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# Producing Cosmopolitanism at the Borderlands: Lonely Planeteers and “Local” Cosmopolitans in Southwest China

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“For one thing, there are cosmopolitans, and there are locals” (Hannerz 1990:237)  
“But ‘local’ in whose terms?” (Clifford 1992:97)

## Abstract

*While recent ethnographic research has complicated our understanding of the “cosmopolitan,” assumptions persist that those who are cosmopolitan must be metropolitan, mobile, consumers. Ethnic minority café owners in the borderland town of Dali, Yunnan, located in the himalayan foothills of southwest China, challenge these assumptions. Their cosmopolitanism has arisen not out of travel, consumption or metropolitan residence, but out of producing cosmopolitanism for transnational travelers, and increasingly, national tourists. While the café owners’ production of cosmopolitanism has become a means for social mobility and ethno-religious revitalization, not a political end in itself, their cosmopolitanism has political implications for how “minorities,” “indigenous peoples,” and borderland places are conceptualized, represented and controlled. The cosmopolitan production of the minority café owners calls for us to reconceptualize the who, what and why of cosmopolitanism. [Keywords: cosmopolitanism, production, China, ethnic minorities, travel, place]*

“Prince! They are playing Prince!” The two American men laughed with surprise and delight. They bopped their heads along to the beat of “Little Red Corvette,” sipped their ice cold beers, and perused the English language menu: hamburgers, chicken satay, cucumber sandwiches, Pad Thai, spaghetti, french fries, chocolate cake. “Check this out.” One of them pointed to a handwritten sign in English above the table where they sat: “No smoking pot please,” and they laughed again.

The men’s surprise and delight at the music, the food, the language—the sensory environment—seemed to arise from the juxtaposition of finding the familiar in an unfamiliar place. They had traveled to the old frontier town of Dali, located in the Himalayan foothills of China’s southwestern Yunnan province, not far from the border with Myanmar (Burma). The American men had arrived in one of China’s most “exotic” places, where Tibetan medicine merchants swagger the streets in gold brocade fur-lined hats, silver daggers hanging from their belts; where Bai minority women don colorful, multi-layered headdresses as they carry baskets of bright chili peppers to market; where Yi minority women in umbrella-sized black hats and Yi men in shin-length felt cloaks tend sheep in the foothills of the snow-capped mountains; where from the minarets of mosques Muslim men sound the call to prayer at sunrise and sunset; where from Buddhist and Daoist temples arise the sounds of women chanting and beating handheld wooden drums. But amidst this strange new environment, the two American men had ventured into Frank’s Café, run by a Muslim man who had given himself the English name “Frank” for the convenience of his customers, and there, perhaps, more strangely, they had found some familiarity, some “home away from home.”

Frank’s was one of the most popular cafés on what Dali townspeople called “Foreigner Street” (*yangren jie* in Mandarin, or in Dali dialect, *yangren gai*, literally “ocean people street”—the word for “foreigner” conveying the idea that the truly “foreign” must have crossed an ocean to arrive in China). “Foreigner Street” contained several blocks of cafés, souvenir shops and guesthouses that had sprung up over two plus decades to cater to transnational travelers. Since 1984, when the Lonely Planet’s *China—A Travel Survival Kit* had first mentioned Dali in its chapter on Yunnan, transnational travelers seeking to get “off the beaten path,” had started to make the journey to Dali. A slow trickle of travelers became a steady stream as the Lonely Planet guide eventually highlighted Dali on two China travel itineraries, the “Beijing to Hong Kong via the South-

West” and the “Hong Kong to Kunming via Guilin,” the latter described as “the most favoured backpacker trail” (Storey et al. 1998:102-103). In the mid-1990s, tens of thousands of transnational travelers passed through the old town of Dali each year, a town of less than 30,000.<sup>1</sup>

The Bai, Hui (Muslim), Tibetan-Muslim and Yi café owners who have catered to the “lonely planetees” on Dali’s Foreigner Street provide a compelling case for challenging some of the assumptions underlying current debates about cosmopolitanism. I will argue that, although they have lived in a small, rural town at China’s borderlands and most have not been travelers themselves (at least not initially), the café owners in Dali are not only cosmopolitan, but have become so in the process of producing cosmopolitanism for others. Moreover, their cosmopolitanism has not necessarily diminished their ethno-religious identification, but at least in one case, fuels it.

Over the past decade and a half discussions about cosmopolitanism have flourished (Beck and Sznaider 2006) in part as a response to a sense of urgency over the “horrors of our time.”<sup>2</sup> Might cosmopolitanism help to address the other -isms: imperialism, nationalism, factionalism, and tribalism (see Calhoun 2002; Pollock 2002 [2000]; Tuan 1996; Wilson 1998)? But then again, what is cosmopolitanism? And what has been its relationship with the other -isms? Is cosmopolitanism a positive condition, potentially leading to world peace? Or is it an ideology of the colonizers? Is it simply a predicament of those who are drifting and disaffected? From whose perspective? What does it mean to be cosmopolitan? Who is cosmopolitan, and who not? And cosmopolitan on whose terms?

The current interest in cosmopolitanism and the questions behind it seem to be further fueled by a sense of frustration with debates over globalization (Turino 2001). Globalization has come to refer to intensified global economic, political and cultural connections and flows (Appadurai 1994 [1990]; Bestor 2001) which some fear are leading to a homogenized “McWorld” (e.g. Barber 1995) and which others view as creating diverse, localized responses (see Watson, 1997). But these debates over globalization’s flows and forces do not necessarily shed light on the abilities of individuals to act in an intensely interconnected world (Waxer 2002:15). Cosmopolitanism, it has been argued, allows us to focus more on individuals within a globalized world (Beck 2002; Rapport 2006; Wardle 2000). Here I will focus on the lives of five individuals who I argue are cosmopolitan, although they do not fit the model of what is assumed to be “cosmopolitan.”

I will take as my starting point that cosmopolitanism is *not* a “universal morality” as philosopher Anthony Appiah has suggested (Appiah 2006:14) but a “continuous openness to the world” (Kahn, cited in Josephides 2006), “an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other” (Hannerz 1990:239), and a “capacity to interact across cultural lines” (Hiebert 2002:212). Over the last decade and a half, anthropologists have pointed out that those who embrace this openness to the world are not necessarily “Western” (see Mardsen 2008; Ong 1998, 1999; Rofel 2007; Schein 1998; Swain 2001; Swain and Ateljevic 2006; P. Werbner 1999, 2006; R. Werbner 2004; M. Yang 2002) nor are they necessarily elites, for example, they might be refugees or those who travel in the service of elites; service workers; or migrant workers (Clifford 1992; Mardsen 2008; Wardle 2000; P. Werbner 1999, 2006). Yet in much of the anthropological and other literature on cosmopolitanism assumptions persist that those who embrace this “continuous openness,” i.e., the cosmopolitans, are either those who travel, and/or those who live in major metropolises. Moreover, these cosmopolitan, metropolitan mobiles, it has been suggested, come to have an attenuated relationship to place. As Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry have argued: “the shift to a cosmopolitan relationship with place means that humans increasingly inhabit their world only at a distance” (Szerszynski and Urry 2006:113). Even those who use the term “rooted cosmopolitanism” (eg. M. Cohen 1992; P. Werbner 2006a), are referring more to a psychological, spiritual and material connection to places for those who have traveled abroad, not to a lived-in connection to place for those who have *not* traveled. For the most part, mobility is still assumed. Anthropologists are only beginning to consider those who might be cosmopolitan without going anywhere at all (Hirsch 2006; Swain and Ateljevic 2006).

The minority café owners on Dali’s Foreigner Street present a case of “actually existing cosmopolitanism” (Malcomson 1998) that challenges assumptions of metropolitan mobility. The café owners live in a small, rural town at China’s borderlands and most have not been travelers themselves. Even for those who do end up traveling, their cosmopolitanism has preceded their mobility. The café owners have embraced a “continuous openness” to the world: learning several languages, learning to cook an array of foods, and learning to create a cosmopolitan atmosphere in their cafés for the transnational travelers and tourists who pass through Dali.<sup>3</sup>

While it has been suggested that cosmopolitans *display* their cosmopolitanism primarily through *consumption* of other places (Szerszynski

and Urry 2002, 2006:115), little attention has been paid to the *production* of cosmopolitanism.<sup>4</sup> The café owners in Dali have become cosmopolitan through their production for others, not through their own consumption. In order to cater to the travelers, the café owners must *produce* a cosmopolitan atmosphere for others.

