

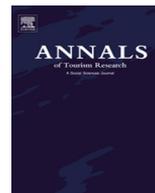


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Impersonation in ethnic tourism – The presentation of culture by other ethnic groups

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ABSTRACT

Adopting Goffman's (1959) theories about presentation in daily life, this paper discusses the use of the culture of marginalised peoples whose very marginality forms the focus and subject of a tourist gaze and tourism development. This paper (a) examines to what extent Goffman's theory (1959) regarding presentation of self in daily life can be applied in discussing commercial cultural performance, and (b) explores the operational mechanism of impersonation in multi-ethnic communities. The discussion is based in an ethnic community, Xinjiang, China where the first author resided for a year for fieldwork. An interdisciplinary approach is adopted in this study. Sociological theory, anthropological research method and management practice are all involved and the implications for both theory and practice are discussed.

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Introduction

It is not uncommon that traditional ethnic culture is used and marketed by governments and the tourism industry as a resource for attracting tourists and investments (Yang, 2007). For example, Tourism New Zealand features Maori culture as something specific to New Zealand while the Australian Northern Territory identifies Aboriginal culture as one of its tourist resources at Uluru. Such marketing

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promises the tourist an opportunity to experience something unique to a given place not available elsewhere. Equally the phenomenon that some ethnicities utilise the attractiveness of another ethnic culture and impersonate membership of another cultural group for their own benefits is not unknown. Examples are cited in China, the United States, New Zealand, Australia and Fiji (e.g. Cong, 1994; Dyer, Aberdeen, & Schuler, 2003; Yang, 2012). Indeed, Maori, Islanders and Murrisees employees in Australia's Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park have been found to impersonate Djabugay people to provide a Djabugay cultural performance (Dyer et al., 2003). In such circumstances, it is these external actors who represent (and may misrepresent) the indigenous culture.

Consequently the modes of commodification associated with cultural tourism may vary from (a) one where an ethnic minority controls but commodifies a product to meet the needs of tourist schedules, to (b) one where a majority group orders representations of a minority culture with little reference to the minority, and to (c) the case described here, where there is impersonation of others by other minorities. This paper therefore examines impersonation in cultural performance.

The mode of analysis is derived from Goffman's (1959) work where he suggests that people use impression management to sustain a performance that fits the requirements of a particular situation. MacCannell (1973, 1976) adopted Goffman's work for analysing touristic performances and in particular identified the importance of what Goffman (1959) termed the front and back stages. In this paper note has also been taken of Guerin's (2004, p. 65) work where he argues 'For the populations that social anthropologists typically deal with, . . . descent groups are the most important social networks and sometimes constitute the only ones of interest'. As described in section three the paper deals with a tight knit low population community bound by blood ties and culture, but living in proximity to others drawn from a different ethnic group and subject to a summer influx from yet a third ethnic group. Patterns of reciprocity are found across the groups (Guerin, 2004) but they inhabit the different spaces of family ties (and ethnicity), proximity and competition (across ethnic groups) and commercial interests (seasonal tourism patterns posing demands and opportunities). Goffman's analysis of performance thereby remains a key concept as in this case study, where non-Tuva impersonate Tuva for the economic gain of both and other parties.

That the issues represented by these arrangements are important is due to the way in which group and personal identities are entwined with the expression of any given culture through conventions and aesthetic consideration. These expressions of culture provide meanings that differentiate one group from another, and provide intra-group status. In addition to such psychological-social attributes, the artistic performances of a cultural group may well have economic implications in tourism, when tourists pay to see something different, and where cultural performance may be used for entertainment or challenge through representing another means of seeing the world. While the artificiality of packaging performances into schedules to fit the time constrained schedules of the performance has often been criticised (Pettersson & Viken, 2007), equally the demarcation of the 'touristic' from other social functions has also been viewed as a social mechanism by which a community differentiates the entertainment from other forms of ritual used for religious or community purposes (Ryan & Aicken, 2005). The impersonation of another's culture, especially for economic gain, at the very least, deprives a group from an income that might be theirs, and equally can threaten or confuse a society to a point where its own traditions are emasculated or undermined (Xie, 2011).

This paper seeks to discuss these issues by reference to field work undertaken in Kanas Scenic Area of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China. This area of China is increasingly attracting domestic tourists drawn from the major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. Being of Han ethnicity and being bound to urban environments, the spaces of Kanas with a different culture attracts such tourists and is indicative of how China is seeking to create product and employment.

The field work undertaken here has, it is suggested, importance because it not only provides empirical evidence of cultural selection in what is presented to tourists, but shows that the processes of commodification can also obtain compliance by those who are impersonated when such compliance gains benefit for the impersonated. The benefits are shown to be not only monetary but also cultural as the impersonated are able to retain core traditional practices. Commodification of culture is thus shown to be complex, and equally the marginalised are not wholly powerless as often imagined.

Conceptual framework

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* Goffman (1959) developed a framework which describes all face-to-face interaction as a theatrical performance: individuals are actors engaged in scenes, and behaviour is the result of the interactions between actors. Goffman takes all elements of acting into consideration: an actor performs on a setting possessing both a front and a back stage; the props in both settings direct action; the actor is being watched by an audience, but at the same time the actor responds to the audience reactions. By using terms such as 'performance', 'performer', 'audience', 'stage', 'back stage', and 'setting' to categorise particular aspects of a social scene, Goffman was able to elucidate the intricacies of social interaction (Hare, Blumberg, & Goffman, 1988). Indeed the very titles of the chapters in Goffman's work 'Performances', 'Teams', 'Communication out of Character' and 'The Arts of Impression Management' hint at their applicability to this subject matter.

