Historical Methodology and Sustainability: An 800-year-old Festival From China

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While much has been written in tourism literature about what is tourism as sustainable development, particularly in the context of planning, management and best practice, there has been little focus on methodologies designed to assess that sustainability. It is suggested that too often we are presented with a snapshot of a given situation at a particular point in time which does not reveal the processes at work over time; and a judgement about sustainability in the absence of the historical perspective and/or a longitudinal study must therefore be treated with caution. This paper examines the value of historical methodology for determining the sustainability of tourism development. It then applies this approach to an examination of a festival which has survived in China for about 800 years. The dynamics and interrelationships between political, sociocultural and economic forces, essential to an understanding of tourism in a holistic way, may thus be related to the sustainability of a tourism development.

Introduction

In any attempt to study tourism (a term which continues to confound easy definition) the pre-paradigmatic state of the specialism confers problems on methodology. There is a fragmentation of theory and equal fragmentation of accompanying methodology which tends to be rooted in various disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, economics, marketing, psychology and geography (Echtner & Jamal, 1997). 'Academic imperialism' is one result, with each discipline treating tourism within its own boundaries and from the standpoint of its own paradigms (Leiper, 1990). A researcher attempting to analyse a tourism phenomenon employing theories of social structure from anthropology and utilising ethnographic research methods may receive short shrift from reviewers versed in the immediacy of market research or economic rationalism. Kuhn (1970) has termed this inability to communicate across disciplinary paradigms with their different methodologies, research standards and problem definitions as 'incommensurability' (1970: 109). The holistic approach to tourism research advocated by Bernstein (1991), Dann, Nash and Pearce (1988), Jafari (1990), Jovicic (1988), Echtner and Jamal (1997) and others is relatively uncommon.

The debate about whether tourism is or is not a discipline in its own right, with its own paradigms and its own body of 'common knowledge' has been sharpened by the emergence in the past 12 years or so of the construct of 'sustainable development'. In its broadest sense, sustainability encompasses environmental, social, cultural, political and economic factors in an integrated, holistic way. The term 'sustainable development' first gained global prominence with the publication of the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (Hall, 1995). Its definition of sustainability encompassed...
the relationship between economic development and the conservation and sustenance of natural resources.

The concept of sustainability was cast in its present shape by the World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED) at its meeting in 1987. It collated a wide range of views on Ecologically Sustainable Development (BSD) which it set out in the so-called Bruntland Report, *Our Common Future*. This synopsis included both biophysical and sociocultural spheres and enunciated a set of principles which have been adopted by many governments since then. There are four fundamental canons, as follows:

1. *Ecological sustainability*
   - Development must be compatible with maintaining ecological processes, biological diversity and biological resources.

2. *Economic Sustainability and Intergenerational Equity*
   - Development must be economically efficient and equitable within and between generations.

3. *Social sustainability*
   - Development must be designed to increase people’s control over their lives and maintain and strengthen community identity.

4. *Cultural sustainability*
   - Development must be compatible with the culture and the values of the people affected by it.

These four elemental points have been applied in a number of countries. For example, a review of development options for Bali was based on them and resulted in a set of seven criteria by which to assess the sustainability of tourism development. Social and cultural sustainability, community and ‘integration-balance-harmony’ were given a prominent place (Wall, 1993: 55). Combined, the seven criteria suggested for Bali’s development path reinforce the notion that sustainable development is an integrated, holistic concept in which all four of the tenets outlined above are inextricably linked together. As another example, the Australian Government set up a series of nine expert groups to examine ESD (ecologically sustainable development) and over a two-year period produced one of the most comprehensive applications of the principles of ESD to tourism development with its 200-page Task Force Report on Tourism (1990).

In the context of tourism it is also important to recognise that ‘tourism as sustainable development’ is not the same as ‘sustainable tourism’. In terms of the first, tourism would be ‘developed and maintained in an area (community, environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period, and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well-being of other activities and processes’ (Butler, 1993: 29).

Sustainable tourism, on the other hand, would only have to maintain its viability as a profit-generating activity for an indefinite period of time to be regarded as sustainable. In other words, to qualify for the first definition, tourism activity needs to combine ‘long term economic sustainability within a framework of long term ecological sustainability, and with an equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of development’ (Woodley, 1993: 136). ‘Ecological’ in this context
includes both the bio-physical and the sociocultural. Extending the Butler-Woodley definitions to embrace festivals as specific touristic activities, a festival (according to Getz, 1998) if it is to be sustainable in a touristic sense would need to combine and integrate a number of social and cultural objectives with an economic return to its organisers and owner community while retaining its appeal to ‘others’.

Historical Methodology and Longitudinal Research

‘History’ as Towner and Wall (1991: 72) observed, ‘is concerned with the dimension of time and attempts to understand social processes and institutions within this context’. This comment echoes Barraclough’s (1979) emphasis that time ‘provides the depth which comes from studying society not as a static but as a dynamic constellation of forces manifesting itself in continuous and constant change’. Historical research is thus concerned with examining the dynamics of the way events change over time (Elton, 1969) and this approach constitutes the distinctive contribution which historical methodology can make to tourism. There have been numerous research approaches adopted by historians, ranging across positivism, structuralism, generalisation, its opposite, particularisation, and Marxist interpretation, to name a few. A French school of historical research, ‘Annales’, stressed the need for integration of the findings and methods of other disciplines into studies of the whole of human activity, and the interplay between long-term continuities and short-term cycles of economic, political, demographic, and social change (Braudel, 1958, cited in Towner & Wall, 1979). According to Towner and Wall (1991: 73), however, ‘very little mainstream historical research has so far permeated the corpus of tourism studies’.

To probe this assertion in the context of writings about sustainable tourism development, a scan was carried out of some of the tourism literature published in the decade since the 1987 Bruntland Report (six journals — *Annales of Tourism Research, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Journal of Tourism Management, Journal of Tourism Studies, Journal of Travel Research, Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*), 30 edited academic books and 25 conference proceedings). This search revealed more than 300 articles written about the topic. They reflected the fragmentation and varied disciplinary bases of their authors, a characteristic as noted by Lepine (1990). While much was written in this limited sample of tourism literature about what constitutes sustainability, relatively less was written about methodologies for analysing and understanding the processes which contribute to the sustainability of a particular tourism phenomenon or development. *Tourism Alternatives* edited by Valene Smith and Earlington (1992) was a notable exception.

Only one of the papers (Picard, in Hitchcock *et al.*., 1993) used historical methodology to analyse aspects of sustainability. In his examination of the development of tourism in Bali over a 50-year period, from the time of the original Dutch colonial power’s utilisation of ‘unspoilt’ Bali to the comprehensive tourism master plan developed in the 1970s by the nationalist government in Jakarta (foreign, Javanese-dominated, non-Balinese), Picard was able to demonstrate how over the last 20 years the Balinese had been able to harness tourism and put it to work for their own purposes, instead of working for tourism. It is suggested in this context that examining sustainability of a tourism development, event or
activity could benefit from a much more active involvement by tourism researchers in historical and longitudinal studies which move outside the restrictive boundaries of individual disciplines, so that economic, social, cultural, political and other ‘fields of influence’ are incorporated in a hermeneutic framework.

