary markers of identity construction, meanwhile the authorities examine this to legitimatize the identity of a social group. A discussion on the politics of identity cannot be excluded when discussing which item should be included in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. That is, how is a social group reputed or repelled during the approval process? How is a social group affected after the declaration or rejection of being an item of Intangible Cultural Heritage? Who should inherit heritage and culture? Who are the owners of heritage and culture? Who are the beneficiary of heritage and culture?

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