

Tourist Tales : A case study on Photography Tourism in Yuanyang, China

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	作成者: Jie, Sun
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Tourist Tales: A case study on Photography Tourism in Yuanyang, China

SUN Jie

Bukkyo University

1. Introduction

The host-guest paradigm is one of the central theoretical tenets of tourism studies. A lot of studies focus on the social, economical and cultural impact of tourism on host populations and societies, as well as the nature of the host-guest relationship. For example, tourism has been regarded as a form of imperialism (Nash 1977) and the tourism industry may bring great economic development, but also increases differentiation between rich and poor (Greenwood 1977). Thus much writing on this subject focuses on the interaction between hosts and guests, and the distinctive anthropological characteristics of destination culture, but hardly discusses the interactions among tourists. On the other hand, the study of tourists and the nature of tourism itself are also important topics on anthropology of tourism, such as their behavior and motivations (Thomas 1964: 65; Smith 1989 [1977]), tourist experience as a pursuit for authenticity (MacCannell 1976), and a personal transition from home to elsewhere (Graburn 1977).

In early works on the anthropology of tourism, there was a predilection for assuming that tourists were a homogenization group, through seeking the essence of tourist experiences and analyzing host-guest interaction. Because not all tourists were the same, scholars in the field tended to document the variety of tourist experiences in terms of typologies that included explorer, elite, mass, individual, backpacker, and charter tourists (Cohen 1979; Pearce 1982; Smith 1989 [1977]: 11-14). One was never sure when or where these general propositions were applicable, though the typology of tourists ordered the data and offered the methodology for tourist studies.

Much of the anthropology of tourism has tended to neglect tourist talks, or "Tourist Tales" as named by Bruner (Bruner 2005: 19). "Tourist Tales" is the story of how people interpret their journey, their lives, and the travel experience which is always ordered by narratives. Since there are no completely naive travelers, tourists normally begin each trip with some preconceptions about the destination – a pre-tour narrative. The tourists then reshape and personalize the pre-tour narrative in terms of their lived experience on tour. Upon returning home, tourists further alter their stories about the journey into what is usually a more coherent narrative (Bruner 2005: 22).

This article will attempt to widen the scope of tourist research with a case study on

photography tourism in Yuanyang, China. Through an analysis of tourist tales told before, during, and after the photography, the paper presents what photographers' interests are, and how they play their roles in photography tourism. Meanwhile, this article will also examine the nature of interactions among tourists to obtain a better understanding of tourism studies.

The dominant position of photography in the modern world and its omnipresence in tourism are well recognized. Tourism is one of the practices through which the targeted society is reconstructed in photography. There are three tendencies in early studies on tourism and photography:

- 1) Tourism and photography combine to create a "tourist gaze" (Urry 1990) in which local inhabitants are positioned and defined by the camera lens. The tourist gaze, objectified in the camera, is said to have the power to create a cultural revival (Bruner 2005: 119), and the tourist gaze creates "the native" (Yamashita 2001 [1996]: 145), or commodifies local culture (Philp and Mercer 1999). However, it has also been argued that there exists a "reverse gaze" (Gillespie 2006), or a "mutual gaze" (Maoz 2006), in which an indigenous "photographee" can position a tourist photographer as a shallow consumer of images. The interaction between photographer-photographee (PPI) is not one in which only the photographee is influenced by the interaction, indeed, so too is the photographer (Cohen *et al.* 1992).
- 2) What is represented in travel photographs? Albers and James (1988) chart some methodological directions for studying the relationship between photography, ethnicity and travel. Their research has shown that photography is a socially constructed medium for communicating ethnic imagery in travel.
- 3) The photographs which tourists take in their tours have intrinsic value in themselves. Tourists always take photos to make a record of their trip and to show others where they have travelled. As Sontag points out, "It seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along" (Sontag 1990: 7), indeed, photographs offer indisputable evidence of travel. Travel photographs also perform a key function of providing tourists an opportunity to tell and personalize the story of the journey as well as souvenirs, they serve as mnemonic devices for storytelling (Bruner 2005: 24).

As mentioned above, the early works on tourism and photography research only focused on the interaction between tourist photographers and local photographed subjects, or how local subjects were represented in travel photographs. However, the interaction between the accompanying tourists, or between the experienced tourists and the potential tourists through photography, is hardly mentioned. Tourists describe the tales not only of the immediate travel, but also about future travel. This paper attempts to show how tourists interpret their photography tour, how they communicate their insights about themselves and travel photographs through their tales and pursuits, based on my intermittent fieldwork from 2006 to 2008 in Yuanyang.