Indeed such an approach is not simply useful but, it is argued, is essential in order to avoid some of the restrictions and deficiencies of ‘conceptual time-capsules’ described by Wilson (1993: 32), when a longitudinal dimension is lacking. These limitations include difficulties in appreciating the underlying dynamics of a situation since many elements will change over time. An historical perspective may assist in uncovering what went on before the period of research commenced; but a finite, single field trip (characteristic of so many consultancies) will tend to focus only on those aspects dominant at the time. It will not necessarily assist in unravelling the underlying forces shaping the way in which a situation has moved and is changing or being transformed, nor be able to point to its future sustainability. These forces however, may be manifested and revealed over a longer time span.

An historical or longitudinal approach avoids what Hitchcock et al. (1993: 6) have termed ‘snapshot pictures’ of a particular period in time which fail to capture the underlying reality of the situation. They note in this context Picard’s studies of tourism in Bali (1987, 1990, 1993) which have clearly contributed ‘to a historically grounded understanding of the transformations of local cultural forms in relation to tourism development’ (Hitchcock et al., 1993: 6). Wilson (1993) was particularly critical of ‘one-off’ studies providing polar viewpoints based on interpretations and conclusions which were in fact deficient because of the lack of an adequate time dimension. Some of these studies have nevertheless gained seminal status in the anthropology of tourism literature because of their utilisation of ‘provocative new concepts’ (Wilson, 1993: 36).

In this context Wilson cited two studies. The first was Greenwood’s (1977) account of the Alarde Festival, Fuenterrabia, in the Basque Province of Spain which became ‘commoditised’ by tourism and fell into terminal decline. This study introduced to tourism literature Greenwood’s concept of commoditisation. The second was Buck’s (1978) study of ‘boundary maintenance’ among the Amish in Pennsylvania, USA, in which Buck postulated that a total separation of Amish ‘backstage’ life from tourists reinforced and revitalised their traditional culture (Wilson, 1993: 36–40).

Other researchers began to utilise Greenwood’s example of commoditisation which became one of the most powerful indictments of the corrosive effects of tourism and one of the most often quoted — c.f. Cohen’s use of Greenwood’s material in his (1988a) paper on ‘Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism’ which itself helped to perpetuate Greenwood’s thesis. Buck’s study of the Amish also attracted influential support — vide Cohen again, who described it as one of the more important studies’ based on MacCannell’s work on authenticity in his, Cohen’s (1988b) paper on ‘Traditions in the Qualitative Sociology of Tourism’.

Wilson subjected the Alarde Festival and the Amish involvement with tourism to a re-visit by research students 10 years after the original research by Greenwood and Buck because of concerns that there were inconsistencies in their
studies. Greenwood had found that the Fuenterrabia Municipal Council, in attempting to exploit the tourist dollar, had ordered the festival to be performed twice a day. In Greenwood’s interpretation, this imposition had deprived the festival of its excitement and spontaneity. It became ‘an obligation to be avoided … (The decision to make) their culture a public performance took the Municipal Council a few minutes; with that act a 350-year-old ritual died’ (Greenwood, 1977: 137). The concept of commoditisation attained validity.

In 1988, however, Young discovered a thriving festival, ‘a vibrant and exciting ritual which took place in a town alive with expectation and emotion … the people, far from feeling that the Alarde was an obligation to be avoided, were enthusiastic in the preparations and enactment of the week long festival’ (Young, personal correspondence cited in Wilson, 1993). Her investigations suggested that the festival had fallen into temporary decline (our italics) during Greenwood’s visit not because of the commoditisation of the event by a tourist invasion but because the municipal government had been viewed then as corrupt, undemocratic and dominated by Spanish bureaucrats. Accordingly the inhabitants had withdrawn their support for the Festival in opposition to the Council’s decision. Young considered that the current success of the festival lay in the politics of that original decision, in which opposition to the Council had turned the event into a symbol of Basque nationalism: ‘the men no longer march to celebrate a famous Spanish victory over the French but rather to state their Basqueness’ (Young, cited in Wilson, 1993). Her conclusion was that Greenwood’s fundamental premise that the development of tourism had led to the commoditisation of the Alarde and hence its cessation, was invalid. One might add that like reports of Mark Twain’s death, Greenwood’s pronouncement about the demise of the Alarde Festival was premature. (It should be noted that the concept of commoditisation was not invalidated by Greenwood’s flawed analysis of the Alarde Festival and it remains a useful concept).

Buck’s premise was in many ways the opposite of Greenwood’s — that the Amish had been able to maintain their way of life despite a tourist invasion of very considerable proportions into their midst. They had not been commoditised but had achieved ‘protection’ for their culture by the erection and maintenance of a rigid boundary which disguised and hid their ‘back stage’ from the tourist gaze. Tourists were provided with access only to staged events on the fringes of Amish territory.

Wilson’s concern was that there was in fact much more contact between the Amish and tourists than Buck had uncovered. Who for example were the cultural brokers staging ‘authentic’ Amish performances along the perceived boundary, Route 30? Who were the ‘teacher guides’, ‘specialists’ and ‘Mennonite guides’ referred to in Buck’s study?

Amanda North undertook fieldwork among the Amish at Wilson’s suggestion in 1992 (private correspondence cited in Wilson, 1993). She established that there were some 800 Amish household farms engaged in direct contact with tourists and that about 400 had been so engaged in 1980. Boundary maintenance was not particularly evident. North found that the Amish were in fact critical of the ‘English’ owners of businesses along Route 30 who exploited Amish culture for their own personal profit. The Amish tended to welcome tourism because it
provided additional employment and income for their younger generation. Farms had become unviable with the increase in Amish population over the years, and tourism provided in situ employment for younger generations. They were actively engaged in learning and then displaying for visitors traditional skills, crafts and occupational tasks. Without tourism, employment would have had to be sought outside the Amish community, a greater evil in the judgement of the elders, than bringing tourism inside their farm gates.

Tourism had thus contributed to the maintenance of Amish culture, community cohesion and family solidarity not by a policy of exclusion of tourists enforced through boundary maintenance but by the opposite — the provision of access to the ‘real’ Amish world. Apparently Buck had simply arrived at a time when one faction of the Amish had been concerned with boundary maintenance, so that the issue was prominent when he had undertaken his fieldwork; but that situation had changed through time.

Wilson’s observation was that these two examples demonstrated how the lack of a temporal dimension could, especially in the case of ‘one-off’ studies, confuse rather than clarify understanding of the impacts of tourism. The lack of an historical basis or longitudinal approach may also result in reliance on what Wilson described as ‘currently fashionable research strategies’ which are ‘the product of a given historical moment’ which may capture a researcher (‘entrapment by one conceptual framework’ — Wilson, 1993: 35).

It is also obvious that historical analysis and a longitudinal study have an improved probability of interpreting more accurately just where a particular situation may stand in terms of the various tourism development models which have been formulated by researchers such as Butler (1980), Miossec (1976), Doxey (1975), Noronha (1979), E. Cohen (1983), and others. Characteristic of all of these models of tourism development are steps or stages; and a situational study may be only a given historical moment and not reveal the processes at work which might result in a different conclusion being drawn.

All situations are of course dynamic. The point is not that situational studies should not be attempted (they may reveal very insightful understandings and provide what Gluckman (1961: 7) has described as ‘apt illustrations’) but rather that caution might best be applied to some forms of conclusions; and certainly those made in terms of sustainability. A series of snapshots over time could provide a technique to chart the ‘progress’ of a particular destination along or through the stages of the various models.