Self-presentation describes an understanding that people present a 'self' to others. This clearly occurs in the 'Home Visit' performances of Kanas where, as described in Section "Impersonation", a self as interpreter of culture steps forward to host the production for the paying guests.

One of the means for conveying information is through the use of fronts. According to Goffman, the front is "that part of the individual's [or team's] performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (1959, p. 22). Fronts provide observers with information in the form of recognisable, standardized mannerisms, appearances, and settings. As Goffman observed, "... every culture, and certainly ours, seems to have a vast lore of fact and fantasy regarding embodied indicators of status and character, thus appearing to render persons readable" (Goffman, 1983, p. 8). In the case of Kanas the impersonation permits the story teller to acquire a legitimacy as the interpreter of the Tuva culture, thereby rendering the impersonator 'readable' by an audience who gives credence to the interpretive role. The expectation generates the apparent authenticity of cultural interpretation.

The back region is a place "where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted" and "where the performer can reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude" (Goffman, 1959, pp. 112–113). MacCannell (1973) introduced this notion to the tourism literature and reinforced Goffman's analysis in many different ways. For example Goffman (1959, p. 158) identifies the role of 'the trainer' wherein the presence of the trainer can intrude upon a back stage as a reminder of a performer's past 'foolishness' and how a performer has repressed parts of him or herself in a given performance—something that can occur in the process of impersonation. In this study that role is also signified by the presence of 'people in the know' as identified below. In the society described in section three 'people in the know' include those who rent their homes to the impersonators, the lamas charged with the ethical guidance of their community and the government officials who chose to turn a blind eye to the practices described. The tourists occupy an audience in the arena of the front stage and as Makley (2007) suggests, walk unknowingly and yet still become a back drop to the community itself. However this case differs from Makley's in that she writes as a foreign tourist in an already significantly changed Tibet—in Kanas the degrees of Hanification are far less, tourism remains relatively new, and non-Chinese tourists are still small in number. Nonetheless, consistent with her work and the continuum of guest-tourists noted by Smith (1989) and Ryan (2003), Kanas has reached a stage where tourists have become part of the backdrop to summer life for local people.

While it may be stated that Goffman did not offer any testable hypotheses that future researchers might use to confirm or reject his framework, this has not stopped many scholars from applying his framework to existing social situations. For example Goffman's dramaturgy has been used to explore the inconsistency in the presentation of white racial attitudes, and the rationalisation of contradictions in their attitudes (Watkins-Hayes, 2009). Watkins-Hayes (2009) discusses how 'whites' interact among other 'whites' ("back stage") and how they interact among 'non-whites' ("front stage") and examines the "slippage" between the two regions, and how 'whites' account for 'race talk' in the back stage when physically near the front stage. Gardner and Avolio (1998) also developed a model for understanding the self-presentation strategies people use to create and maintain the image of being a charismatic leader. They used dramaturgy and self-presentation to identify the various ways leaders lead.

With reference to tourism studies, [Jacobsen \(2010\)](#) suggests that the influence of Goffman on tourism research has tended to focus on the tourist, especially the tourist 'gaze', thereby framing tourism either as a quest for authenticity (e.g. [MacCannell, 1973, 1976](#)), or as a manipulated experience where apparently 'authentic' back stage cultural scenes are actually 'staged' back regions (e.g. [Urry, 2002](#)). [Larsen \(2010\)](#) re-affirms the pertinence of Goffman for the 'performative turn' in tourist research, where tourists are understood to be embodied in the performance, and making alive, the various scenes they find themselves in. This is consistent with notions of the tourist as a 'prosumer' ([King, 2002](#)) and the concept of the creative tourist product ([Richards & Wilson, 2007](#)). In the case of Kanas it occurs when the tourist becomes involved in singing or dancing with the presumed host. There is therefore a changing notion of 'authenticity' and of note is the concept of [Wang \(2000\)](#) of existential authenticity where the focus lies on the tourist belief in the authenticity of the performance, even as he or she becomes involved as a participant as in the case of the 'Home Visit' in Kanas. These are not new arguments and [Cohen \(1979\)](#) develops a matrix of perceived and traditional authenticity where it becomes possible for the tourist to perceive an event as failing to possess an adherence to past practice although it retains traditional rites. Nonetheless, in such debates the acts of performance and how they are staged remain a focus of attention, and hence the work of Goffman retains a relevance despite the passing of time.

However, while seeking to apply Goffman's thesis one must be aware of nuances. As noted, Goffman's work in the tourism literature is famed for his analysis of back and front stages, yet in *Frame Analysis* he comments "Defining situation as real certainly has consequences, but these may contribute very marginally to the events in progress. All the world is not a stage—certainly the theatre isn't entirely... True, we personally negotiate aspects of all the arrangements under which we live, but often once these are negotiated, we continue on mechanically as though the matter had always been settled" ([Goffman, 1974, p. 1](#)). Implicit in this is a distinction between performance as style and performance as cultural substance. In this study Kazakhs create a style of being Tuva, which has consequences as noted by Goffman, and it is here suggested that the style informs and becomes of substance through social consequences that follow from the distribution of incomes derived from tourism. Equally the Kazakh performance during the tourist season permits Tuva to retain traditional nomadic pastoral practices away from the villages—and yet gain an income from tourism through renting their homes to the 'impersonators'.

In short, there is a need to be aware of the critiques of Goffman's work. For example Burns in his commentary on Goffman's *The Presentation of Self*, specifically states that "... Goffman omits economic, political, religious, cultural and social organisation in general, as well as specific organisation, from the account... it was as though what was under discussion was the choice of habitats suitable for bird-watching" ([Burns, 1992, p. 118](#)).