Moreover, in their production of a cosmopolitan atmosphere for travelers and tourists, the minority café owners do not seek to distance themselves from Dali as a place, nor do they necessarily endeavor to eschew ethnic and religious ties. Contrary to those who have argued that cosmopolitanism weakens ethnic and other ties (Hollinger 1995; Szerszynski and Urry 2006), I will contribute to the burgeoning discussion that cosmopolitanism and other forms of identification (ethnic, regional, religious) are not only *not* mutually exclusive, they may actually reinforce one another (see Marsden 2008; R. Werbner 2004).

Below I first provide an overview of theoretical discussions about cosmopolitanism. Then, I present the cases of five Dali café owners, situating them within the particular cultural, political and economic context of China, Yunnan, and the old frontier town of Dali. I illustrate how the café owners came to be cosmopolitan despite their living in a small town and not having traveled. I intersperse historical and theoretical challenges to assumptions about cosmopolitanism with brief narratives of the café owners' cosmopolitanism in practice. I argue that the cosmopolitanism of these individuals not only challenges what and who we assume to be cosmopolitan, but challenges us to reconsider how we imagine ourselves and others in a globalized world.

### **Cosmopolitan in Theory**

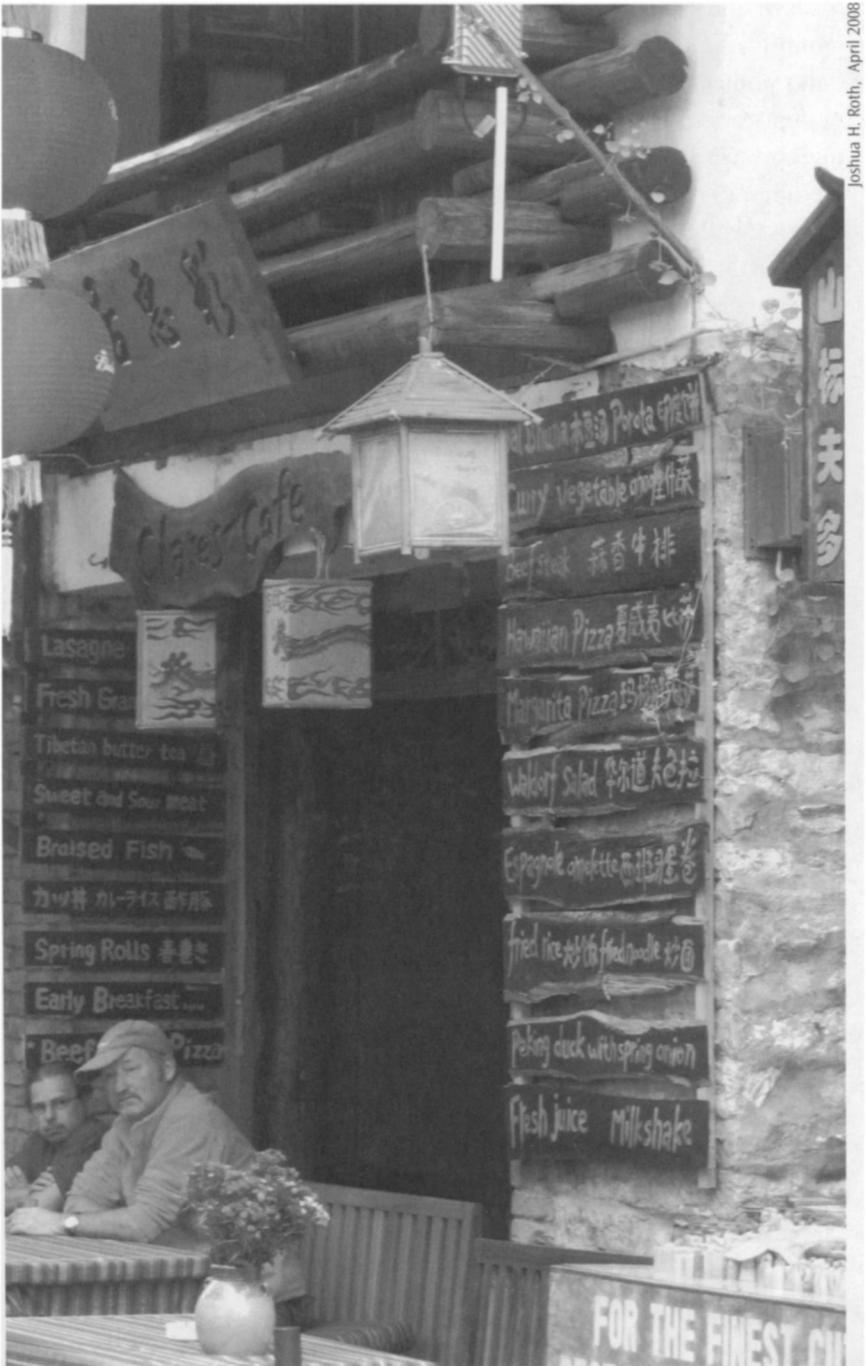
The term “cosmopolitan” derives from *kosmo-polites*, a paradoxical combination of the Greek words for “cosmos” and “city citizen” (Appiah 2006:xiv; Cheah 1998:22), and dates to approximately the fourth century B.C. when non-Athenian intellectuals—Anthisthenes, founder of the Cynics, Diogenes, and Zeno, a Stoic, began to use the term to refer to an imagined community of intellectuals beyond the confines of their *polis*, their city-states. Zeno in particular “imagined an expanding circle of inclusion—from self, to family, to friends, to city, to humanity” (Fine and Cohen 2002:137). In this utopian vision, political, economic and religious institutions would disappear: there would be “no law, no compulsion, no council, no currency, no temples” (Fine and Cohen 2002:137).

In English the noun “cosmopolite” appears to have been common in the 17th century, and was revived again later in the 19th century, along with the noun and adjective “cosmopolitan” via 18th century French philosophers who embraced a “cosmopolitan spirit.” Cosmopolitan came to denote “an intellectual ethic, a universal humanism that transcends regional particularisms” (Cheah 1998:22; see also “Cosmopolite;” “Cosmopolitan”).

Cosmopolitan intellectual visions played an important role in German philosophical thought, and have come to be associated with divergent political projects. In the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant imagined cosmopolitan society (*cosmopolitismus*) as a way to world peace (Kant 2006 [1798]:236), where racially different “savages” and “barbarians” would be brought under control and raised to a higher level of “civilization” as designated by an imperial or “Western” power.<sup>5</sup> In the nineteenth century, Karl Marx called for oppressed peoples around the world to create a universal class-based culture as a way to fight against imperial-colonial-capitalist power (Cohen 1992; Fine and Cohen 2002). And in the mid-twentieth century, Hannah Arendt envisioned a revival of cosmopolitan ideals as way to nourish a European intellectual community in exile, and as a way to guard against the extreme fascism of WWII (Fine and Cohen 2002) which had belied Kant’s national character appraisal that a German was “too cosmopolitan to be deeply attached to his homeland” (Kant 2006 [1798]:221).

The recent re-emergence of cosmopolitanism as a topic of interdisciplinary discussion can be seen as part of a current intellectual response to the perceived political dangers of isolationism, nationalism, factionalism, and tribalism (Beck and Sznaider 2006; Calhoun 2002; Pollock 2002 [2000]; Tuan 1996). A plethora of edited volumes and international conferences further demonstrate this interest.<sup>6</sup> In these current discussions, anthropologist Ulf Hannerz’s seminal essay “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture” (1990) has launched some of the key terms of debate. In his essay, Hannerz established a binary opposition between “cosmopolitans” and “locals.” “Cosmopolitans,” according to Hannerz, are those who travel, who have a worldly outlook, while “locals” do not go anywhere and are not concerned with matters beyond their own communities (Hannerz 1990:237).