The historical approach applied: A case study from China

To test the merits of an historical framework for understanding sustainability, a festival in China was subjected to detailed analysis utilising a combination of research methodologies. This is the Gokh Chin or Chrysanthemum Festival of Xiaolan in southern Guangdong Province, which has managed to survive and span some seven or eight centuries of upheaval and find a niche in the political and socioeconomic environment of contemporary China. It appeared to owe its current vitality to tourism since it was promoted by the Chinese tourism authorities as one of the country’s major cultural attractions of 1994. Emphasis
was given to the fact that it took place only every 60 years, hence attendance was
'a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity'.

A field trip was undertaken at the time of the 1994 Festival and the techniques
of participant observation adapted from ethnographic methodology were
utilised, accompanied by interviews with key personnel. The specific participant
observation of the 1994 Gokh Chin Festival constitutes what the ethnographic
literature describes as 'a situational analysis' which exhibits 'the morphology of
the social structure' (Gluckman, 1958; Mitchell, 1984), from which inductive
analysis proceeds. Library research into the historical background of the festival
was undertaken through the Chinese University of Hong Kong, including
secondary sources covering ancestral clan records.

To approach the question of the sustainability of the Festival the different
social, political and economic conditions of Xiaolan over the centuries in which
the Festival had occurred were pieced together from a variety of records. This
procedure was deemed necessary to determine as far as possible the interrela-
tionship between these factors and the Festival. What was the foundation on
which the current manifestation of the festival is based? How has it changed over
the centuries? What are the prevailing forces which have shaped its current
dimensions?

In association with a longitudinal and/or historical approach to under-
standing sustainability is the value of adopting a reasonably broad
interdisciplinary approach to events within which tourism development has
occurred. It is trite but needs to be stated explicitly: tourism development does
not and cannot take place divorced from its surrounding political, social and
economic environments, nor from the discourse of power. The necessity therefore
is to ensure that any historical study of the particular tourism element also takes
into account the changing political and socioeconomic forces at work over time.
In the case study presented here, it can be seen that the Festival has been shaped
and owes its survival (sustainability) to its ability to adapt and 'fit in' with
changes in the broader environment. Without such a methodological approach,
the study of the Gokh Chin would be reduced to little more than a descriptive
recital of how many chrysanthemums were displayed where, with n numbers of
visitors from 'X' and m numbers of visitors from 'Y', spending so much money
on accommodation or food and beverages — important for a market survey but
assisting little our understanding of sustainability ...

This study of the Gokh Chin provides details of socio-economic-political data
relating to a particular situation or sequence of events from which theoretical
inferences about sustainability and tourism development are drawn. It is a survey
of a specific configuration of events or material in which a distinctive set of actors
or institutions has been involved in a defined situation at particular points in time
over a long period of time. An important characteristic of the study is synchronic
analysis of the interrelation of institutions and power within the changing
sociopolitical whole over a period of several centuries. The researchers are then
strategically placed to appreciate the theoretical significance of these intercon-
nections in the context of the general principles of sustainability and
development.
Historical Background

Throughout China's long history, culture and the traditions of festivals, heritage travel and pilgrimage have been a unifying theme (Overmyer, 1986; Li & Sofield, 1994). This theme was central during the four millennia covering the reigns of the dynastic emperors from 2000 BC to AD 1900, but it virtually disappeared during the twentieth century as a series of upheavals racked the country. The declaration of a Republic in 1911 broke the linkage with annual imperial pilgrimages and a range of festivals constructed around the court was abolished. Two world wars in which China suffered invasion severely curtailed cultural activities. Internal unrest from 1911 up to the time of the civil war between the forces of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led by Mao Zedong and the Kuomintang regime of Chiang Kai Shek in the latter half of the 1940s, disrupted many of the surviving festivals and prevented most recreational travel. Then, for the three and a half decades of Mao Zedong's regime both traditional culture and freedom to travel were suppressed, as Mao pursued his vision of 'totalistic iconoclasm' (Lin, 1979: 1). The 'four olds'—old ideas, customs, culture and habits, especially the continuing influences of traditional religions and philosophies and reverence for past imperial dynasties ('feudal superstitions')—were attacked. Tourism was not accepted as an appropriate form of economic development; visitation by invitation to China (the only form of 'tourism') was used as a propaganda tool.

Only with the advent of Deng Xiaoping's 'open door' policies of 1978 were these trends reversed (Meisner, 1986). Tourism was then endorsed because of its capacity to make a contribution to modernisation. The conservation and presentation of traditional culture were also approved because of its perceived contribution to enhance national unity and to develop the country's tourism product. However, contradictions remain between the differing objectives of socialism, modernisation, globalisation and traditional culture as the Chinese economy powers its way towards the Year 2000.

The Chrysanthemum Festival of Xiaolan has managed to survive this turbulent history. Adaptations to the way in which it has been organised, and changes to its objectives and its form have mirrored changes at both the regional and national levels. From its origins as a traditional celebration in honour of Xiaolan's ancestral founding fathers it is now more sharply directed towards tourism and financial gain as China moves towards a market oriented economy although its modern form remains embedded in ancient heritage. This tension between its traditional roots and its contemporary commoditisation is an example of Swain's (1989) 'paradoxical issues', the resolution of which is essential in her view to developing sustainable ethnic tourism.

Two components of the Gehu Chui of the 1990s stand out: its embrace of tourism and its entrepreneurial promotion of investment in 'up-market' real estate, both areas of economic activity which were anathema to the China of Mao Zedong. These two elements are consistent with Getz's (1998: 13) definition of festivals 'as tourist attractions, catalysts for other forms of development, image makers, facility or site animators (designed) ... to promote an attractive image for investors or potential residents'.

To understand the influences which have wrought changes in the staging of
the *Gōkh Chīn* it is necessary to consider the festival in concert with changes in Chinese society as a whole. Thus, the tensions generated between the Chinese Government’s determination to maintain political stability under the Communist Party and attempts to modernise are also analysed. Against that background the way in which the *Gōkh Chīn* has been recycled to reflect those changes is then examined. The twists and turns of policy as the Communist Party strived to find an appropriate mix of traditional Chinese culture, socialist culture and ‘modern’ culture (the latter necessarily incorporating Western values and systems), with reference to economic development are traced.

**History of Xiaolan and the Gōkh Chīn before the Communist Revolution in 1949**

**Historical origins**

Xiaolan is a market town in the heart of the Pearl River delta in Guangdong Province, Southern China. Its wealth was based on the reclamation of the river’s sands and their transformation into rich alluvial paddy (Eastman, 1986). According to popular discourse, the original inhabitants comprised a group of merchants, their extended families and their servants who were fleeing an oppressive warlord about 800 years ago. As their boats sailed along the river they saw in the distance a field of gold, which turned out to be a mass of yellow chrysanthemums. Taking this sight to be a propitious omen, since the colour yellow symbolises prosperity, longevity and imperial mandate in Chinese cultural consciousness, they disembarked and set up their households.