Research setting

Kanas Scenic Area and Tuva people

The setting for this analysis is the portrayal of Tuva culture by Khazak people in the Kanas Scenic Area of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China. The Kanas Scenic Area has 7 administrative villages under the direction of two township governments. Its total population of 4,330 comprise Tuva, Kazakh, Hui, Russian and Han. Tuva and Kazakh are the main minority groups inhabiting in this area.

The Kanas Scenic Area is the main Tuva settlement in China. Hanas, Hemu and Baihaha Villages have a total population of 3012, of whom almost 60% are Tuva. Tuva speak the Tuva language among themselves, Kazakh when talking to Kazakhs and Hui people, and speak Mongolian with Mongolian people. However, until relatively recently they have not commonly spoken Mandarin. Tuva have their own beliefs, customs, religious codes, primitive production means and nomadic lifestyle, and these have been packaged into marketing aimed at tourists.

In China minority nationalities with a population of below 100,000 people are named as 'the less-population minority nationality' (人口较少民族 *pinyin: renkou jianshao minzu*). Generally, the economic and social development of these minority nationality communities is low, and poverty is

still a prominent problem. According to the Fifth National Census, there are 20 minority nationalities with less than 100,000 people (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010). Furthermore, the *sparse-population minority group* (小小民族 *pinyin*: *Xiao xiao minzu*) classification is of peoples with a population of less than 10,000 people who generally confront even more severe development difficulties than do the *'less-population minority nationalities'*. While the total number of Tuva people around the world is around 300,000, there are fewer than 3000 Tuva people in China who inhabit the border areas of Northwest China. Therefore, Tuva people and other *sparse-population minority groups* require special attention under Chinese policies. Within the context of co-habitation with 'more powerful' ethnicities, discussion about their interaction with other ethnicities has significance for the stability and harmoniousness of the society. However, there is a lack of research about tourism impacts on these minorities.

Impersonation

It is the Tuva culture along with the scenic values of Kanas that are promoted as an attraction for visitors (Yang, Ryan, & Zhang, 2013). Consequently, many parties involved in tourism, such as the local governments and entrepreneurs based outside Kanas including horsemen, restaurant and hostel operators, all actively propagate Tuva people and culture in a manner consistent with their own aesthetic values, tourist preferences and their own purposes. Needless to say, these modes of presentation induce non-Tuva components into representations of Tuva culture.

As an example, some directly or indirectly imitate Tuva, as in the 'Home Visit'. 'Home Visit' (literally means to visit local family's home), is a popular cultural attraction in tourism destinations inhabited by indigenous peoples in China. It provides opportunities for tourists to understand locals' daily life and culture via a variety of activities, e.g. viewing the home, storytelling, song performance, dining, etc. In the Kanas Scenic Area, especially in Hanas Village, the Home Visit provides performances of Tuva culture for tourists. Among the ten Home Visit businesses in Hanas Village, only two were operated by Tuva residents of Hanas Village. The other eight were all operated by outsiders, and most performers are Kazakh or Mongolian from neighbouring townships. The non-Tuva performers generally dress in the traditional clothes of Tuva, welcome tourists in the way of Tuva people, and play the Suer, a traditional Tuva musical instrument.

These ten Home Visit properties have operated since 2000 and serve to supplement the region's natural attractions (Yang et al., 2013). Although Kazakh performers presenting a less than 'authentic' view Tuva culture by, for example, incorporating the *dombra* (a Kazakh musical instrument) into performances, these visits are popular with tourists as possessing high entertainment values (see Section "Belief in performance" and following text). Such impersonation is common in many ethnic cultural performances in China (Notar, 2006) and was evidenced in the ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics.

Research methods

The data emerge from fieldwork spanning a year from summer 2009 to autumn 2010 by the first author. This paper specifically relates primarily to seven Home Visit properties, and draws on immersion in village life and unstructured interviews with various stakeholders, a content analysis of official documents in addition to recorded conversations, notes of unrecorded discussions, and a research diary comprising notes, observations, feelings, questions and other material based on a daily record of things done and observed. The first author is fluent in Chinese, and can speak both Tuva and Kazakh.

Consequently the performances provided, and tourists' reactions to the experience, were observed several times. The performers' hospitality and catering for tourists and the nature of performances were noted, as were tourists' behaviour, interaction with the imitated host, and communication amongst themselves prior to, during, and after their visit: all with a view to explore their expectations and experiences towards this tour activity. Sometimes, the researcher even helped the operators to cater for the tourists when the numbers of tourists were many, which help included involvement in

performances. In addition, there were numerous opportunities for spontaneous informal ‘chats’ in addition to more formal research methods—such chats being recorded in the daily diary.

The role of artefacts is often overlooked by ethnographers (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 134). However, the material goods, objects and traces played an important role in the performances. The property location, room decorations, the facilities used in the Home Visit, were all artefacts to which the authors paid attention. The purpose of referring to these items is not simply in the interests of documenting the ‘contexts’ of the Home Visit prosperities, but to understand their contribution to the ‘success’ of the performance and the business as a whole.

Performance

Goffman’s dramaturgical and impression management framework is rooted in symbolic interaction and places great emphasis on situational performance (Smith, 2006) and includes the following analytical categories.

Front

‘Performance’ is “all the activities of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his (sic) continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). ‘Front’ is a part of performance which defines the situation for the observers of the performance. Goffman (1959, p. 22) defines ‘front’ as “expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance”. Front consists of ‘setting’ and ‘personal front’ (Goffman, 1959). These are now discussed below.