This opposition between “locals” and “cosmopolitans” has been challenged in part, notably by James Clifford who has pointed out that: “the notion that certain classes of people are cosmopolitan (travelers) while the rest are local (natives) appears as the ideology of one (very powerful) traveling culture” (Clifford 1992:108). Clifford’s critique of Hannerz has



Joshua H. Roth, April 2008

Photo 1: Foreigner Street, Dali.

focused more on the socioeconomic status of travelers than on their mobility; he attacks the assumption that cosmopolitans are necessarily elites and that locals are non-elites, and he draws attention to the many non-elites who travel who may also be considered cosmopolitan: servants, migrant workers, refugees (Clifford 1992; see also Marsden 2008; P. Werbner 1999, 2006). Yet the assumption that a cosmopolitan is one who travels, while the opposite of a cosmopolitan, whether a “local” or a “provincial,” is one who does not travel, has powerfully persisted in the debates on cosmopolitanism. This opposition between movement and non-movement is what defines the cosmopolitan, as Hannerz concludes: “there can be no cosmopolitans without locals” (Hannerz 1990:249). However, as we will see below, in the case of the café owners in Dali their cosmopolitanism has come without their going anywhere at all.<sup>7</sup>

Hannerz, to his credit, pointed out that, on the flip side, not all those who travel are cosmopolitan. For example, business elites who traverse the globe can stay within their own hotel bubbles, and Nigerian market women who sell fish in London may go there and back without entering into the larger life of the city. In other words, those who travel can manage to operate within a familiar cultural zone. Hannerz describes these travelers as: “anti-cosmopolitans, people (mostly business travellers) who would rather not have left home; people who are locals at heart” (Hannerz 1990:241). Drawing on noted travel writer Paul Theroux, Hannerz recognizes that “many people travel for the purpose of ‘home plus’—Spain is home plus sunshine, India is home plus servants, Africa is home plus elephants and lions” (Hannerz 1990:241). Hannerz comments that: “Such travel is not for cosmopolitans, and does little to create cosmopolitans” (Hannerz 1990:241).

The lonely planet backpackers (lonely planeteers) who travel to Dali are not anti-cosmopolitans, for they explicitly eschew hotel bubbles and tourist traps. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, they are more visually than viscerally adventuresome: they want to see new and exotic people and places more than they wish to eat strange foods or listen to strange music (Notar 2006b). This demand for some visceral familiarity led to the opening of cafés and pubs on Foreigner Street by café owners who produce a cosmopolitan atmosphere for the travelers.

In the literature on cosmopolitanism it is still assumed for the most part that a cosmopolitan, whether elite or not, must travel, and must be metropolitan. The cosmopolitan, it is assumed, is not local (Hannerz

1990), not indigenous (Turino 2000), and certainly not ethnically-oriented (Hollinger 1995). The cosmopolitan, it is assumed, not only travels, but lives in a metropolis (Abbas 2002 [2000]). He (or she) certainly does not live in a small town (for exceptions see Marsden 2008; Swain and Ateljevic 2006). Yet, we will see that the non-elite, minority café owners in Dali are just as, if not more cosmopolitan than transnational travelers and national coastal elite tourists, although, until recently, they did not travel anywhere, they live in a small town, and at least some are undergoing an ethno-cultural revival.

### “Local” Cosmopolitan 1: He Liyi

I first met He Liyi when I was conducting my initial eighteen months of extended research in Yunnan province from 1994 to 1995. During the week I lived in a fishing and farming village, and on weekends I would go into the town of Dali to take a shower, get a cup of coffee, and check up on the foreign news and transnational traveler scene on Foreigner Street. On one of these weekend visits into town, I went to the post office to place a long-distance call to my sister (at that time the village in which I lived did not have a telephone). After chatting about family, life and work, my sister said to me: “I just read a great book written by a Bai minority man about his life.”

“You have? Really? In English?” I answered, surprised.

“Yes,” my sister replied. “It’s called *Mr. China’s Son*. I’ll send it to you.” About a month later, the book arrived in the mail. It was indeed a fascinating book, written in English by a Chinese Bai minority man about his life, and published in the U.S. I wondered how I might get in touch with the author, when one day, as luck would have it, I bumped into him on the street.

“Mr. He?” I inquired.

“Yes...How do you know me?”

“I just read your book. Your photograph is on the cover.”

“Ah...yes.” He looked a little embarrassed. I did not know at the time that Mr. He had not been telling people in Dali about his book published abroad for fear of rumors that he had made a lot of money on it. In the mid-1990s, affiliations with foreigners were still considered somewhat suspect, reminders of the extreme xenophobia of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Mr. He invited me over for tea that afternoon, after which we

met various times over subsequent weeks and months to talk more about his book and his life experiences.

In his memoir of life as a minority man in China’s southwestern Yunnan province, He Liyi (born Zhang Shuyi, he changed his name, as is Bai custom, when he married into his wife’s family), describes his transformations of status and occupation over the course of his lifetime: from a village boy to a college student; from a translator to a political outcast who is required to do various kinds of reform-through-labor (as a brick maker, buffalo herder, barber, miner, construction worker); from a farmer and “shit stealer” (his words—surreptitiously taking nightsoil from public latrines to use on communal fields), to a globally published English-language author; from an English teacher (an employee of the state, a “Mr. China’s Son”) to an entrepreneurial café owner on Dali’s “Foreigner Street.”<sup>8</sup>

By the time he opened his café on Foreigner Street, He Liyi was fluent in English and corresponded in English with many pen pals from around the world via both snail mail and email. Seemingly against all odds for an ethnic minority man from a rural area, he had published two books abroad in English, his memoir and a book of translations of folk tales. Because of these books he had been invited to the UK and the US to give talks. Since he had retired from teaching, he could spend much of his time in his café with travelers from around the world, chatting with them for hours about their lives and his. From the travelers, he and his family learned to make the foreign foods and drinks that they liked: sandwiches, spaghetti, coffee.

He Liyi’s “actually existing cosmopolitanism” (Malcomson 1998) challenges many particularly persistent assumptions of who can be cosmopolitan: a “Western” (Euro-American), elite, metropolitan, well-traveled individual. He Liyi is not only non-Western, he is from an ethnic minority group within China, the Bai. He grew up in what might be thought of as a middle class rural household, but lived much of his life as a poor laborer and farmer. He was from, and returned to a small farming village at the Chinese borderlands, nowhere near a major metropolitan area. While late in life he did have the opportunity to travel abroad, his cosmopolitan orientation occurred much earlier in life. How can we explain Mr. He’s cosmopolitanism as well as the cosmopolitanism of other café owners and operators on Dali’s Foreigner Street? How does their production of cosmopolitanism challenge assumptions about who and what is cosmopolitan? Below I intersperse historical and theoretical challenges to assumptions about cosmopolitanism with brief narratives of the café owners’

cosmopolitanism in practice. The first challenge is to the assumption that cosmopolitan is “Western.”

### **Assumption 1: Cosmopolitan as “Western”**

The dominant “Western” (read Euro-American) narrative of China since the mid-nineteenth century has been that it has been an “isolated,” “backward” place, trapped in thousands of years of unchanging tradition.<sup>9</sup> It has been the self-proclaimed duty of the “West” to “open” China to the world. This narrative arose first in the mid-nineteenth century with the Opium Wars (1840-1842) and has appeared again in China’s era of “reform and opening” (*gaige kaifang*), market reform and opening to international investment and trade.

Forgotten in this dominant narrative of the “West” bringing cosmopolitanism to the insular “East,” is that in 17th and 18th centuries, Europeans considered China and the Chinese as key symbols of the cosmopolitan. For example, in 1634, when explorer Jean Nicolet (1598-1642) left Québec and set sail across Lake Michigan, thinking that he would find China on the other side, he donned a “Chinese damask robe woven with flowers and multicolored birds,” which he thought would be suitable for making a good first impression on his Chinese hosts (Brook 1998:xv). Europeans considered China the center of the world at the time.<sup>10</sup>

In Oliver Goldsmith’s once popular, now neglected, eighteenth-century satire, *Citizen of the World* (which imitated Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters*), the cosmopolitan par excellence was the imagined elite Chinese abroad.<sup>11</sup> Goldsmith used the fictional character of Lien Chi Altangi, a Chinese philosopher traveling the world, to critique aspects of an insular British society. In his letters home to his friend Fum Hoam in Pekin (Beijing), Lien mocks the pompousness and inequality of British society.<sup>12</sup>

China and elite Chinese would not continue as symbols of the cosmopolitan, however. By the mid-nineteenth century, the British, having a seemingly insatiable taste for tea and silk, had developed a serious balance of trade problem with China. In order to try to reverse their silver outflow, the British, through the East India Company, devised a plan to grow opium in their Indian colonies and export it to China. Britain and China waged a series of “Opium Wars” between 1839-1842 and 1856-1860, where Chinese officials burned British opium, and British warships bombarded Chinese ports. The British prevailed, leading to a series of unequal treaties that allowed the

British to establish “foreign concessions” in China’s major ports and to trade in opium and manufactured cotton textiles. Other colonial powers—France, Germany, Japan, and the U.S.—were quick to demand the same privileges. China was now described as a place that needed to be “opened” to a colonial “civilizing” influence (see Chesneaux, Bastid, and Bergère 1976). This led to the development of colonial cosmopolitanism in China.