Chinese imperial society at the time had embraced the philosophy of Confucius and the system of Mandarin bureaucrats for administration of the Empire (Tu, 1979). As part of that philosophy, the arts were highly regarded and scholarship was held in higher esteem than military prowess (Pye, 1981). In the small provincial town of Xiaolan, the aspirations of its lineage leaders sought consummation through literary accomplishment in conformity with those values. Local scholars as members of the national literati utilised the chrysanthemum in their poems and writings, and proudly extolled the role of their lineages in staging festivals. Flower displays, accompanied by operas and poetry readings, became competitive elements between the lineages. ‘When the chrysanthemums flower’, wrote Wen Zhengheng in 1620 (cited in Clunas, 1996: 169), ‘the aficionados obtain several hundred stems of multi-coloured hues, arranged in rows ... to vaunt wealth and nobility’.

The chrysanthemum has in fact had a special place in Chinese aesthetics dating at least back to the poems of Tao Yuanming (T’ao Ch’ien, AD 365–427), ‘the archetype of the man of noble mind who abandons high office for a life of self-sufficiency and reclusion’ (Clunas, 1996: 53). Tao’s most famous poem, still taught in Chinese schools around the world, depicted the chrysanthemum as a moral symbol of pure and lofty behaviour and thought. It conjures up an image of Tao with his back turned on government office, his face turned to his rows of chrysanthemums by the East Gate of his garden and a view towards the distant Southern Mountain.

Over several centuries, the Xiaolan festivals became more elaborate and fused
elements of ancestral worship, Confucian scholarship, lineage status and leadership, the perpetuation and veneration of traditional culture, and an expression of both thanks for past prosperity and hopes for future wealth. The elaborate public ritual gave the community a shared consciousness about cultural identity based on lineage, the dominant social organisation in South China (Freedman, 1966). The chrysanthemum became synonymous with Xiaolan and today it is known as the 'Chrysanthemum City'.

The 1782 Chrysanthemum Festival

The first detailed description of the Festival was in 1782, when ‘each major surname (in Xiaolan) put on floral displays (of chrysanthemums) ... There were scores of theatrical troupes whose performance brought together kinsmen and friends’ (Siu, 1990: 765). The Festival was a domestic affair organised by the town’s lineage associations, landlords and merchants largely for Xiaolan’s residents. The He, Li and Mai lineages dominated Xiaolan’s social and political life and they controlled grain production, trade and the reclamation of the alluvial sands. Their ancestral halls were focal points for their activities and manifestations of their status, and the floral displays and operas were staged outside these halls. The Festival attracted several thousand visitors, precursors of today’s tourists. Siu records that in the mid-nineteenth century there were 359 ancestral halls in Xiaolan, which had only 20,000 inhabitants, ‘a phenomenal proliferation of wealth under the shadow of the ancestors’ (1990: 771).

The Festivals of 1814 and 1874

In 1813 the major lineages organised a special event to celebrate a court ruling by the town’s magistrate which removed a powerful oppressor from their midst. This decision was unexpected and was widely believed to have been caused by divine intervention. As the chrysanthemums were in bloom, the event’s operas then became known as the ‘chrysanthemum operas’. It was 24 years since there had been a chrysanthemum festival and it sparked public demand for periodic festivals (Siu, 1990: 770). According to contemporary documents of the time, it was decided to conduct regular festivals which would be designed around the format of the original Chrysanthemum Festival and thus revive an historical happening that Xiaolan could claim as its own. The focal ancestral halls became the centres of the revamped festival in the year of jiashu (1814), with three days of operas and competitions among the lineages for the most impressive displays of chrysanthemums. The town’s leaders decided at this festival to celebrate it every 60 years, this period signifying the completion of a full cycle of human affairs in accordance with cosmic forces (the jiashu cycle). This timing thus added a religious and cultural significance to the legitimacy of the festival as authentic tradition.

The anniversary of the festival was also important in another sense. The year of jiashu, 1274, six centuries earlier, when the Emperor Song had migrated south from Hangzhou to escape Mongolian invaders (Elvin, 1973), was identified by the lineage leaders as the date when Xiaolan’s founding fathers moved from northern Guangdong to the Delta. In the early nineteenth century, disputes in the Pearl River Delta were frequent concerning claims over title to the alluvial fields
and rights to harvest and other fees. In this context the Festival could be utilised as a mechanism to give historical depth to the rights of the Xiaolan clans, even if the legitimacy of some of their claims was open to challenge.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries connections to the imperial court were also very important as symbols of a community’s status (Naquin & Rawski, 1987). The lineage records of Xiaolan contain great details of all of their members who were successful at the imperial examinations and of the positions they held in the imperial bureaucracy (the Mandarin bureaucracy was based on entry by academic merit through nation-wide examinations) (Siu, 1990). The reconstruction of the Gokh Chin as a memorial festival celebrating ancestors who originated from the central plains (which extend south from Beijing to Shanghai and westwards for 600–700 kilometres) and had migrated south with the Song court may have been a device to demonstrate close affiliation with the imperial centre, extend the literati pedigree of the dominant Xiaolan lineages by several centuries and also to distance them from the original natives of the Delta who were regarded as inferior.

It is also noted that the Song dynasty gave imperial support to the ancient art of chrysanthemum cultivation and that when the capital and court were located in Hangzhou, a chrysanthemum show was held in the Royal Garden on the banks of West Lake every autumn (Qian et al., 1991). Xiaolan’s Chrysanthemum Festival may thus be construed as signifying linkage-by-association with the imperial court.

Since guanxi (connections) have always been central to conducting affairs in China, the Gokh Chin thus became another stage for demonstrating to the Chinese world Xiaolan’s attachment to the imperial system, the importance of the lineages’ academic achievements, and for proclaiming the merit of Xiaolan. In the words of Siu, the festivals:

provided the setting in which a long history of settlement, lineage power and literati pretensions were explicitly interlocked. The created nexus was important. Having collectively appropriated the status symbols of a state culture and thus its political connections, the aspiring elites in Xiaolan aggressively claimed the lands from the county magistrates in the names of their lineages and developed them into productive fields. (Siu, 1990: 778)

When the next year of Jianshu came around in 1874, the Chrysanthemum Festival was used to consolidate the power and status of the lineages, reaffirm their links to the imperial state and reinforce the image of Xiaolan as a market centre of some significance.

The 1934 Chrysanthemum Festival

By the time of the next 60-year anniversary (1934), however, dramatic changes had taken place. The imperial order had crumbled and finally been abolished. A Republic under Dr Sun Yat Sen had been declared in 1912 but could not maintain control, and warlordism had become endemic. The Nationalists under Chiang Kai Shek had established an unstable degree of unity in 1927, only to lose control over much of the country when the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931 (Schirokauer, 1977). The power of the lineages had been dispersed to a large
extent and, in Xiaolan, local military strongmen in alliance with individual merchants had emerged as controllers of the alluvial fields.

These emergent interests staged the 1934 festival around their own power bases. They utilised community temples rather than the ancestral halls of the lineages from which to display the chrysantheums. This re-location was significant in terms of signalling the shift in power because the community temples served as public, security offices of neighbourhoods, were under the patronage of local military strongmen and functioned also as tax collection centres. Operas, fireworks and a parade of boats on the river surrounding the town replaced the more scholastic activities of previous festivals. Visitors from many parts of China came to Xiaolan for the activities.