Setting

Setting refers to “furniture, decor, physical layout, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it” (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). They tend to consist of items that are immovable to give audiences members a sense of credibility about the performance. Settings are especially useful for the performance of several fronts. In terms of the Home Visit properties, the setting leads tourists to assume a Home Visit property is a home-style cultural performance stage, rather a highly commercialised theatre or someone’s home, yet it is this outside the summer tourist season.

The operators rent the house from locals. All the Home Visit properties are located in the village, normally in a same courtyard where local families live. The stage thus appears closely linked to Tuva, albeit slightly apart as a ‘cultural stage’ as shown in Fig. 1.

Many social phenomena are thought impossible without the use of material goods (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 134). All the material objects in the Home Visit, the carpet embroidered with the photo of Genghis Khan, the wall niche for the Buddhist statue of Chos-kyi Rgyal-mtshan (the tenth Panchen Lama), the traditional Tuva musical instruments that performers play, the minority styled clothes hung on the wall, local Tuva artefacts, some dairy tea and dairy food on the table—all contribute to an impression that it is a place of Tuva, and not the home of a Han person. Fig. 2 presents



Fig. 1. The physical appearance of a Home Visit property.



Fig. 2. The setting of a Home Visit property.

the typical physical layout and furniture of the performance room. As [Goffman \(1959\)](#) notes, concealment is a mechanism of performance management (here a Kazakh identity is concealed), but the 'props' evoke a Tuva 'reality'.

The operators therefore 'borrow' 'clues' from Tuva houses to represent local Tuva homes and culture. In the past the Tuva hunted using traditional handmade tools. Their prey included bear, deer, wolf, wild pig, rabbit, marmot, fox and other wild animals, and were served as food and their bones made into different kinds of tools. Hence the heads and bones of the larger animals are hung in the houses and these are 'borrowed' by Home Visit operators to decorate their venues as a Tuva house.

Yet on the wall of some properties are hung Mongolian style minority clothes, and in some Home Visit operations are also found the clothing worn by Kazakh and Uygur (the largest minority in number in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region). Paradoxically it can be claimed that these add to an authenticity of fusion, in that Tuva interact with these groups, and occasionally it is claimed these are the clothes of a Tuva occupier dependent on the story being told to Han tourists. Certainly it reinforces a notion of rural Xinjiang, a location very different from the experiences of urban Han tourists, especially if from the eastern cities.

The performers perform for tourists in this setting, and terminate their performance when they leave this setting. The performers normally perform solely in one Home Visit property and only in some exceptional circumstance might they perform in other properties. For example, when the Suer player of a Home Visit was not available, the operator 'borrowed' a performer from another property to play the Suer for the tourists.

Personal front

'Personal front' refers to performers' items of expressive equipment that will follow the performers wherever they go. Personal front may include: insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like. Personal front can be further divided into 'appearance' and 'manner'. It is fully utilised by the performers in the Home Visit properties who dress in the traditional clothes of Tuva, welcome tourists in the way of Tuva people, and play the Suer (see [Fig. 3](#)).



Fig. 3. A Kazakh man dressed in Mongolian clothes is performing for tourists.

The appearance of a performer in the Home Visit tells tourists of their temporary ritual state, that is, they are engaging in performance provision in the Home Visit properties. All the performers are of minority identities and residents from nearby regions; therefore they differ in appearance from the Han majority. Although Kazakhs' physical appearance differs from Tuva, tourists (who are mainly Han), cannot distinguish the difference and indeed generally do not intend to distinguish. Furthermore, when the Mongolian and Kazakh performers in the Home Visit 'work', they may dress in traditional Mongolian (sometimes Kazakh) robes. Such appearance makes them different from the local residents who dress in ordinary every day dress such as jeans and jacket. Tourists get the impression from the appearance that he/she is some-one who will perform for them. Another role of such appearance is to attract tourists passing by the properties; in other words, a performer's appearance is also an advertisement of being Tuva.

On the other hand, the Han operators of the Home Visit and/or the Han guides normally do not dress using minority robes. Three reasons dictate this—namely they are not performers, they look like their tourists (an asset in their business) and third they assume the position of a 'cultural broker'—the intermediary who brings the tourist to the 'authentic' Tuva. Their role is of guide and 'gate-keeper' to the Tuva Home Visit and is itself a performance that opens the setting for the Tuva performance. Their gate keeper role both legitimises and operationalizes the 'reality' of the Tuva house as a venue of performance (Yang, Ryan, & Zhang, 2014).

Consistency of setting, appearance and manner

The setting of the Home Visit properties, the performers' appearance and manner contribute to a coherent product of cultural difference, thereby attracting tourists' attention to the differences between Kanas and other areas of China. As noted, however, the difference is a fusion of Tuva and Kazakh culture (for example the Dombra is played and counterpoised with the playing of the Suer). The dance performed is often in a Kazakh style. The product that emerges is one that interests tourists as a portrayal of a culture within an entertainment medium, and that is sufficient to meet their needs (Yang et al., 2013). The performers therefore impersonate Tuva to the point of concealing their Kazakh identity.

Indeed non-Tuva performers tell tourists they are Tuva, since it is the Tuva culture that is being sold as an attraction to the tourists. These Kazakhs 'work' in Hanas during the tourist season and return to their neighbouring townships and counties in the non-tourist season. Nonetheless, through the familiarity with Kanas that they acquire over time, they are able to tell stories of the Kanas communities with sufficient detail to pass themselves as being local when performing to tourists.