2. Photography Tourism in Yuanyang

Yuanyang county, located in the south of Yunnan Province (in the southwest of the PRC), is under the administration of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture (Figure 1). It is well-known for its large area of spectacular rice terrace fields (12,700 hectares), which

constitute 53% of the total cultivated acreage in the county. The rice terrace fields are situated on mountain slopes ranging from 170 meters to 1,980 meters above sea level. In fact, more than 88% of these rice terrace fields are on mountain slopes higher than 800 meters above sea level. The slope of the rice terrace fields is as steep as from 10 to 60 degrees (Huang 2007: 127-129).

Yuanyang is also the main inhabited area of seven officially identified ethnic groups, the Hani, Yi, Dai, Miao, Yao, Zhuang and Han, and has a total population of 380,609. In 2006, the Hani constituted 53.04% of the total population, followed by the Yi at 23.97%. Rice cultivation has been their dominant agricultural activity for many generations¹⁾.

Yuanyang is called "the paradise of light and shadow" by photographers and is well-known all over China and abroad as a tourist destination for photographing the rice terrace fields (Gebu 2001: 14-153; Huang 2007: 183; http://www.enorth.com.cn etc.). The statistics of Yuanyang's Tourism Bureau, which was established in 2002, show that the number of visitors in 2001 was less than 100,000, but by 2006 the number had gone up to more than 300,000. Although few package tourists have visited there, many amateur and professional



Figure 1 Yuanyang: The study site (Drafted by the author, 2009.10).

photographers have visited the place for shooting the beauty of the landscape²⁾. This paper will examine the tourists who go to Yuanyang to take photos of the rice terrace fields.

In Yuanyang, the landscape changes dramatically in different seasons of the year. In summer, the paddies are luxuriantly green with growing rice stalks. The harvest in fall turns the paddies a brilliant golden hue. The paddies are glittering with water in winter and early spring (from November to March). The flooded rice terrace fields create a reflecting pool effect, which is a blend of light and shadow that any photographer aspires to capture. Meanwhile, in the course of one day, sunrise and sunset may be excellent moments which photographers are eager to capture because the two time periods are really full with a variety of light and shadow. The landscape changes every minute, even every second.

Photography tourism is a new form of tourism in which the tourist's purpose is to take photographs of a special photographic object. In general they like shooting the natural landscape. The photographic object, the presentation in photographic prints, as well as the photographic activity itself are considered the pleasure of photography tourism. There are many destinations for photography tourism in the world. For example, Biei in Hokkaido in Japan is an excellent shooting spot for taking photos of hillside farmlands (Konagaya and Yasujima 2005: 39-48); and Kanas Lake in Xinjiang, China is called "the lover of photographers" for taking landscape photos of an oasis and poplar trees³⁾. My fieldwork area, Yuanyang, is another one. In Yuanyang the spectacular rice terrace fields, a dense or thick mist, golden sunshine, a sea of changing clouds, the lines of a terrace's ribs, and the water flooded in terraces are all essential images to be captured in photographs (Picture 1). There are rice terrace fields all over the world including Japan, the Philippines and other provinces in China. However, only in Yuanyang are the terraces filled with water, and located on such steep mountain slopes. Water is the key factor for photography because all rice terraces have different shapes, and since all terraces are filled to the brim with water, the perfectly filled pools mirror the bright light of the skies above in different ways. As the light changes, the scene constantly alters. To some photographers, the constant changing light and shadow are the most attractive part of the rice terrace fields. To others, however, the mushroom-shaped thatched houses, and the colourful traditional costumes worn by local ethnic groups constitute the most outstanding features of the view. This article will focus on photographers' tales about "the paradise of light and shadow", rather than the photographees of local ethnic groups.

The actors in photography tourism always distinguish themselves from mass tourists in terms of their skills and insights in taking photographs. They tend to be prejudiced against mass tourists because they think that mass tourists just get to the destination and take their pictures in haste. Mass tourists always shoot the landscape or the local people, and like shooting themselves into photos, that is to say, tourists also become the photographic objects too, so they can prove that they had visited there. On the contrary, "photography tourists" seldom shoot themselves into photographs, and hardly take part in package tours, and often stay at a shooting spot for several days. They usually travel alone, or with a group named "Photographic Association", or with friends who also take photography as a hobby. They call themselves "Sheying Ren" (a man who take photos), or "Sheyou" (fans of photography). Are they tourists?