The 1934 festival may be interpreted as an attempt to ‘capture’ for its organisers the status and accompanying connotations of local leadership. It was a public affirmation of their authority and power. It reflected the fact that the traditional leadership of the town, based on landed lineages and literati prestige, had largely disintegrated and been replaced by a mixed group of local strongmen and merchants who had links to provincial war lords (‘warlordism’ was endemic in many regions of China, with localised political power based on military power: Meisner, 1986). The change of focal stage from ancestral halls to community temples symbolised the changes which had taken place in the wider society. The ability to attract many visitors from distant places reaffirmed the new order in both local and national terms.

The Gokh Chin 1949 to 1979

The victory of the Communist revolution in 1949 ushered in even more dramatic societal changes. It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the many changes which China experienced under Mao Zedong. It is sufficient to state that they were profound, wide-ranging and reached into virtually every corner of the land (Meisner, 1986). The monolithic administrative apparatus of the CCP replaced all former leadership systems. ‘Redness’ became dominant over ‘expertness’ and political loyalty to the new order became the single most important principle, guiding society in every facet (Mackerras et al., 1994).

The next Gokh Chin was not due until 1994, but in fact three more festivals were staged in the interim by the Communist Party. The first was in 1959 when the town’s CCP Committee decided to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the revolution. This production was something of a surprise given the Party’s ideologically-driven antipathy towards feudal customs, its ban on lineage and temple activities, and its criticism of chrysanthemum cultivation as a decadent past-time of the leisureed classes. It may be interpreted as an attempt by the town’s CCP committee to take on the mantle of legitimacy bestowed on the organisers of the chrysanthemum festival, and to turn it to revolutionary ends. The objective was no longer enhancement of lineage power and literati status, ancestral veneration, imperial homage and capitalist pursuit of wealth, but rather the extolling of the glories of Mao and the Communist Party. The ‘flower fairy’ of chrysanthemum tradition was replaced by the Communists’ equally mythical revolutionary soldier hero, Lei Feng, with a central monument erected to his honour in the midst of the floral display. This monument symbolised the
ownership of the festival by the dominant players within the power structure of Xiaolan, their capacity to reinterpret history and the use of their own emblematic to signify the new objectives and direction of the festival.

The Communist Party staged another festival in 1973. Their action was a response to a major chrysanthemum festival which had been organised in Hong Kong by a group of Taiwanese merchants at that time. Concerned that ‘their’ emblem had been appropriated, and given the hostility then extant between mainland China and Taiwan, the Xiaolan Town Committee quickly organised their own festival to reclaim their floral symbol. Again, however, it must be seen as somewhat aberrant in the prevailing sociopolitical environment of the time, when China was still recovering from the trauma of the Cultural Revolution. It may be interpreted as a convoluted example of a local CCP Committee seizing an opportunity to illustrate its commitment to nationalism and the motherland where the ends justified the means, even if the means had in the past represented the despoiled ‘four olds’.

The third occasion was in 1979, the year after Deng had proclaimed his ‘open door’ policy. The Town Committee utilised the staging of the festival in that year to demonstrate to neighbouring towns and the outside wor... especially the overseas Chinese who were targeted for attendance, that Xiaolan...was a leader in the reforms, was serious about attracting investment, and had opportunities and potential for profitable business activities. Nationally it also drew attention to the town’s attachment to Deng’s policies and the new era of liberalisation, a modern version of its former acclaim for the imperial system.

The Party located former landlords and literati who were expert in the cultivation of chrysanthemums and the art of floral displays and put them to work with apprentices. In the event, some 40,000 visitors, many of them from overseas, attended the opening ceremony and another 100,000 followed over the course of the week-long festival. Xiaolan gained both national and international attention (Siu, 1990: 785). It was one of the first major tourist festivals to find a place in Deng’s new order.

Deng’s ‘Open Door’ Reforms

The environment for market reform introduced by Deng created a new opportunity for Xiaolan to celebrate the 1994 Gold Chiu. In the early 1980s a series of reforms to implement Deng’s 1978 ‘open door’ policies changed the whole face of rural China. A central feature of the economic reforms was the localisation of the economy and approval of market enterprise. The centralised, hierarchically-organised bureaucracies led by Communist cadres were replaced by decentralised decision-making between individual enterprises and economic units. De-collectivisation of the rural communes which had been formed by combining small villages during Mao’s ‘Great Leap Forward’ in the 1950s and which Mao described as ‘the main pillar of socialism’ (Kwan Ha Yim, 1991: 204), began in October 1983. By mid-1985 the nation’s 56,000 communes had evolved into more than 92,000 townships in which economic and administrative functions were separated (Xinhua News Agency, 6 June 1985).

One of the consequences of the rural reforms was that village and town-run enterprises blossomed everywhere in the countryside. The State Bureau of
Statistics (SBS) estimated in 1993 that there were more than 22 million village and township-owned cooperative enterprises. They employed anything from a handful of people to several thousand. There were also hundreds of thousands of individually owned private businesses, often very small, and operating at an informal level. The SBS estimated that in 1993 village and township enterprises registered a gross output of 2.7 trillion yuan (approximately US$225 billion) accounting for 33.6% of the country's total industrial output. They employed 118 million people in the rural areas (Chen, 1993a). Thousands of tourism sites and thousands of tourism-related businesses were developed by local interests. ‘Having the peasants leave the land without leaving the village’ to participate actively in village- and town-run enterprises was acknowledged as a guiding principle of national strategic importance (Fei, 1989: 50).

Under the reforms, Guangdong Province in particular benefited enormously from compatriot Chinese and foreign investment (Lew, 1995). Hong Kong relocated many of its labour intensive factories from the then colony to the adjacent mainland. Entrepreneurship skills, marketing and promotional expertise and business management capabilities flourished among Xiaolan’s community. The town’s population increased almost sevenfold to 130,000 as its prosperity increased under the impact of the reforms (Xiaolan Town Committee, 1994). Where Xiaolan’s Festival in 1979 could only talk about the promise of the future, in 1994 the town could look back on 15 years of solid achievements.

In 1978 there had been only a handful of state-run enterprises but in 1994 there were more than 600 cooperatives in Xiaolan. Many were in the light industry sector and the town produced 60% of the national output of adhesive tapes and 40% of its door knobs and locks. Total industrial and manufacturing turnover in 1993 amounted to US$312 million, 59 times more than the total for 1978 (Xiaolan Town Committee, 1994). Agricultural produce (market gardens, horticulture) was worth US$17.5 million, almost 14 times the 1978 total. According to the China State Bureau of Statistics, Xiaolan’s industrial and agricultural production was ranked seventh among all towns in China.

Service industries had also flourished. In 1994 there were six banks and more than 100 credit unions. There were 39 primary and secondary schools, and the town provided nine years’ free education for all its children. There was a new hospital. There was a total of 59 recreation centres, sports stadiums, parks, cinemas and arts and cultural centres. In 1978 there were only three or four small hotels in Xiaolan, although a new six storey hotel was built for the 1979 Gōkō Chih. By 1994 there were twenty new hotels, some of them up to nine storeys high (e.g. the Xiaolan Grand Hotel, the Xiaolan Chrysanthemum City Hotel, and the Mandarin Hotel and Shopping Centre). There were numerous restaurants and several karaoke clubs. There were several large new integrated shopping centres. Travel agencies and tour companies had appeared and flourished. According to local sources, about 50% of the investment (US$25 million) originated from compatriot Chinese from Hong Kong, many with relatives in Xiaolan. This figure is consistent with published sources (e.g. Leung, 1990; Associated Press, 1993; Chen, 1993b; Lew, 1995) indicating that about 40% of compatriot Chinese investment in China has been in property development including hotels, resorts and office apartments, the bulk of it in Guangdong Province. Many of the
ventures were 'equity joint ventures' or 'cooperative or contractual agreements', part of the US$25 billion of foreign investment in China pledged in 1993 alone (Lew, 1995: 168).