Belief in performance

Goffman (1959, p. 18) argues that when an individual plays some roles, two extremes may occur: the sincere or cynical. 'Sincere' refers to a situation where the performer begins to believe in their own self-deception to the point that observers may conclude the performer stages a 'real' reality. The 'Cynical' means the performer is not taken in by his or her own routine, and regards the performance as a means to other ends, having no belief in his or her own actions and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of an audience other than a wish to retain a source of income or other benefit. As Baudrillard (1998, p. 111) writes, it becomes "a continual *simulation* of function without any real, practical referent" to the original social reality or aesthetic.

This distinction can be used to define the motivations of the performers in the Home Visit properties. Generally, the performers in the Home Visit properties can be regarded as 'cynical'. The performers are cynical about their performance. They change to their everyday clothes, such as jeans and T-shirt, as soon as they finish their performance, even if tourists have not left the property. They perform because it is a way to obtain an income. This applies as much to Tuva as to others. Although the Tuva argue that they perform to exhibit Tuva culture, their operational strategy, such as co-operating with outsider Han people, and their disputes over the allocation of incomes, indicate that economics are the main motivation for their performance. Equally, given this motive, Tuva will also compromise on the portrayal of their culture, adopting those non-Tuva features that appeal to the audience.

Dramaturgical realisation

Dramatisation of one's work can theatrically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure (Goffman, 1959, p. 30). Dramaturgical realisation permits a Home Visit business to be different from regular Tuva homes. Tuva stay 'back stage'; therefore tourists can scarcely appreciate Tuva culture from Tuva informants except in the one case described above where Tuva operate a Home Visit business. In practice the performances are in the tourists' language as performers sing, dance, and provide 'local food' for tourists. Such dramaturgical realisation means the facsimile of culture becomes the portrayal of the Tuva culture—and appearance is made real as the drama unfolds by reference to local life.

Given this, as Goffman notes, the work of performance commands the time of the performer, and the content of performance becomes secondary as operators seek a 12 month income in the short summer season. Hence the attention to performance takes precedence over adherence to tradition.

This concern with performance and audience reaction explains why the performers rarely intend to study Tuva culture in detail. Rather they concentrate on acting, playing musical instruments, singing, dancing, etc. They concentrate on the mechanics of performance and have little time (or in some cases, interest) in better understanding Tuva culture. The performance is based on a selection of cultural aspects premised on a need to satisfy an audience. Thus the perceptions of audience reactions give a primacy to the tourist evaluation of the play. In an indirect manner Han tourists determine the content of the Tuva performance. Hence Tuva culture is filtered through Kazakh and Mongolian perceptions of those elements of culture that satisfy an audience, the audience select from the performance those aspects they enjoy, and over time the performance of Tuva culture becomes a fusion of the dramaturgical. In short, the trajectory can lead to the situation described by Xie (2011) where it is possible to imagine an equivalent to the imaginary ethnic minority of the Hainan—namely the Chiyou tribe—performing for tourists.

Idealisation

If an individual is to give expression to ideal standards during his performance, then he will have to forgo or conceal action which is inconsistent with these standards (Goffman, 1959, p. 50). When such inappropriate conduct is itself satisfying in some way, then one commonly finds it indulged in secretly (Goffman, 1959, p. 50). In terms of the Home Visit, performers conceal their identity as Kazakhs to both make the tourists believe they are attending a Tuva event and to enjoy the audience response.

In their daily life, the performers engage in a variety of ambiguous impressions to conceal awkward truths. Such impression can benefit those who intentionally mislead and thereby prevent potential risks of being deemed 'inauthentic' (Goffman, 1959). As Xie (2011) notes—brochures use the word 'traditional' (传统)—not 'authentic' (真实). Such impression of the 'traditional' can be fully embodied in the names of the Home Visit properties. Each Home Visit has a name to distinguish it from others. Among the Home Visit properties, 'Tuva' can be found in the names of the properties operated by Tuva people (e.g. Tuva Folk Art Home Visit) and also by outsiders operating the business (e.g. Traditional Tuva Home Visit).

On the other hand, the following non-Tuva operators name their Home Visit properties by musical instrument name (e.g. Traditional Suer Home Visit) and people's names (e.g. Bieke Home Visit). The non-Tuva operators' avoidance of using 'Tuva' in the names of the Home Visit businesses decreases risks and even bring benefits to the operators. Noticeably, some Home Visit properties even have English names to attract some foreign tourists, as seen from Xiao Ta Home Visit (Fig. 4).

According to some local Tuva, an outsider Kazakh operator often lied that he was the son of a famous Tuva elder. It was once suggested to the first author by a tourist that she should visit that Home Visit giving the reason that "the Tuva guy told me that he studied in a university and came back to operate the business". The first author had, however, witnessed the performance provided in the Home Visit when tourists visited. The operator knew the identity of the author and probably because her presence, on that occasion he told tourists he was a native in the village, implying but not explicitly saying he was Tuva. Untruths are avoided, but the stated truth is 'economical'.

Sample nomenclature of ‘Tuva’ Home Visit Operations



Fig. 4. Xiao Ta Home (family) visit.

On the other hand, the house owners tacitly accepted the counterfeit Tuva performance provided by the non-Tuva tenant. One conversation with a Tuva woman who had rented her house for four years to the outsider Kazakh operator of Home Visit, included the following note:

1st author: The operator is Kazakh, but he operates Tuva Home Visit.

The respondent: The performers do not say it is Tuva Home Visit. It is just Home Visit.

1st author: But the performers tell tourists they are Tuva.

The respondent: No. They do not say this.

1st author: Have you seen the performance they provided for tourists?

The respondent: Never.