### ***Colonial Cosmopolitanism***

“Shanghai in the 1930s,” writes Leo Ou-fan Lee, “was the cosmopolitan city par excellence” (Lee 1999:315). Called the “Paris of the Orient,” Shanghai’s Bund—that famous stretch along the Huangpu River—boasted British banks in neo-Grecian style, Art Deco hotels such as the Park designed by Czech-Hungarian architect Ladislaus Hudec, and movie theaters like the Strand where one could watch Hollywood films such as King Kong. One could relax with a coffee at Café Renaissance run by White Russians on Avenue Joffre, or snack on Coca Cola, ice cream and chocolate at Sullivan’s (Lee 1999:8-23). The most prominent symbol of the commerce, leisure and decadence of cosmopolitan Shanghai was the amusement center aptly named The Great World (*Da shijie*), a “department store of entertainment” (Lee 1999:14) located at the intersection of then Thibet Road and Avenue Edward VII that included funhouse mirrors from Holland, fast-food, Chinese opera, gambling and prostitution (Wakeman 1995:105-106, 353-354 n. 78).

Shanghai’s cosmopolitanism can be considered “a by-product of colonialism” (Lee 1999:313), or simply, colonial cosmopolitanism.<sup>13</sup> As Ackbar Abbas has observed, “Shanghai’s strength as a cosmopolitan city was based on China’s weakness as a nation” (Abbas 2002:215). After the British victories in the Opium Wars, Shanghai was designated as a foreign “treaty port” and concession. This once semi-rural area would eventually draw diverse people from around the world (Lu 1999:26-29).

Yet diversity did not mean tolerance. The colonial cosmopolitanism of Shanghai resembled that of other cosmopolitan colonial places such as Alexandria, Egypt (see Zubaida 2002:37-38), marked by racial segregation of parks, clubs and residential areas (Lee 1999:29-32; Lu 1999:28-36). Just as “[n]ative Egyptian society provided servants, functionaries and prostitutes for the cosmopolitan milieu” (Zubaida 2002:37-38), so too, in the views of many Westerners, were native Chinese considered inferior and there to serve colonial expatriates.<sup>14</sup>

The southwestern province of Yunnan, where He Liyi grew up, was thousands of miles from the colonial treaty ports like Shanghai. Yet Yunnan still experienced colonial influence in the mid-nineteenth century. The British, who had conquered Burma, sought to extend their influence eastward into Yunnan. The French, who had colonized Indochina (what is currently Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam), sought to extend their control northward. In 1910 they opened a railway connecting Hanoi with Yunnan's provincial capital of Yunnan-fu (now Kunming).<sup>15</sup> French, French-Vietnamese, and others, like Greek Jewish merchants, lived and worked in towns along the railway (Israel 1998). French tour books referred to Yunnan as "l'Indochine du Nord" (Guides Madrolle 1939). British, French and American Missionaries actively recruited in Yunnan. It was through his association with an American missionary family in Kunming that He Liyi first practiced his conversational English and observed American family life (He 2003:48).

When Japan occupied and attempted to colonize much of coastal China between 1935 and 1945, thousands of elite coastal refugees fled to unoccupied Yunnan. China's major universities: Beijing, Nankai, Qinghua, temporarily relocated to Yunnan and reopened as a wartime "Affiliated University" (*Lianda*) in Kunming (Israel 1998). He Liyi attended middle school with displaced elite children from Shanghai while his father was working as a police officer near Kunming. In addition to learning the official language, Mandarin, He Liyi learned Shanghainese, and learned more about the culture and customs of Shanghai families (He 2003:36-37).

### ***Political Cosmopolitanism***

The colonial cosmopolitanism of early 20th century China, where "splendor and squalor existed side by side" (Abbas 2002:215), prompted the emergence of another kind of anti-colonial, political cosmopolitanism. Similar to the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 in Ismailiya in colonial Egypt (Zubaida 2002), the Chinese Communist Party was founded in Shanghai in 1921.

The Chinese Communists, who would eventually come to victory in 1949, were not the first political cosmopolitans of China. The Nationalists, who the Communists defeated after decades of civil war, had overthrown the last imperial dynasty of China, the Qing, by securing political and financial support outside of China.

Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan), Nationalist "founding father" (*guofu*) of the Republic of China in 1911, who was educated in Hawaii and Hong



**Photo 2: Lonely Planeteters, Dali.**

Kong, traveled the world for over three decades to raise funds from Overseas Chinese merchants in America, Europe and Japan to establish a Chinese republic (Wei et al. 1984:xiv-xxii). Sun and his followers were successful in overthrowing the Qing Dynasty in 1911, and although he died in 1924, his Nationalist Party (Guomindang) allied with the Communists to oust the warlords who still controlled much of the country. But in 1927, the Nationalists, under Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi), began a purge of the Communists. This started a civil war that would last over two decades. The Nationalists and Communists were theoretically allied against the Japanese between 1936-1945, but in practice the civil war continued from 1927 to 1949, when the Communists came to power.

While the impression of Communist China may be one of a “closed” society, that was finally “opened” with the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué between Zhou Enlai and U.S. President Richard Nixon in 1972, and the “normalization” of U.S.-China relations in 1978, it was not initially so.<sup>16</sup> In his book *Revolution and Cosmopolitanism* Joseph Levenson reminds us that many of the Chinese Communists were explicitly cosmopolitan, and envisioned the Chinese revolution as part of a global cultural, economic and political movement (Levenson 1971). Communist leaders such as Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping had lived and studied in Paris, where the Chinese Youth Communist Party was established in 1922 (Lee 1994). In the early years of communist rule, plays from Romania, Russia, Italy, England, Germany, and France were translated and performed in Shanghai (Levenson 1971:15). It was only with the Sino-Soviet split after 1959 and with Mao Zedong’s paranoid consolidation of power during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) that China became a relatively insular place. As Levenson notes: “Cosmopolitanism, that is, was out. Sophistication, nuance, were out” (Levenson 1971:47). Mao was suspicious of any “rootless cosmopolitans” (Levenson 1971:50-51), who might refuse to declare absolute allegiance to his nationalist ideology.<sup>17</sup>

Mao was not the first Chinese revolutionary to be suspicious of cosmopolitanism; national founding father Sun Yat-sen had earlier cautioned against forsaking nationalism for cosmopolitanism.<sup>18</sup> While Sun Yat-sen argued that cosmopolitanism would follow from nationalism in China, both his nationalism and that of the Chinese Communist leaders (except Mao) were born out of their cosmopolitanism.

In Yunnan, He Liyi had grown up during this time of Civil War between the Nationalists and the Communists. Yunnan was nominally under Nationalist control, and the Nationalists had enlisted the aid of the U.S. in their fight against the Communists. He Liyi writes of his memories of a Chinese truck driver with whom he had hitched a ride, trying to trade fake jade for cigarettes with U.S. servicemen stationed in Yunnan (He 2003:30-31). He saw the wrecks of crashed American planes and the convoys and parades of American soldiers after the U.S. defeat of Japan. Some of these American soldiers gave him what he initially thought were bars of brown soap, which turned out to be bars of chocolate (He 2003:44-45). In part, these early interactions with U.S. servicemen sparked He Liyi’s desire to study English, which he later practiced with American missionaries and their families (He 2003:48).

After the Communists came to power in 1949, He Liyi describes in his memoir an initial period where a sense of possibility prevailed. He worked happily as a translator for a research project on ethnic minorities in Yunnan, using three of his languages: Bai, Mandarin and English. It was not until the mid-1950s when things started to turn badly for him: his family back in the village was assigned the class status of “landlord,” his father was executed for having served as a policeman under the Nationalists and for having refused a position under the Communists; and his older brother was arrested for having served in the Nationalist Army (He 2003:52).

By situating He Liyi’s life within a broader context of colonialism, missionizing, and war, we can understand how a boy from a minority village in rural China became interested in “Others”—Shanghai children, American servicemen, American missionaries—their languages and cultures. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that cosmopolitanism in Dali could arise only out of colonialism or as a reaction to it. There is a third type of cosmopolitanism to consider here, borderland cosmopolitanism.