During the years following Deng’s open door policy, China had developed a sophisticated international tourism industry. From being virtually non-existent only 16 years previously, tourism in China had rapidly become one of its largest sectors. Its growth has been nothing short of spectacular (Wei, 1993). In 1978, a total of 1.81 million tourists visited China, 1.6 million of them from Hong Kong. In 1979 that figure expanded to 4.2 million, (3.8 million of them from Hong Kong) an increase of 232%. By 1993, the total had reached 41.5 million overseas visitors and international receipts had climbed from US$263 million in 1978 to US$5.1 billion. In 1994 the number of domestic Chinese tourists was estimated at 430 million by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA). There were more than 44 million international visitors, constituting — at least in sheer numbers — one of the most dynamic tourism industries in the world (CNTA, Yearbook of China Tourism Statistics, 1990-1994).

In developing China’s tourism industry in the post-Mao era, the national authorities focused on heritage and culture (Sofield & Li, 1998). The Heritage Conservation Act 1982, passed by the 25th meeting of the Operations Committee of the National Peoples Congress of the CCP on 19 November 1982, provided the legitimacy for tourism to proceed in this direction. The preambular paragraph states that the Act is designed ‘to strengthen the conservation of China’s heritage’ and ‘to carry out nationalism, to promote revolutionary traditions, and to build up socialism and modernization’. The Act is comprehensive and each province, autonomous region, county and municipal (city) council was charged with the responsibility of setting up its own heritage conservation management organisation (Article 3 of the Act). This Act gave legal sanction and the endorsement of the Chinese State to the staging of Xiaolan’s Chrysanthemum Festival.

At the Thirteenth National Congress of the Communist Party in 1990, the Director of Cultural Affairs, Li Zui-huan, reaffirmed the requirement that culture had to be a servant of socialist ideology. However, in a major departure from Mao’s policies, Li also stated that cultural policy had to serve economic policy and the people should try to find ways to make money from their heritage. This attempt to synthesise socialism and modernisation with the preservation of traditional culture provided further encouragement to tourism planners (amongst others) to find ways to ‘make culture pay’. Li provided direct encouragement for domestic tourism with his exhortation that the Chinese people should visit heritage sites, cultural festivals and the performing arts. As Qiao (1995: 56) noted, tourism was developed ‘to strengthen local cultural traditions and promote better cultural understanding among people in different parts of the country’. The politics of tourism as a propaganda tool for Maoism were thus replaced by the politics of tourism as economic development for Deng.

Not only physical sites such as the Great Wall, the terra cotta warrior army of X’ian and the Forbidden Palace (to name but a few) were rehabilitated in China’s rapid move to embrace heritage as a major component of tourism. Traditional festivals, religious ceremonies and pilgrimages, classical plays and re-enactments of historical events were also revived around the country — not only as
statements of culture, community identity, or religious affiliation but as tourist events manifesting the 'Chinese-ness' of the occasion for both domestic and overseas visitors. In 1993 the CNTA identified 40 festivals and celebrations that could serve to promote tourism (Zhang, 1995).

This then was the environment in which the authorities in Xiaolan decided to stage the 1994 Gokh Chin.

The Gokh Chin 1994

Planning for the event commenced three years in advance, and two areas which were repugnant to the socialist ideology of Mao — tourism and overseas investment in real estate, industry and manufacturing — constituted major new elements in structuring the Festival. In an astute calculation, the town committee recognised the capacity to harness tourism to bring Xiaolan's investment opportunities before a very much larger audience than would otherwise be possible. Its unique selling point was the Chrysanthemum Festival: it could claim the only authentic such festival in all of China. Its connections with the overseas Chinese, many millions of whom are of Cantonese origin, provided the target segment.

The Festival Committee therefore worked closely with the China Travel Service to ensure that the Chrysanthemum Festival was placed on its global promotions agenda for 1994. In its 1994 Catalogue of Tours to the Middle Kingdom, the Gokh Chin was prominently advertised. In the event this was a highly successful ploy as literally hundreds of busloads of visitors from both overseas and around China turned up to witness what was described as a special event occurring only once in a lifetime because of its staging only every 60 years. The three previous festivals between 1959 and 1979 were quietly forgotten. It was the largest and most spectacular Gokh Chin yet, with a total of more than 1 million visitors during the fortnight of the Festival (19 November to 3 December 1994).

It firmly established itself as a 'hallmark event', that is, one which achieves such a high level of awareness and projects such a positive image regionally and nationally that it has 'become inseparable from, and mutually reinforcing of, the destination's image' (Getz, 1998: 15). Xiaolan is China's Chrysanthemum City.

The ancestral halls and the community temples played virtually no part in the 1994 spectacle. Two new boulevards 50 metres wide, each one kilometre in length and forming a cross were constructed on the outskirts of the old town in a classic example of urban expansion. This area is called New Town. Massed displays of chrysanthemums occupied the central strip of each boulevard, several individual bushes having more than 1000 blooms. The flower fairy was prominent in one display as were depictions of phoénixes, dragons and other symbols of good luck and prosperity. Some of the intricate displays incorporated literally thousands of blooms. Of the revolutionary Communist hero, Lei Feng, there was no sign.

Each side of the new avenues was prime real estate and a range of investors (as noted, many of them joint equity ventures with partners and/or relatives from Hong Kong) had constructed multi-storey office buildings, high rise blocks of flats and condominiums. Many of these were for lease or sale. Two major housing estates, funded largely by Hong Kong developers for which the conceptual plans were displayed, were marketed — Golden Chrysanthemum Gardens and Silver...
Chrysanthemum Gardens. Both featured high rise hotels and shopping centres, recreation facilities, blocks of flats and condominiums. A new town hall and government offices some nine storeys high was sited halfway along one of the boulevards. Many of the ground floors of the newly constructed buildings were leased for showrooms, and housed displays of goods, equipment and manufactures. All of the new buildings were elaborately decorated with more displays of chrysanthemums. The chrysanthemums appeared almost incidental to the real estate marketing and the trade exhibition, yet they were the foundation upon which the financial and business ventures were based. There were three main displays of chrysanthemums: at the People’s Park; along the east bank of the river which bisects the old town; and the boulevards of New Town.

The Festival had an extensive cultural activities programme. In addition to the flower displays there was an Opening Day Grand Parade of decorated floats, a fireworks display, and a dragon dance display which took place in the New Town Sports Centre. There were operas which were performed at the Government Cultural Centre and the ‘Forever Peace’ Cinema by both the local town opera society and invited opera companies from Guangzhou and other cities. There was a combined cultural, art and development achievements exhibition in the new town hall. Other activities included jugglers from Guangzhou, a puppet show, plays (with drama groups from as far distant as Szechuan), variety shows (including a team from Hong Kong), cabarets, a chess championship (held in the Government office building), an exhibition basketball match, a model boat sailing exhibition, and kung fu exhibitions.