Given the knowledge networks of the village it seems almost inconceivable that the informant does not know what is happening. So what might cause this response? The Tuva host is choosing to refuse to admit to the first author that the tenant (Kazakh operator) operated a counterfeit Tuva performance. Hence the informant may be engaged in self-denial to preserve a ‘front’. To state otherwise would be a confession that an inappropriate act is being committed—and so the adherence to simulation preserves both income and a pretence that Tuva, Kazakh and the local community and government sustain to preserve face (*mianzi*) and social cohesion.

Teams

It is often the case that each member of a troupe or cast of players may be required to appear in a different light if the team’s overall effect is to be satisfactory (Goffman, 1959, p. 84). Teamwork is therefore necessary and loyalty to the performance is a prerequisite.

Each Home Visit involves three or four staff: one narrator, one Suer player and one singer, and in some operations the narrator also sings and dances. The whole performance takes around half an hour. First, the narrator introduces Tuva culture for 5–10 min. Then, the player plays the Suer, and then the Dombra. After that, the singer sings for guests and proposes a toast to the guests. Normally, the singers sing two songs that represent traditional throat singing. Last, the cast dance with the tourists. Tourists can taste dairy alcohol and snacks during their visit. All staff may play the role of waiter, intermingling

with the tourists, permitting the taking of photographs and creating a tourist experience within the time permitted.

The owner/operator plays a prominent role in the operation of Home Visit. The operator plays multiple roles, including renting the house from the locals, hiring performers, attracting tourists and tour guides and maintaining a good relationship with local government officials. Price competition is the main promotional means adopted by the operators. Until 2008, the ticket price for Home Visit was 30 RMB (US\$4.7) per person. The common marketing practice for each Home Visit property is to give commission to tour guides, who would suggest specific Home Visit property to tourists as an optional tour activity in Kanas.

Until the change in legislation taking effect from 1st October 2013, tour guides obtain little or no salary from tour operators/agencies. Their income was based on commissions. From 2005 to 2008, the commissions to tour guides rose from 5 RMB (US\$0.78) per tourist to 28 RMB (US\$4.40) per tourist. That meant the guide could obtain 28 RMB (US\$4.40) from each tourist purchasing the optional tour activity of a Home Visit. Some operators used other incentive policies to attract tour guides. For example, if the number of tourists reached ten, the ticket for one or two tourists was reimbursed to the tour guides.

Accordingly, the tour guide's position is problematic. Although they are not members of the 'team', they have very close relationship with the team and it is they who bring tourists to the businesses. They are thus indirect members of a 'team', and it is suggested that over time this position will become more regularised as a result of the 2013 legislation.

The cooperation of team members is important. Goffman mentioned two important components of such relationship. First, any member of the team can give the show away or to disrupt it by "inappropriate conduct" (Goffman, 1959, p. 88). This could explain why each performer's performance and service is important to the tourists' overall experience. One operator stated that the performer playing Suer had been employed for five years in her business, since he played Suer very well and tourists like it. While another operator complained:

I will not hire the girl singing songs next year. She only knows two songs and she behaves not appropriately in front of tourists.

Second, if members of a team must cooperate to maintain a situation, they will strongly maintain that particular impression before each other as persons 'in the know' (Goffman, 1959). In terms of a Home Visit, persons 'in the know' involves all the members of the outsider operated Home Visit businesses, and all the locals and government officials. When government officials, especially Tuva officials, are present as audience, the performers do not say they are Tuva. Furthermore, in some cases, the first author is also regarded as a person 'in the know' due to her familiarity with the performers and locals. Yet by maintaining a fiction for the tourists, the researcher herself became an 'honorary' team member 'in the know'.

Regions

Goffman's (1959) defines three regions, back region, front region and residual region. Watkins-Hayes (2009) refers to Goffman's comments about 'spoiled performances' (such as when an outsider intrudes into the back stage) as the 'slippage' between the back stage and the front stage.

Most Home Visit properties have a front region, and a back region presented partly as a front region and a back region. The front region serves as the performance area (see Fig. 2). There is a back region presented partly as a front region (see Fig. 5). Errors and mistakes are often corrected before the front stage performance. Performers change clothes in this room, and prepare drink for visitors. It also serves as a restroom for tour guides and as a bedroom for the performers. It can be argued it is a back region. On the other hand, this room is normally the outside room of the front region and people need to enter into the front region from this room. Carpets, minority clothes and other signs are also hung on the wall. Therefore, it also presented partly as a front region. Due to the proximity of the front region and this back region, the performance in the front region is sometimes influenced by what



Fig. 5. A back region presented partly as a front region.

happened in the back region, for example, people chatting and children's cries. To some extent, these make the performance not overly commercial and contribute to the elements of 'Home'.

The actual back region is where the staff live, cook and sleep, and in many cases, people cook and sleep in the same room (see Fig. 6). According to Goffman, the back stage is a place "where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted" and "where the performer can reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude" (1959, pp. 112–113). The back stage is characterised by a less formal atmosphere, where the actors can openly violate expected role behaviours. In contrast to the scenarios discussed by Goffman (1959) and MacCannell (1973, 1976), the actual back region of the Home Visit is open to access by outsiders and tourists can enter if interested in doing so. This is one difference between China (especially its western ethnic communities) and Western countries where privacy is valued more (Hofstede, 2001).

Performers' behaviours in the front and back regions differ. In the latter they do not dress in traditional costumes. Instead, they wear modern clothes such as T-shirt, jeans, sports' shoes, etc. The so-called 'daily' food and drink in the front region are only for tourists, and this is prepared while considering the food preference of tourists from other parts of China. In the back region, they have their own authentic 'daily' food. Even the layout of the snacks on offer to tourists differs from those of the back room. Those of the front room are neatly laid out, and placed in orderly rows, contrary to the somewhat haphazard normality of the back room (see Fig. 6); although individual differences between the Home Visits permit some variance. However, the front room almost always tends to the orderly.