### ***Borderland Cosmopolitanism***

Although it has been considered a provincial backwater by coastal elites (more on this below), Yunnan is the most culturally diverse province in China, in part because it borders on the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Burma (Myanmar), Laos and Vietnam. The place that is now Yunnan has for centuries been an important trading zone between China, Tibet and mainland Southeast Asia, in what has been called the southern silk road. The town of Dali in particular was an important economic, cultural and religious center.<sup>19</sup>

From the 7th to the 13th centuries, Dali was the capital of two Buddhist kingdoms, the Nanzhao and the Dali Kingdoms, which at their zenith controlled all of what is now Yunnan as well as northern Vietnam. Monks from as far away as India and Japan came to study in Dali. Armies brought back prisoners of war, some of whom were skilled artisans, and traders traveled throughout the kingdoms (Backus 1981; Ma 2001). Although the power of Dali was much diminished after its conquest by Kublai Khan in 1253, when Italian Marco Polo passed through Dali (he referred to it as “Carajan”) he described it as a flourishing region inhabited by Saracens (Muslims), “Idolators” (Buddhists), and Nestorian Christians (Yule 1929:66-80).

In the 19th century Dali still retained its trading status as the place “where all important roads from Southeast Asia met” (Prasertkul 1989:72).

When Japan blockaded most of coastal China during WWII, merchants of the Dali area grew wealthy trading primarily in cotton, herbal medicines, opium, silver, sulfur and tea into Southeast Asia, particularly Burma (Zhu 1983:1-78). At this time, when Chinese anthropologist Francis L.K. Hsu (who had trained with Malinowski and later became president of the American Anthropological Association) conducted research in a town in the Dali basin, the sophisticated, elite merchants there represented themselves to him, and he subsequently represented them in his book *Under the Ancestor's Shadow*, as “typical Chinese” (Hsu 1967 [1948]). It is not difficult to imagine that people living along this southern silk route did not necessarily have to be moving themselves in order to interact with diverse others. They could be inn keepers, restaurateurs or tea stall operators who could develop complex cultural competencies. These “older experiences, understandings, and strategies” (Marsden 2008:235) of cross-cultural interaction may in part shape contemporary cosmopolitanism in Dali.

Of course, I am not the first to point out that cosmopolitanism is not just a “Western” phenomenon, others have already done so (Appiah 1998, 2006; Josephides 2006; Zubaida 2002) and some specifically with regards to China, Chinese and the Chinese diaspora (Chan 2002; Ong 1998, 1999; Rofel 2007; Tuan 1996; M. Yang 2002). While many recognize that cosmopolitans are not necessarily “Western,” the assumption persists that cosmopolitans are metropolitan mobiles. Yet He Liyi was neither metropolitan nor elite, and his cosmopolitan “openness” developed long before he traveled abroad. Below I examine the cases of two other Dali café owners of a younger generation who are also cosmopolitan, and then take on the assumption that cosmopolitans are always metropolitan mobiles.

### **“Local” Cosmopolitans 2: Simon and Hua**

While He Liyi’s cosmopolitan leanings as a young man were structured by a backdrop of colonial influence, cross-border trade, and wartime exigencies, a younger generation of café owners on Dali’s Foreigner Street grew up in Mao’s “closed” China. And while He Liyi had studied English in college and opened his café in retirement, after he had already traveled to the U.K. and the U.S., the younger generation of café owners and operators in Dali did not go to college, and had not traveled abroad before they opened their cafés. How can we understand the emergence of their cosmopolitanism? Theirs might be thought of as a “merchant cosmopolitanism” (Malcomson 1998)

that grew out of an opportunity and willingness to *produce* cosmopolitanism for the lonely planeteers who began to visit Dali in the mid-1980s, a few years into China's reform era. The café owners' cosmopolitanism has been structured by China's "opening" to global trade and transnational travel and the designation of Dali as an "open" place for travelers (see Notar 2006b).

Approximately twenty cafés catering to transnational travelers would open on Dali's Foreigner Street between 1984 and 1994. A few in particular came to dominate the Dali café scene primarily, I would suggest, because of the abilities of their owner-operators to produce a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Two cases in point are Simon and his "Lhasa Café" and Hua and her "Dian Café."

### **Simon**

Simon, a Tibetan-Muslim man, ran the Lhasa Café on Foreigner Street along with his Bai wife Qinglan, her sister, and other hired hands. Simon was perhaps the most adept of the café owner-operators in Dali, in part because of his good political connections, but also because he anticipated changes in the Dali scene before they actually happened and adapted his business practices accordingly. Simon exuded a casual but professional demeanor. Dressing in crisp button-down shirts and khaki pants, he might have been a model for a J. Crew catalogue.

Simon had opened the Lhasa Café in 1986, only two years after Dali had officially "opened" to transnational travelers. In the mid-1980s, in an effort to bring in more foreign exchange, the Chinese government began designating more places in China as "open" (*kaifang*) to transnational travelers and tourists. In order for a place to be "open," it had to have at least one hotel or guesthouse that was deemed appropriate for receiving foreigners. In Dali, it was the No.1 and No.2 Guesthouses that received this designation. Because the No.2 Guesthouse offered dormitory rooms and more reasonable rates, it became the lodging of choice for most low budget lonely planeteers until privately managed guesthouses were allowed to open in the mid-1990s.

Simon opened his Lhasa Café directly opposite the main gates of the No.2.<sup>20</sup> Every morning, travelers from around the world would roll out of their dormitory beds and stroll across the street to the Lhasa for breakfast. There, sitting outside at the long wooden tables and benches with other travelers, they were able to look up the street at the mountains above town. They could order from an array of North American and European style breakfast foods, otherwise difficult to find in China at that time except at

the business hotels in major metropolitan areas: toast with jam, oatmeal, banana pancakes, sausages, fried or scrambled eggs, coffee. The Lhasa also offered sweet or salty Tibetan tea, served at your table from a wooden butter churn and poured into a silver rimmed wooden bowl. On any particular morning, the Lhasa would usually be bustling with travelers as well as shoeshine men and Bai women souvenir sellers who tried to catch travelers first thing in the morning (see Notar 2006a).

In 1989, Simon opened an art gallery next door to the café. The gallery featured paintings done by his Bai wife, Qinglan, in the then popular Yunnan School's "primitivist" style (see Cohen 1988). With the help of a French traveler, Simon had arranged for Qinglan to have an art exhibit in Paris earlier that year, and Qinglan was able to obtain a visa to attend the exhibit. Qinglan later showed me a photograph of herself dressed in Bai ethnic attire—a multilayered headdress with white fringe down one side, a red side buttoned vest over a white blouse, an embroidered apron over pants—standing in front of the glass "pyramid" in the courtyard of the Louvre. Some of her paintings exhibited in Paris sold for over a thousand U.S. dollars.

A decade later, Simon built a mini "Pompidou" art center (his term) and guesthouse in Dali. He imagined that it would become a kind of artist's colony and cultural exchange center for an "Upper Mekong Regional Arts Association" that would include artists from Yunnan, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Although the artist colony never fully developed, the guesthouse thrived, and when I last visited it in 2005, it attracted many American, French, and Italian travelers.

### **Hua**

Hua was one of two dominant women café owners in Dali. Hua's family was of the Yi minority nationality, from Chuxiong, east of Dali. Her parents had opened one of the first cafés in Dali in 1985, and for years, Hua had helped them by keeping the books. In 1994, Hua decided to start her own place, the Dian Café.

Unlike the Lhasa and some of the other cafés on Foreigner Street that had a more relaxed atmosphere, Hua's Dian Café was more sophisticated. Hua had decorated the café so that it looked like a trendy California bistro: bamboo fish baskets served as lampshades, and wicker chairs encircled beautifully carved wooden tables with marble tops (a speciality of Dali craftsmen). The bi-lingual English and Chinese menus resembled cloth-bound books, reflecting the intellectual theme of the café. Hua had

acquired a large collection of English language books, which lined the shelves of her café. Because of the books, the elegant atmosphere, as well as Hua’s formal presentation of self (she wore her hair in a tight bun, and dressed smartly in blouses and skirts, her wrists adorned with silver jewelry which she bought from the Tibetan pilgrims and traders who passed through town) the Dian usually attracted a quieter and older crowd for lunch, dinner and dessert; people who wanted to read, talk quietly or play chess. I also went to the Dian when I wanted to read old *New Yorker* magazines left behind by travelers, write in my journal, or chat with Hua.

Hua had invested in a small electric oven, and learned to make delicious pizza and luscious chocolate cake. She also made, in my opinion, the best cup of coffee on Foreigner Street.