Picture 1 Sunrise (Photographer: Ffunsun; 2005.3).

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourists as people who, "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited" (WTO1995). According to the definition, I interviewed sixty visitors whose purpose is to take photographs. Most interviewees (91.7%) would be classified as tourists. The rest of the interviewees (8.3%) work for newspapers or magazines. In early works on the anthropology of tourism, some scholars paid attention to backpacking as a special form of tourism (Noy 2004: 78-102; Arimoto 2006: 117-131). However, photography tourism as another special form has hardly been discussed. Photography tourism is comparable to backpacking tourism, which is different from mass tourism and is beyond industry tourism, but still has elements of the definition of tourism. Therefore, I call this form of tourism pattern "photography tourism", and call the actors "photographers" although they don't take photos for papers or magazines as a profession.

3. Tourist Tales: Before Photography

According to a brochure which was issued by the local government in 1992, "from winter to early spring, the rice terrace fields, with a vast sea of clouds hovering over mountains, and the beautiful landscape attract a large number of photographers to Yuanyang" (Zhonggong

Yuanyang Xianwei Xuanchuanbu 1992). This is the earliest record of photographers' visits to Yuanyang to take photos as far as I know, and it indicates that although lots of photographers have visited Yuanyang since the early 1990's, the local government had not yet developed tourism at that time. With regard to the birth and development of a tourist destination, many cases can be attributed to a well-known film (Yamanaka 2001 [1996]), a Korean TV drama program (Endo 2004: 83-98), or an itinerary (Kawamori 2001). Scholars have emphasized the power of the film, the TV drama, or the itinerary in constructing the destination image. In Yuanyang, the photos of rice terrace fields have had a direct impact on the birth and development of local tourism, but it is difficult to determine which photo is the key one⁴⁾. Although countless photos are published and shown in various methods, there is a predilection for uniformity in those photos. For example, in order to express the spectacle and location of the rice terrace fields, photographers tend to take panoramic photos. They always shoot sunrise and sunset so as to project the various colors of the clouds. And they named these photos with several similar titles, like "Guimohongda (large-scale)", "Qishipangbo (magnificent)", "Renjianxianjing (fairyland)" "Wucaibinfen (colourful)" etc. These photos and the many catchphrases show that Yuanyang is a perfect area for photography.

In the potential tourists' imagination, Yuanyang is a "paradise of light and shadow". It is far away from the noisy industrial cities, a Xanadu which maintains the traditional agricultural civilization, and few mass tourists have visited there. Since the 2000's, more and more potential tourists have become familiar with this description of Yuanyang as "the paradise of light and shadow", as it is a well-known story told in brochures, travel accounts, guidebooks, television, film, monographs, anthropological writings, journalism, discussions on the internet, and other sources. Meanwhile, as a pre-understanding, unlike tour groups for whom tourist agencies arrange everything, photographers know that they have to arrange for transportation and accommodation by themselves in an underdeveloped tourism area. They also understand that they should collect more information from experienced tourists rather than from public resources.

3.1 Transportation and Accommodation

Before their departure for a photography tour, the theme of photographers' tales is always about transportation and accommodation. The photographic activities are random, anywhere can be a shooting spot, and the decisive moment may appear at any time. Thus flexible transportation is very crucial for photographers. In general there are two types of transportation for getting to shooting spots: to drive a rented car, or take a crowded bus and then get to the final destination on foot. Most photographers who are not familiar with Yuanyang choose to rent a minibus with a local driver who can also serve as a tour guide, taking photographers to the popular shooting spots and to unexplored places. Meanwhile, the locals can give them advice about the accommodation and the weather. However, some photographers who live near Yuanyang and are familiar with the environment usually prefer to drive their own cars to shooting spots⁵⁾. Photographers always exchange among themselves the contact information of those local drivers.

Photography tourism is a special type of tourism which is similar to backpacking tourism. Backpackers believe that they are not identical with mass tourists; most scholars

also point out that backpackers have their own vision of appropriate accommodations, modes of travel, and narrative structures, and segments of the tourism industry that cater to their desires (Cohen 1973; Bruner 2005: 15; Arimoto 2006). Photography tourism also has its own vision of accommodation and modes of transportation; choosing easy accommodation and flexible ways. Meanwhile, when photographers arrange for travelling and lodging for themselves, it does not weaken their enthusiasm, instead, it makes the travel even more interesting.