Discussion

Adopting Goffman's (1959) theories about presentation in daily life, this paper discusses the use of the culture of marginalised peoples whose very marginality forms the focus and subject of a tourist gaze and tourism development. In Goffman's (1959) discussion about impersonation, he addresses the inconsistency of impersonation. If some person impersonates supreme/sacred characters (e.g. doctor or Minister), it would be regarded as an unforgivable crime; however, if he/she impersonates unimportant persons, it would not be taken seriously. This can explain tourists' and governments' atti-



Fig. 6. A corner of the back stage.

tudes toward the performance of the Tuva culture. Tourists do not strongly care if these performers are Tuva people or not. In fact, some tourists know these performers are not Tuva, but they still enjoy the performance. Nor has the government implemented the rules that forbid such imitative performances. But as Goffman noted, actions have consequences, but wherein the above analysis follows Goffman in his assessment of performance, in this instance the consequences, it is suggested, are not confined to matter of staging alone and are creating new dynamics in village life.

Within tourism there are many examples of traditional ethnic culture being used and marketed by governments and the tourism industry as a resource for attracting tourists and investments, and at the same time for promoting economic and cultural development and ethnic unity (Xie, 2011; Yang, 2007). Equally the dominant society and its economic interests may develop 'authentic' tourism products and market the 'exotic' image of indigenous peoples being motivated more by profit rather than by any genuine concern about presenting indigenous peoples in a sensitive and just manner (Silver, 1993). It is at this point that tourism academics deviate from Goffman to argue that the 'brokers' and 'cultural brokers' found in all cross-cultural situations are likely to generate major social and cultural change (Brown, 1992).

The lack of authenticity in performance generates several subsets of issues. First, there is an issue of power structures, in that the failure to authorise (Ryan, 2003) the performance as authentic is itself symptomatic of a given power structure. At the least, such a lack of authorisation can only occur with an implicit or passive view about the authenticity of the cultural product on the part of other actors such as tourists or governmental bodies. Indeed traditional ethnic festivals, pilgrimages, and historical events have been utilised to construct an image of authentic ethnic traditions (Oakes, 1998; Sofield & Li, 2007), even if not founded in truth as in Xie's (2011) example of the Chiyou tribe.

Second, there is the issue noted by Trinh, Ryan, and Cave (2014) in their study of souvenir sales at Hoi An, Vietnam, namely that there are selections of crafts, traditions and periods upon which to base some concept of authenticity, and the final commodification of the souvenirs leads to a new fusion, which itself becomes 'authorised' by the different actors to represent place and meaning. From this perspective, the performances by Kazak of Tuva culture create their own new notions of cross-cultural understandings that possess their own authenticities of collusion, tradition, convenience—all of which come to be understood in the minds of the audience as described by Goffman.

Issues such as these are also implicit in the work of Barth (1959, 1967). Based on his research in Pakistan Barth examines the potential relationship that can arise between communities in close proximity that are marked by social hierarchies. His analysis is based on patterns of reciprocity (see also Blau, 1964), and it is possible to offer a similar analysis here. However, differences exist between Kanas and Pakistan due to seasonal factors leading to the arrival and departure of tourists and external entrepreneurs alike in Kanas. What is concluded is that cultural meanings are intersubjectively negotiated through stakeholder interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Chio, 2011).

Such circumstances are not unique to this specific location. Shelton (2005), for example, describes what is termed the 'ethnoscape' of the American Southwest as a fusion between American, Hispanic and Indigenous Indian arts, and notes the international production of native arts and crafts, and traces a history in such manufacture that extends for well over a century. Similarly Swanson (2013) also makes a distinction between the objective and constructed authenticities, arguing that the objects of the American South-West peoples have been subjected to complex patterns that continue to marginalise a people whose arts and crafts increasingly become a hybrid of several different art forms.

An added aspect to these parallels between issues of tourism and minority peoples can be found in the work of Nyiri (2012). Writing of developments on the Laotian-Chinese border at locations such as Mongolia, Nyiri clearly demonstrates how an area once dominated by the ethnic groups Shan (Dai) and Akhar in increasingly coming to resemble a Chinese rural town with the influx of Chinese entrepreneurs. This can be argued as a form of Chinese neo-colonialism.

Conclusions

This study supports the notion that Goffman's (1959) theory can be used to analyse the situation of indigenous minority tourism. For his part Selwyn (1996) differentiates between 'cool authenticity',

which refers to the real, original, or genuine, and 'hot authenticity', which refers to the accepted but enjoyed fake versions. What tourists obtained from the Home Visit was arguably an inauthentic Tuva culture experience, although in many cases they fail to see through the veil of inauthenticity, but paradoxically can see and enjoy a fusion of culture in that they appreciate the concession to Han sensitivity and their wish for entertainment. They know it is not wholly real, but they assume the core to be Tuva.

Entmann (1993) also draws on Goffman's (1974) work on framing and suggests that framework analysis is based upon selection and salience to define problems, diagnose causes, to judge and to suggest remedies. In this study using Goffman's (1959) concepts of presentation and performance the findings indicate that non-Tuva frame themselves with an articulation of Tuva culture, yet increasingly infuse it with familiar aspects of their own culture to present an entertainment to Han tourists. For their part the Han tourists condone the performance because it would seem they seek 'difference' rather than 'authenticity'—their experiential authenticity is one that is based upon being present in a locale very different to the urban centres from which most come. As Yang et al. (2013) note, it is sufficient for them to be present in a landscape of which Tuva form part. They frame their experience through an expectation of difference being fulfilled.