Hua married an American man who frequently passed through Dali on trips to buy Dali’s indigo tie-dyed and hemp cloth for specialty shops back in the U.S. Their relationship was somewhat rocky, however, and they divorced after a few years. Some time after their divorce, Hua met a French importer-exporter who invited Hua to come work for his company. When I last saw her in 1999, she had closed her café, learned French, and was doing import-export work between China, France and Switzerland. “I feel right at home in Switzerland,” she told me. “With the snow-capped mountains and alpine lakes, it looks a lot like Dali.”

### **Assumption 2: Cosmopolitan as Metropolitan and Mobile**

Although Hua and Simon’s wife Qinglan would eventually travel abroad themselves, both to Europe, their cosmopolitan openness and competence developed well before their travels. They could speak other languages and cook other foods. They could interact easily with travelers from around the world. Their cosmopolitanism challenges the persistent assumption that cosmopolitans are those who travel and/or those who live in major metropolises.

In Anthony Appiah’s recent book, *Cosmopolitanism*, he notes that:

celebrations of the “cosmopolitan” can suggest an unpleasant posture of superiority toward the putative provincial. You imagine a *Comme des Garçons*-clad sophisticate with a platinum frequent-flyer card regarding, with kindly condescension, a ruddy-farmer in workman’s overalls. And you wince (Appiah 2006:xiii).

Appiah counters this stereotypical image of the elite cosmopolitan with the observation that: “The well-traveled polyglot is as likely to be among the worst off as among the best-off—as likely to be found in a shantytown as at the Sorbonne” (Appiah 2006:xviii). In his first statement, Appiah presents one set of binary assumptions about cosmopolitans: that cosmopolitans are urban, well-off, intellectual or white-collar, while non-cosmopolitans are literally provincial, rural, and blue-collar. While his second statement challenges the assumed class status of cosmopolitans to argue that they can just as well be from a “shantytown” as from the “Sorbonne”—he still retains the assumption that cosmopolitans are urbanites who travel.

The assumption that cosmopolitans are mobile metropolitans pervades much of the literature on cosmopolitanism. For example, Ackbar Abbas, in a recent essay on cosmopolitanism in Hong Kong and Shanghai, notes that: “The ideal of cosmopolitanism [...] as ‘an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences’ may be an admirable one, but it is sustainable only in metropolitan centers where movement and travel are undertaken with ease and where the encounter with other cultures is a matter of free choice, negotiated on favorable terms” (Abbas 2002 [2000]:210-211).

In China, as in other countries, an assumption prevails that only major cities are cosmopolitan places: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hong Kong. It is in these cities where foreigners from abroad work and study, and where global foods and fashions can be consumed. The far-off borderlands, like Yunnan, are considered to be the “hinterlands,” the “backwaters” of China.<sup>21</sup> In this conception of only the coastal cities as cosmopolitan, it is forgotten that foreigners travel outside of these cities and that the peoples of borderlands, due to their proximity to other places, may have a more cosmopolitan orientation. Yunnan province borders Myanmar (Burma), Laos and Vietnam and, as I noted earlier, Dali has long been a trading crossroads between China to the east, Tibet to the north, and Southeast Asia.

Not only are the borderlands as a *place* assumed to be unc cosmopolitan, so too are the minority peoples who live at the borderlands. The Chinese borderlands are home to approximately 100 million people, over 8% of China’s total population, who are classified as non-Han Chinese.<sup>22</sup> Officially called “minority nationalities” (*shaoshu minzu*), these peoples may be thought of somewhat analogously to Native American Indians, First Nations and other “indigenous” peoples in the extent to which they have been the object of “civilizing projects”—in the Chinese context—Confucian, colonial and

Communist (Harrell 1995), and the degree to which they have been both romanticized and demonized in official and popular representations (see Diamond 1987; Gladney 1994, 1995; Schein 1997, 2002; Notar 2006b).

“Indigenous,” like the term “local,” has been used as an antonym or juxtaposition for “cosmopolitan.” For example, Tom Turino, in his otherwise powerful discussion of popular music in Zimbabwe, writes: “I will use the word *indigenous* to refer to people and lifeways that are part of cultural trajectories with roots predating the colonial period or that, in terms of ethos and practice, provide local alternatives to cosmopolitanism” (Turino 2000:18). Here we might think of “people and lifeways” that are considered “authentic” and “uncontaminated.”

Yet just when “indigenous” is held up as a counter to “cosmopolitan,” examples of indigenous cosmopolitans come to mind, for example internationally read author and speaker Rigoberta Menchú; or Davi Kopenawa, a leader of the Amazonian Kayapó, who attends global conferences on Indigenous Human Rights.

While the Chinese government has supported the UN Commission on Human Rights’ working group declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, it has denied that there is an “indigenous peoples’ question in China,” viewing this question as only a product of European colonialism (Sturgeon 2007:134). Although the structural position of minority nationalities in China may resemble that of indigenous peoples elsewhere, there is a political limit to which minority nationalities can make claims against the state (Sturgeon 2007:134). Therefore, while the cosmopolitanism of minority nationalities in China may *not* be part of an explicitly political project, it may contain political implications which challenge state definitions and boundaries, for example the Chinese Miao (Hmong) who attend the “International Symposium on Hmong People” in St. Paul, Minnesota (Schein 1998), or the Bai and Sani minority women entrepreneurs in southwest China, who learn several international languages to better sell “authentic” “indigenous” attire and crafts to transnational travelers (see Notar 2006a; Swain and Ateljevic 2006). In the case of the Miao who attend the St. Paul conference, they are non-metropolitan, non-majority, non-elites but they do travel. The Bai and Sani entrepreneurs more closely resemble the Dali café owners whose cosmopolitanism precedes their travels. With regards to café owners Shirley and Frank, who I discuss below, not only are they minority cosmopolitans, but also, their profits go towards ethnic and religious revitalization.

### **“Local” Cosmopolitans 3: Shirley and Frank**

#### ***Shirley***

In addition to Hua, Shirley was the second dominant woman café owner on Foreigner Street. Her café, with its low squishy couches, skylight, and wicker chairs out front on the sunny afternoon side of the street, drew a relaxed lunchtime and dinnertime clientele. On rainy days as well travelers would spend hours there writing in their journals, playing cards, or talking and drinking tea. I also spent many rainy weekend afternoons there writing and chatting with Shirley.

Shirley had a relaxed, easy-going style, but she was more attentive to her dress than most women travelers. She usually wore her long hair back in a bun that showed off her silver dangle earrings. Sometimes she wore jeans and t-shirts, but more often than not she wore dresses and sling-back shoes or sandals. Quite a few male travelers developed crushes on her—there was one Dutchman who seemed to pine for her for at least a month, spending hours talking with her in her café—but she managed to keep most of these suitors at arm’s length. Talking with these men and other travelers she developed excellent colloquial English.

In the end, Shirley did end up marrying a German engineer who was stationed in Dali while assisting in the set up of a factory there. He spent many lonely evenings visiting Shirley at her café, and eventually persuaded her to marry him. Shirley began learning German in preparation for when he would be sent back home and she would accompany him.

Shirley’s parents also helped her by doing some of the shopping and cooking in the café. They would watch the café for her when she was out (although neither of them spoke other languages). Her family was Hui (Chinese Muslim), a community that had suffered persecution in the past. Dali had once been the capital of an independent Muslim-led state between 1856 and 1872, until it was suppressed by Qing imperial forces. After Muslim rebel leader Du Wenxiu surrendered in January 1873, pleading with imperial generals to spare his people, the generals massacred thousands of Dali’s Muslims. Survivors fled, and Muslim property was confiscated (Atwill 2005). For years, Dali’s Muslims suffered recrimination, and are still objects of some suspicion and derision (Notar 2001).

Shirley’s father attended mosque regularly. He was interested in the history of the Qing suppression of Dali, and read books about it. Shirley’s father was also involved in some of the recent efforts to com-

memorate the massacre of 1873, and used some funds from the café to support these efforts.

### **Frank**

Frank and his family opened their café in the late 1980s, and it was one of the earliest in Dali. Their café soon gained a reputation among transnational travelers for being *the* place to go for a late night scene. Frank had developed a casual, informal style; he looked like he could be a lonely planeteer himself. His long hair hung almost to his shoulders and he usually wore jeans and a t-shirt. He had learned excellent colloquial English by sitting, listening and chatting with travelers for hours. He asked them to make cassette music tapes for him and soon he had amassed a collection of disco, pop, rock and retro pop music. Abba, Ace of Base, Beatles, Madonna, Michael Jackson, Prince, the Rolling Stones, etc. would blast out of speakers both inside the café and outside on the street until two or three in the morning.