The Xiaolan Town Committee and its business community shrewdly utilised the town’s cultural heritage for financial gain. A major ‘Investment and Information Bureau’ was located adjacent to the Government offices in New Town, where it was surrounded by massed displays of chrysanthemums. The Bureau disseminated details of sale, lease and investment opportunities in the town. Festival brochures, maps and programs quoted a Guangdong Province description of Xiaolan as ‘the model town in Guangdong for 10 years of development under the “open door” policy’.

Space restrictions preclude a detailed discussion of visitation to the Festival and a broad summary only is provided. Following the CNTA classificatory system, visitors were segmented into domestic (many of them VFR), ‘Compatriot Chinese’ from Hong Kong, Macau and to a lesser extent from Taiwan, ‘Overseas Chinese’ (ethnic Chinese who reside overseas) and ‘Foreign Visitors’ (i.e. non-Chinese). Domestic visitors numbered approximately 70%, according to Xiaolan tourism officials. Visitors from Macau (which is only a short journey by road from Xiaolan) numbered more than 50,000 throughout the Festival. The total from Hong Kong was more than double at 120,000, a number of whom made two or more visits during the 14 day period of the Festival. While many visitors were attracted to the spectacle of the massed chrysanthemums and the cultural activities of the Festival, it was estimated that perhaps one-fifth of Hong Kong visitation was motivated by the prospect of real estate investment (flats and condominiums in Xiaolan were being marketed at less than one-third the cost of similar size apartments in Hong Kong).

For many Chinese from overseas, the Festival as a ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ occasion
also represented a significant opportunity to return to their homeland, visit friends and relatives, or introduce their children, born overseas, to their ancestral 'home town', or even invest in an apartment for retirement. This type of visitation has been described as 'sojourner-tourist', since historically 'the overseas Chinese experience has been described as one of a sojourner' (Lew, 1995: 158); that is, leaving the homeland was motivated by the opportunity to improve one's economic fortunes and therefore status on eventual return, rather than an intention to migrate permanently. Cohen (1979a) has referred to this type of travel as 'existential' tourism, undertaken by persons who are spiritually alienated from their place of physical residence and physically alienated from their spiritual home.

Lew (1995) has attributed this desire to return to three main reasons:

(1) the importance of the extended family, especially in southern China and Guangdong where most villages are patriloclal clan communities. Even though one or more generations of a family may have lived overseas they will still regard their ancestral village as their 'true' home and they will maintain contact with their relatives;

(2) sustained pressures from the town for sojourners to return home, including filial piety (concern and care for aged parents and ancestral graves). In some areas of southern China, including Xiaolan, collectivisation was less successful and, in return for remittances from overseas, even during the Mao years villagers were successful in maintaining the property rights of overseas relatives. As Peterson (1988) noted, despite 40 years of Communist rule many southern Chinese who left before 1949 still maintained ownership of their homes; and

(3) the existence of a more open class society in southern China allowed upward mobility and an openness to new ideas, with the concept of an economic-based social class system coexisting with the dominant Confucian land owning class. Returning sojourners could therefore 'fit' into their society easily and be readily accepted.

Visitation and investment by overseas relatives was substantial for the Gold Chin of 1994 and it may thus be viewed as making a significant contribution to the maintenance of kinship ties and intergenerational aspects of the festival, in conformity with tradition.

No data were gathered on individual expenditure levels but Xiaolan city officials estimated that with a per capita expenditure of around US$100 the Festival generated gross revenues of more than US$200 million. Per capita expenditure may seem low but it must be remembered that 70% of all visitors were domestic, and that while hotels experienced capacity occupancy rates, VFR home stays played host to many thousands. In addition, perhaps as many as 20,000 Hong Kong visitors were 'day trippers' in which the Festival was only part of a longer five or seven day group tour through Guangdong and its attractions (source: discussions with CTS staff, Hong Kong and Xiaolan). Expenditure on real estate was not available; however, comments from agents and others that 'many' sales had been made appeared verified anecdotally by observing transactions being signed and through personal contacts with buyers. Economi-
ally the impact of the Festival on Xiaolan, both in terms of income generation and infrastructure development may be seen as substantial.

The 1994 Festival was commoditised and reconstructed in such a different form that its linkage to its traditional roots appeared distant. It was thoroughly modernised. Yet in another sense it is suggested that while the content had changed and the presentation was markedly different, very little in terms of fundamentals had changed.

The Festival was still held to promote the prosperity of Xiaolan. It was still held to reinforce the leadership structure of the town — even though it is a different structure from that which used to be dominated by the lineages. Instead of an alliance of lineage leaders and individual merchants, the key players were the town CCP Committee, town cooperatives and joint venture enterprises (many of whose management are leading members of the He, Li and Mai clans). Overseas investment was the ‘golden chrysanthemum’ they were aggressively pursuing. The Festival still demonstrated attachment to the prevailing national system, even though that is the Communist Party rather than the emperor. Cultural elements were prominent, although these might be best described as contemporary forms of popular entertainment rather than the ‘high culture’ art and literary merit of ancient times. Basketball and cabarets might not be traditional parts of China’s ancient heritage; but if heritage is regarded as a process encompassing change, then they constituted authentic elements of contemporary Xiaolan society.

At this juncture it is useful to examine Swain’s (1989) construct for sustainable ethnic tourism in China. While directed at ethnic tourism in fact it has more general application where cultural resources are utilised or exploited for tourism. Writing in the context of the Sani ethnic minority of Hunnan Province, China, Swain suggested the necessity of some politically sanctioned power if tourism development was to be sustainable. She advanced the notion of the nation state as the key actor required to create an environment conducive to ensuring that the community had the capacity to act upon its decisions and sustain them. In the particular case of the Sani people in China it was legislation which created land rights and granted limited political autonomy (the 1984 Law on Regional Autonomy of Minority Nationalities) which allowed them to gain control over Sani culture-as-tourism. In the case of the Xiaolan it was the series of laws introduced as a consequence of the post-Mao ‘open door policies’ of 1978 which decentralised economic and political control and devolved rights to municipal authorities, community cooperatives and local residents to establish commercial enterprises, including tourism ventures.

In addition to the question of ownership of cultural resources, Swain suggested that paradoxes arising from the opposing forces of conservation and change in the development process (inevitable tensions between tradition and modernisation) needed to be addressed with appropriate strategies if sustainable forms of tourism were to be achieved. For the Sani minority the paradox was the standardisation of ethnic culture controlled by the state for tourist consumption with staged ‘authentic’ events, and with tourists themselves having expectations of their ethnic hosts being ‘quaintly non-modernised’ or ‘museumised’ juxtaposed with the minorities rights legislation of 1984 (Swain, 1989:37). Policies then
introduced which were conducive to Sani control over their participation in tourism still contradicted socialist dogma and state apparatus designed to facilitate social control. The continuing transformation of China to a market-oriented economy is, however, lessening the difficulties experienced by the Sani.

In terms of Xiaolan and the Chrysanthemum Festival, an analogy may be drawn between Maoist centralism and its control over all cultural expression prior to 1978, and the restructuring of political relationships which occurred as the state under Deng became the promoter of cultural forms while concurrently validating non-state localised enterprises. Ownership of the Festival by Xiaolan was not contested. Unlike Greenwood's Fuenterrabía council, the conglomerate of interests responsible for organising the 1994 Gokh Chin was accepted as integrally part of the Xiaolan community — many of them after all were drawn from the city's three main clans whose lineage linkages extend into every suburb of the city. There appeared to be not only broad acceptance by residents that the organiser were acting in a way which would benefit the whole town (even if cynicism about where most of the dollars might be going was also evident) but genuine pride in the staging of the event. Once again the Gokh Chin had illustrated its adaptability and had been changed to meet internal and external imperatives.