Simultaneously the study also permits alternative readings of the performance akin to that of Swanson (2013) and indeed back to earlier literature. Thus, for example Cohen (1979) commented that a failure to observe and distinguish the performance from the reality of production can nonetheless generate tourist satisfaction. The question asked by Trinh et al. (2014) in their study of Hoi An is whether tourists engage in a 'knowing failure'. As in their study, this research found respondents refer to a need to keep alive local traditions as a motive for purchase, and thus a veil is drawn over the extended production processes that lie behind the performances. Goffman's work helps to elucidate the nature of this veil, wherein the back stage of collusion between Tuva and others are hidden from the tourist.

The study provides an additional nuance to past writing whereby culture or 'tradition' is transformed into a set of 'things' which are at once symbolic of Western pursuit of the exotic 'Other', and the commodities of modernization (Bruner, 2005). The impact of tourism on indigenous cultures often produces a social situation in which local people alter their lives to suit the demands of tourists. As noted above the particular aspects of local culture most sought by tourists are often theorised as resulting in 'staged authenticity'; a cultural performance moulded to suit tourists and tour operators, but devoid of its indigenous cultural meanings (Crystal 1989; MacCannell 1973). Thus, in China ethnic culture is represented and marketed in order to create cultural exoticism, to establish local distinctiveness, to encourage commercialism, and to enhance the links between local ethnic traditions and the nationalism of modern China (Oakes, 1998). Oakes (1998) suggests that ethnic culture is not only reproduced to meet the demands of commodity production but also to contribute to the cultural construction of an alternative modern China. He identifies two dominant ideologies regarding the production and commodification of ethnic culture in China. On the one hand, preserving traditional ethnic culture has become important for China's nationalism and modernisation; on the other hand, there is a pursuit of economic and cultural development to combat rural poverty (Oakes, 1998). Ethnic culture, which is promoted as both investment enticement and tourism commodity, becomes important for the economic development in China (Oakes, 1998) and as a statement of contemporary China as indicated by Xi's references to minority cultures in his book, *The Governance of China* (Xi, 2014).

Governments and entrepreneurs are the main powers in developing ethnic tourism in China, but most of the powerful are not members of the ethnic communities (Yang, 2007). This permits a pastiche of the culture in promotion. Ironically, the provision of Tuva culture by Tuva people is not officially defined as a necessity for the Tuva Home Visit in the administration's documentation. In the *Kanas Scenic Area Home Visit and shopping spots Administration Measures* provided by Tourism Bureau, Folk Home Visit is defined as

Ethnic home styled attraction opened to visitors for visiting, touring and shopping. It is mainly provides visitors a stage to understand the local folk culture.

Thus, Yang (2007) suggests that more stable and effective tourism policies and regulations should be established to protect ethnic resources from non-local investors' profit-orientated operations. She further calls for fostering ethnic entrepreneurship and to encourage community based and

minority-controlled businesses in future tourism development, but she also admits that to eliminate Han-owned and operated tourism enterprises is undesirable because in part they help to engender a demand for products.

In one way it can be argued that the Kazakh managed Tuva homestays are part of what Bruner (2005) termed the borderzone. He notes that 'This border is not natural; it is not just there, waiting for the tourists to discover it, for all touristic borderzones are constructed' (Bruner, 2005, p. 192). Like many borderzones the Tuva home stage becomes a point of communication, but it is a communication that engages in an explicit staging of cultural performance played by one group, condoned by another for the purposes of a third group—an audience of tourists, through the intermediary of a fourth group—the travel and tour agents. It is also a nexus of implicit forces, those of the modernisation of China as newly enriched tourists seek difference within a framework of market forces where entertainment is a motive, but where entertainment creates new hybridities of cultural re-enactment that over time will come to inform new ways of seeing the Tuva Scenic Area.

Finally, it is suggested that the paper allies itself with recent studies appearing in English that seeks to analyse issues of culture and tourist experiences of performances within a Chinese context infused with Chinese perspective. For example Vasantkumar (2009) in his studies of Tibetan-Han interactions note that for Han domestic tourism in places such as Gansu is as if visiting a foreign country. Similarly Notar (2006) has expressed the anxieties felt by Bai producers and sellers on the one hand and tourists on the other over the authenticity of souvenirs in Yunnan. She makes the point that while Western literature about authenticity is often about states of being and essence—in China the concern was often about appearance. It is suggested that in Kanas if the appearance represents Tuva, then Han tourist is, for the most part, ready to accept the performance of the front stage. Yet to delve beyond the front stage is to begin to unmask a complex pattern of collusion, masquerade and necessities as all parties work within the political *realpolitik* of unequal access to power and decision making.

The simulacra of Tuva culture is thus even more complex than noted by Baudrillard (1998). On the one hand it is an invention that fuses cultures and introduces selections of Tuva and Kazakh culture to meet the entertainment needs of Han seeking difference, and so becomes and creates its own evolving substance. But the invention permits Tuva to earn an income from tourism whilst adhering to a traditional summer pastoral nomadic pattern of life—yet tourism itself induce other changes in the village. The patterns of change are not only evolving, but seem to evolve more rapidly than in the past in a current world of greater mobility. As Chio (2011) then notes—these new mobilities, not only of a spatial nature, but of transfers of life styles, technologies, interactions and challenges, all create series of performances that bear consequences for community lives—even in the remote parts of China (Yang, Ryan, & Zhang, 2015).

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