Travelers taught him how to make dishes and drinks that they wanted to consume. Frank’s English, Chinese and Japanese menu, in addition to the usual traveler café fare of sandwiches and spaghetti, included items with a Southeast Asian flavor—chicken satay, Pad Thai, shredded carrot and cucumber salad—taught to him by travelers who had acquired a taste for such things in their earlier Lonely Planet guided travels in Indonesia and Thailand. Traveler requests for daquiris, rum punch and piña coladas prompted Frank to buy imported rum, a blender, and a refrigerator with a freezer.

Frank was the name and face of his café, but his family—his mother, father, younger brother Sam, and his wife also played important behind the scenes roles—shopping, cooking, cleaning, bringing food and drinks to tables of customers.

Like Shirley, Frank’s family was also Hui and they played an even more active role in the activities of the Muslim community in Dali. They donated some of the profits they earned from the café to the reconstruction of a mosque down the street. Once Frank invited me to attend a ceremony there marking the end of Ramadan (*kaizhai jie* in Mandarin). It was strange to see Frank in a white turban standing solemnly among the other men in the courtyard of the mosque, when I was so used to seeing him in jeans and a t-shirt in his café.<sup>23</sup>

While Frank and the other minority café owners in Dali have sought to produce a cosmopolitan atmosphere in order to profit from it, and their cos-

mopolitanism has not been an explicitly political project, their cosmopolitanism certainly has political implications. First, it challenges the prevailing ideas, both Chinese and Western, of what a minority or borderland person should be: presumably “backward,” “primitive,” and “provincial.” Second, as minority café owners interact with Americans, Europeans, Israelis, Japanese, Koreans, Thais, Vietnamese, as well as people from other parts of China, they build trans-regional, trans-national connections that transcend the bounds of both their borderland region and the nation-state. Other scholars have conducted research on the construction of cosmopolitan “trans-cultural Islamic spaces” in Central and South Asia and the Middle East (see Marsden 2008:216; Ho 2006:100). Similar research might profitably be done with regards not only to Chinese Hui Muslims and their connections from Southeast Asia to South and Central Asia and beyond, but with other Chinese minority nationalities as well.

## Conclusion

In recent years, many have challenged the assumption that cosmopolitans are necessarily “Western.” With regards to the Chinese context in particular, scholars have looked at Chinese overseas and Chinese in coastal cities, for example, Guangzhou merchants (Siu 2000), Hong Kong elites who jet between Vancouver and elsewhere (Ong 1998, 1999), Chinese in Bangkok (Chan 1997), Shanghai media consumers (Yang 2002), and young women consumers in Beijing (Rofel 2007). Cosmopolitanism in these cases arises out of location (metropolitan coastal areas), travel and consumption.<sup>24</sup> But the Dali café owners I have discussed here—He Liyi, Simon, Hua, Shirley and Frank—live in a small town at the Chinese borderlands far from a major metropolis or coast, and I have argued, their cosmopolitanism has arisen not out of travel (although some of them have later traveled) or out of consumption (although they do that too), but out of their having to *produce* a cosmopolitan atmosphere for those who travel *to them*. The Dali café owners’ cosmopolitanism defies persistent assumptions in writings on cosmopolitanism in general that cosmopolitans are only meant to be in certain kinds of places (cities) and that through travel they come to have an attenuated relationship to any particular place—the typical cosmopolitans should be at home everywhere and nowhere, inhabiting “their world only at a distance” (Szczesny and Urry 2006:113).

At the end of his classic article, Ulf Hannerz mused: "And one may in the end ask whether it is now even possible to become a cosmopolitan without going away at all" (Hannerz 1990:249). However, Hannerz imagined this travel-less cosmopolitanism to arise out of media use and consumption (television and the internet). Szerszynski and Urry (2002) have termed this a "mundane cosmopolitanism," simply an awareness of a larger world outside one's own location. Yet from media consumption alone one rarely attains cosmopolitan competencies, and Szerszynski and Urry's term "banal globalism" (2002) seems more apt. The Dali café owners' cosmopolitanism has not arisen out of media consumption or other kinds of consumption, but of having to produce cosmopolitanism for others. Cosmopolitanism arising from production has been sorely neglected in discussions of cosmopolitanism.

Recently, some scholars have begun to examine cosmopolitanism in relation to ethnic minorities in China, for example, ethnic minority Hmong (Miao) who travel between Guizhou and Minnesota for a Hmong conference (Schein 1998), or Bai and Sani minority women in Yunnan who sell souvenirs to tourists (Swain and Ateljevic 2006). Like these examples, the cases of the Dali café owners who are Bai, Hui (Muslim), Tibetan-Muslim and Yi challenge the idea that all minorities at the Chinese borderlands are "backward" and "provincial." They further challenge a general assumption that "indigenous" is an antonym of "cosmopolitan," and that to be cosmopolitan one must have weakened ethnic and religious attachments. As Bruno Latour has pointed out: "A Stoic or Kantian will call cosmopolitan anyone who is a 'citizen of the cosmos' rather than (or before he or she is) a citizen of a particular state, an adherent of a particular religion, a member of a particular guild, profession, or family" (Latour 2004:454). Latour suggests instead that we should draw inspiration from Isabelle Stengers' use of "cosmopolitics" to reconsider what it means "to belong" (Latour 2004:454). Richard Werbner (2004) has used the term "cosmopolitan ethnicity" to remind us that the two are not mutually exclusive.

Yet it would be a mistake to romanticize the "indigenous cosmopolitan," "ethnic cosmopolitan" or "local cosmopolitan" as embracing a vision of world peace or inter-ethnic harmony. "Openness" to others and "cross-cultural competences" as highlighted in Hannerz's definition of "cosmopolitan" do not necessarily define what one will do with this ability. As has already been pointed out: "Cosmopolitan competencies, the arts of crossing, translation, and hybridity do not inevitably lead in 'progressive' (gen-

erally democratic and socialist) directions” (Clifford 1998:368; see also Ong 1998; Rapport 2006; Schein 1998). Cosmopolitanism in and of itself will not provide a solution to the other “isms” (Clifford 1998; Latour 2004; Ong 1998; Rapport 2006; Rofel 2007; Schein 1998). Cosmopolitan competences may only provide a stepping stone for other kinds of global interactions. Latour suggests that we ask not whether cosmopolitanism is good or bad, nor whether it will provide a solution to the “horrors of our time;” but ask instead: “Through what sort of test do you render possible the distinction between good and bad attachments?” (Latour 2004:457-458). Yet, this question is also problematic. Are café owners Shirley and Frank’s family attachments to local mosques bad attachments? Well, it depends not on the attachments themselves, but on the *actions* of those involved with any particular group or organization.

Lisa Rofel, in her recent book *Desiring China*, offers a more productive direction by suggesting that: “we might reconsider questions of locality and, by extension, cosmopolitanism, by refusing to assume that we already know the content of the local and the global” (Rofel 2007:114). Drawing inspiration from this, we should not assume that we already know who is what kind of person simply by his or her location or ethnicity, or by his or her ability to travel and consume. Our assumptions may lead us astray.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>According to the Dali Tourism Bureau, there were 40,600 international tourist visits to the Dali prefecture in 1995, and by 1999 this had increased to 101,000 tourist visits (Doorne, Atlejevic and Bai 2003:5). However not all of these tourist visits were made by lonely planeters, and I observed that the numbers of international backpackers

staying in Dali began to decrease as Dali became a more popular destination with Chinese tourists (see Notar 2006b:42-43). In 1995, there were 2.7 million domestic tourist visits to Dali; by 1999 this had grown to 5.3 million (Doorne, Atlejevic and Bai 2003:5), and by 2004, to nearly 6 million (5.95 million, statistic courtesy of the Dali Tourism Bureau). "Dali" refers to an administrative prefecture, a municipal area, and a town (just as "New York" refers to a state, a metropolitan area, and a city). Since 1956, the prefecture has been designated as the Dali Bai Nationality Autonomous Prefecture (*Dali Baizu zizhizhou*) (*DZMJ* 1990:26), after the predominant minority group who live there, the Bai nationality (*M. Baizu*) who had a population of 1,081,167 according to the 2000 census, and 1,121,700 by 2003 (*DZMJ* 2004:31; *YNRK* 2002, v.1:105). The Bai are the fourteenth largest minority group in China, and the second largest in Yunnan, after the Yi.