**Sustainability and the Gokh Chin**

The question must be asked: do durability and continuity over centuries constitute sustainability? If we return to the principles of tourism as sustainable development, it can be seen that an historical analysis allows us to set the dynamics of the Gokh Chin in context. In its modern form it displays a complex mix of local and global forces in its presentation. At one level it draws upon an eight hundred year long history of tradition, dating back to the time of the original settlement of Xiaolan circa 1200 AD. Some of the original motivation for staging the festival remains. But the contemporary commoditisation of culture and the form of its current staging, with tourism and the marketing of real estate and investment in manufacturing and industry upstaging the display of chrysanthemums, are entirely modern and a reflection of both national change in China and global trends. Visitations and investment by the sojourner/existentialist tourist inspired by the 1994 Gokh Chin, drawing upon the global dispersion of the Chinese diaspora and the tradition of maintaining contact and concrete linkage with the spiritual 'home', also reflect this duality. The 1994 staging of the Gokh Chin thus illustrates both the globalisation process and specific adaptations to local internal aspects of China's tourism development.

Ownership of the Festival has remained with the city community as a whole, but the organisers have changed as the leadership and power structures of Xiaolan have changed. The organisation of the Festival in 1979 and 1994 demonstrated an increase in the capacity of the town's own structures to exert a degree of control over the direction of their development rather than following the dictates of the central Communist Party in Beijing. The social significance of the traditions of the Gokh Chin lies in its association with identity. It has been fundamental in helping individuals and the community define who they are, both to themselves and to outsiders, over centuries. It provides a sense of belonging in a cultural sense and in terms of place. In this context, ownership of
travelling is linked to ideology and its symbolism takes on strong political overtones. The selective conservatism of some aspects of the Festival, rather than others, and accompanying interpretation and presentation may be used to sustain or demolish a particular version of history or promote certain political or social values. The fleeting appearance — and subsequent disappearance — of Communist hero Lei Feng is one example of this phenomenon. The Gokh Chih can be seen to have played a pivotal role in the identity of the leadership and authority structures of Xiaoalan, and of its township identity which is exemplified in the nationally recognised title of 'The Chrysanthemum City'. If sustainable development is development which should increase people's control over their lives and maintain and strengthen community identity, and sustainable tourism development encompasses that community ownership (as Swain asserts), then it can be argued that the Gokh Chih makes a significant contribution to the attainment of this objective.

The 1994 Gokh Chih also illustrates the dynamic nature of tradition and heritage. They are not unchanging 'things' but part of an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation as each succeeding generation responds to new understandings, new experiences and new inputs from an ever-increasing range of sources, both internal and external. What was regarded as 'traditional' in the eighteenth century is quite different from what is regarded as 'traditional' now. Historiography (the study of writings of history) reveals that contemporary values and circumstances always influence the interpretation of historical fact. Interpretation may change to suit or satisfy particular needs because heritage, its ownership and its presentation will involve considerations of changing values, power structures and politics. Heritage is thus not static in time, but through continuous interpretation may be viewed as an active process. The Gokh Chih has not been immune from these forces. It remains consistent with the values of its society even as those values have changed, been reinvented to meet contemporary needs, or reinstated to enhance continuity with the past. The Gokh Chih fulfills the 'test' of cultural continuity in terms of sustainability.

The relevance of the intergenerational equity principle is one which has long been a part of Confucian Chinese notions of work, the continuation of the family and clan, and future prosperity (Chan, 1969; Mote, 1988; Tu, 1979). Traditionally, their world view has extended over generations rather than the much shorter time spans more characteristic of western societies. The 'device' of the 60 year cycle of the Festival provides a vehicle for ensuring that different generations may be able to benefit economically, socially and culturally from its staging. The culturally determined reason for holding the Festival is entirely consistent with the principle of intergenerational equity — to ensure the continued and future prosperity of the people of Xiaoalan.

An examination of the compatibility of the Festival with the fourth fundamental of ESD, that is, the maintenance of ecological processes, biological diversity and biological resources, is not as central as the other three. The Festival is not, and never has been, a nature-based event even if chrysanthemums are its focal point. Its contemporary emphasis on real estate development makes for a very poor fit indeed with environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, on a more cerebral level, as an expression of the Confucian philosophy of man seeking
wisdom in nature, Tao's idealisation of chrysanthemums and its adoption by Xiaolan may be interpreted as one small element in the wider picture of moving civilisation towards a more understanding view of nature. In this context, that part of the Festival based in horticulture may be interpreted as consistent with the need enunciated in ESD to maintain balance and harmony between man and nature. It is a philosophical focus which continues to underlie the Festival and provide a validity for its historical origins and its cultural aptness, even if the 1994 commoditisation with its emphasis on tourism and real estate was economically rather than ecologically driven. If it is accepted that the principles of ESD are to find a degree of symmetry between the economic, political, social, cultural and environmental landscapes, then the Gokh Chin in its twentieth century configuration may be held to have achieved some portion of success.

Conclusion

In the broadest sense, the structure, form and organisation of the 1994 Chrysanthemum Festival emphasise the continuing transformation of China from a socialist, centrally controlled economy to a more open, capitalist-oriented economy. The event exemplifies the key role which tourism is playing in the dynamics of change in China, change which allowed the Chrysanthemum Festival to be organised in 1994 in bold contradiction of orthodox CCP ideology. Similar scenes are being repeated in many cities and towns throughout China as tourism expands almost exponentially. The Gokh Chin of 1994 is a modern expression of heritage now embedded in the country's tourism product, in stark contrast to the totalistic iconoclasm promoted by Mao and the mass destruction of heritage which occurred during the Cultural Revolution. It is at once a renewal and a rebirth of Chinese tradition. Unlike Boorstin's (1964) newly created 'pseudo-events', the Gokh Chin is drawn from 'real' history by a society cognisant of its deep roots and philosophical heritage, and it may therefore claim a degree of cultural authenticity denied to more fanciful and recent festivals.

If we return to the distinction between tourism as sustainable development and sustainable tourism (Butler, 1993) and what constitutes a sustainable festival (Getz, 1998), it is suggested that the Gokh Chin's contributions to the ethos of the community of Xiaolan extend beyond the narrow confines of economic rationalism, and that it meets the criteria of sustainability as defined by the Bruntland Report. The conclusion may be drawn that the devolution of a certain degree of power from the state to the townships has produced an element of cooperation in tourism development between the burgeoning private sector and the state which constitutes a rationale for continued community identity, residents' rights, economic independence and cultural diversity, i.e. sustainability.

The use of methodology derived from the discipline of history to unravel the processes of change provides a hermeneutic approach to permit a deeper understanding of the durability of the Festival and its concomitant linkages into the social, political, cultural, economic and power structures of China over centuries. This integrative approach, similar to that adopted by Braudel (1958), reveals the interplay between the long-term continuities and shorter-term cycles which have determined the shape and form of the changes endured by the Gokh Chin. This case study lends weight to the contention that historical methodology
may be a useful tool for gaining instructive insights into the dynamics which underpin tourism as sustainable development.

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