<sup>2</sup>See Bruno Latour 2004:456. Latour, drawing inspiration from Isabelle Stegner's multivolume work *Cosmopolitique* (1997) prefers the term cosmopolitics to cosmopolitan, viewing the latter as burdened by and limited to a certain Western conception of the cosmos (Latour 2004:454). Van der Veer is similarly critical of the term cosmopolitanism as "not only a trope of modernity but [...] very specifically, of colonial modernity" (Van der Veer 2002:169). However, I think that it is possible to recuperate the term cosmopolitan, keeping in mind its genealogy (which I discuss in more detail below) and opening it up to a multifaceted vision of what constitutes the "cosmos." In terms of describing Dali's café owners, I find the term cosmopolitan more useful than cosmopolitics or cosmopolitical since the café owners' modus operandi is an economic and cultural one, not an explicitly political one.

<sup>3</sup>Other scholars have usefully outlined different uses of the term "cosmopolitan": as an institution-building project; as a world view; as an enterprise of identity construction; as a socio-cultural condition; as a mode of orientation to the world; and as a set of competencies which "allow one to make one's way within other cultures and countries" (see Szerszynski and Urry 2006:114; Vertovec and Cohen 2002). In terms of the café owners in Dali, all of the above senses of "cosmopolitan" *except* "cosmopolitan" as an "institution-building project" apply. They are cosmopolitan in terms of world view and orientation, and their cosmopolitanism is part of their identity. In particular, in this paper I examine their cosmopolitan competences, although, as I will show below, these competences have developed *not* in making their way into other cultures and countries, but in catering to those who make their way to them.

<sup>4</sup>One exception is Loimeier (2006) who has examined the "production of cosmopolitanity" in Zanzibar.

<sup>5</sup>For critiques of Kant's racialized vision see Eze 1997; Fine and Cohen 2002:145; Harvey 2000; Malcomson 1998:238.

<sup>6</sup>For example see Cheah and Robbins, eds. (1998) *Cosmopolitics*; Breckenridge, Pollock, Bhabha, and Chakrabarty, eds. (2002) *Cosmopolitanism* (originally a special issue of *Public Culture* 2000); Vertovec and Cohen, eds. (2002b) *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*; a special issue of *The British Journal of Sociology* (2006); and recent anthropology conferences, namely the Association for Social Anthropology Diamond Jubilee Conference: "Cosmopolitanism and Anthropology," held at Keele University, UK, April 10-13; and the Canadian Association for Social Anthropology and the American Ethnological Society joint conference, "Indigeneities and Cosmopolitanism," held at the University of Toronto, May 9-13, 2007.

<sup>7</sup>One of the anonymous reviewers for *AQ* has encouraged me to bring the issue of class more into focus in this paper, but the "class status" of the café owners is a bit difficult to define. Some of them came from well-off families who were classified as either "landlords" or "wealthy peasants" after the Communist victory in 1949, and therefore

suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when they were among some of the poorest families in China. Since their family status was so low, they had little to lose by taking the risk of becoming entrepreneurs (*getihu*) in the mid-1980s and “jumping into the sea” of the new market economy. Now they might be termed “petty capitalists,” forming part of the merchant middle-class of Dali.

<sup>8</sup>See He Liyi with Claire Ann Chi (2003) *Mr. China's Son: A Villager's Life*, 2nd ed., Boulder, CO: Westview Press. The first edition (1993) tells his story up through becoming a teacher; the second edition continues the story of his life up through the opening of his café in Dali. Since Mr. He has published in English about his life, I use his real name here. For the other café owners I use pseudonyms.

<sup>9</sup>For a discussion of cosmopolitanism in ancient China see Chan (2002); Tuan (1996).

<sup>10</sup>Brook 1998:xvi. Brook notes that this cosmopolitanism existed despite official policy: the Ming Hongwu emperor's ideal was that people would be content at home, and there would be no need for travel. Indeed there were official prohibitions in *The Ming Code* on both physical and socioeconomic mobility. Despite official policy, commerce and trade flourished (Brook 1998:19, 68-69).

<sup>11</sup>Goldsmith was from a family of “poor clergymen-farmers” from County Longford, Ireland, but went on to study at Trinity College, Dublin, and then Edinburgh, and Leyden, yet without much success. While hoping to become a doctor, he instead was recruited to work for a press, and eventually wrote for the new London newspaper *The Public Ledger* in which his 119 “Chinese Letters” first appeared between January 24, 1760 and August 14, 1761. The letters were then published in a collected volume in 1762 as *The Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, residing in London, to his Friends in the East* with four new letters added. See W.A. Brockington, [n.d.] “Introduction.” Oliver Goldsmith. [date of reprint not given] [1762]. *Citizen of the World*. Select letters edited by W. A. Brockington. London, Glasgow, Bombay: Blackie and Son, pp. 7-32.

<sup>12</sup>“The slightest misfortunes of the great, the most imaginary uneasinesses of the rich, are aggravated with all the power of eloquence, and held up to engage our attention and sympathetic sorrow. The poor weep unheeded, persecuted by every subordinate species of tyranny; and every law, which gives others security, becomes an enemy to them.” Letter XXXIII, “A City Night-Piece,” Goldsmith [1762]:150-151.

<sup>13</sup>See Van der Veer 2002. The cosmopolitanism of Shanghai has also been described as “import cosmopolitanism,” represented by “the architectural styles of pre-war Shanghai, where people tried to rebuild the whole world on their city streets” (Pollock et al. 2002:11), but this term does not make sense unless it is placed within the context of colonialism.

<sup>14</sup>See Clifford 1995:75-78, 278-279; Lee 1999:29-31. Mayfair Yang (2002) has described a new kind of “(re)cosmopolitanism” of Shanghai in China's reform era, that differs from colonial cosmopolitanism.

<sup>15</sup>The railway was built at a terrible cost, approximately 30 percent of the 80,000 laborers died while completing the 290 mile line (Tarling 2001:221).

<sup>16</sup>Lisa Rofel reminds us that this representation of Communist China as a non-cosmopolitan China is not only a Euro-American representation, but a Chinese one as well: “In revisionist history, China is portrayed as isolated and closed during the socialist period, thus accomplishing the historical forgetting of a world that no longer exists—the world of international socialism. This historical forgetting produces the felt need for China to become cosmopolitan” (Rofel 2007:119).

<sup>17</sup>Anthropologist Helen Siu (2000), in a long-term historical study of merchants in Guangzhou has pointed out that the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the rise of mili-

tarism and warlord power in south China led to a demise of cosmopolitan merchant culture before the Communist rise to power. Still, she notes, the “Maoist regime virtually eliminated all private commerce” (Siu 2000:216).

<sup>18</sup>Sun used the analogy of the Chinese “coolie” laborer who trades his bamboo carrying pole for a lottery ticket, as one who forsakes his livelihood, and by extension, his nation, for a dream of cosmopolitan wealth: “The lottery ticket [*caipiao*] represents cosmopolitanism [*shijie zhuyi*]; the bamboo pole, nationalism [*minzu zhuyi*]. If, tempted by cosmopolitanism, we threw away nationalism, we would be like the coolie [*kuli*] who, after he had won the first prize, threw away the bamboo pole, his only means of livelihood. See Sun 1974 [1931 (1924)]:151; for Chinese see Sun 2003 [1924]:44.

<sup>19</sup>I am particularly grateful to one anonymous reviewer for *AQ* for encouraging me to develop this section.

<sup>20</sup>In 2005 the No.2 Guesthouse was demolished to make room for a mall called “Foreigner Street Plaza.”

<sup>21</sup>See Rofel (2007:5) for a discussion of young Beijing urbanites’ judgmental views that only urbanites of a certain status have the ability to become cosmopolitan “desiring subjects” in reform-era China.

<sup>22</sup>See “Fifty-six Ethnic Groups,” [english.gov.cn/2006-02/08/content\\_182626.htm](http://english.gov.cn/2006-02/08/content_182626.htm).

<sup>23</sup>It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the connections of Dali’s Muslim community with a global Muslim community. Suffice it to say here that there were global connections, and a few of members of Dali’s community were officially allowed to make the haj to Mecca each year.

<sup>24</sup>Rofel has used the wonderful term “cosmopolitanism with Chinese characteristics” (Rofel 2007:112), a play on “socialism with Chinese characteristics”—the euphemism officially used to describe market reforms in China. She describes the appeal of a “mesmerizing cosmopolitan consumption,” for young women in Beijing, for example of fast food restaurants (Rofel 2007:120-121).

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