For example, few photographers choose luxury hotels located in Nansha, the government seat of Yuanyang county. On the contrary, most photographers prefer motels and family hotels in Xinjiezhen township or in Shengcun Village, which are close to shooting spots. Although expenditure is the primary consideration, another factor cannot be ignored. That is, they think that a photography tour is different in form from a group tour. It is also a "process of suffering" both mentally and physically. "No suffering, no good photos" is their philosophy. Indeed, in order to capture sunrise, she or he must get up early and carry the heavy photographic equipment when walking toward a shooting spot. Meanwhile, when gathering in the popular motels or restaurants, such as "Laosichuan restaurant", "Photographer's Hotel motels", and "Yuanchun restaurant", photographers can obtain new information about the weather, discuss the function of their cameras, reunite with friends, and may even organize a new trip. Therefore, the spacious rooms and delicious food of package tours are considered not suitable for them. "Enjoying the luxury hotel is not our purpose. We come here to take good photos, meet friends, and exchange photography skills. Just look and shoot, then go to a luxury hotel to sleep, that is what mass tourists normally do", a lot of photographers explained to me during my fieldwork. However, no one can guarantee that she or he can shoot the desired photographs in their travel, even though they had to deal with various difficulties, because good weather is a key factor for good photography in Yuanyang.

3.2 Weather

Photographers would like to have *Haotianqi* (good weather), but their concept of "good weather" is not identical with what most people would expect. They never trust the weather forecast fully. They need correct information to judge whether the weather will be "good" or "bad" and then decide whether or not to travel each time. Before departure for Yuanyang, they always ask for information about weather. First of all, in order to confirm if it is rainy or not, they check the weather forecast from the media, put messages on the BBS (Bulletin Board System) on the internet, or call the locals and other photographers who are staying in Yuanyang. If the prediction is for fine weather, they usually start their travels, although there is no guarantee of the good weather which they hope to have.

A local proverb describes the vagaries of Yuanyang's weather as, "there are four seasons on the same mountain, and the weather changes every ten miles". But such changing weather conditions may not be completely "bad" for photography, just as "good" weather may not be an ideal condition for shooting photos. For example, a sunny, clear day is not necessarily suitable, because the dazzling rays of the sun may shine directly on the water surface which reflects it without refraction. Under this condition, the photograph would not be a good one



Picture 2 Fairyland (Photographer: Meg; 2007.1).

for lack of contrast of light and shadow. On the other hand, the sun's rays may come filtered through the clouds and mist, droplets of water become numerous prisms, and make the sky, clouds and the water-covered surface of rice terraces colorful. Thus, the best factors for *Haotianqi* are composed of sunshine, a sea of clouds, a thin mist, and the reflected light from the water surface (Picture 2).

When they arrive in Yuanyang, weather is still the hot topic of their conversation. "A sea of clouds seems likely tomorrow morning, are you going to shoot?", or "How about your shooting spot? Is it possible to capture some nice moments?", or "The sky is beginning to turn red here, come as quickly as possible". They exchange information about the weather face to face or through mobile telephones. They always plan their activities by consulting the experienced photographers rather than the weather forecast, because "only photographers understand what 'good weather' is for photography" 6).

As mentioned above, weather is a concern when taking photos in Yuanyang, but no one can benefit from "good weather" all the time. Photographers always attribute their success or failure to "luck" or "bad luck". Variable and unpredictable weather in muddy conditions doesn't ensure a successful photo at any time or any place. For example, on a beautiful day in February 2006, I interviewed a photographer, Mr. Luo, in a Xinjiezhen Township motel. Mr. Luo suggested that we should go to the shooting spot to take photos, but when we drove 35km away to the Bada shooting spot, there were clouds and heavy fog there. While he was very disappointed that he couldn't shoot anything, the sky began to turn blue unexpectedly with bright sunshine. Within only half an hour, he had the best moment for shooting. There are numerous similar examples in my fieldwork. Therefore, a lot of photographers are sure that to capture the good moment is not due to his or her

technology but luck (the weather). Looking forward to an unpredictable pleasure is one of the most important driving forces for their repeated visits to Yuanyang.

4. Tourist Tales: During Photography

In Yuanyang, the purpose of a photography tour is to have a natural landscape with light and shadow. Deciding how they can shoot the best picture, and which photographic equipment they can use to support shooting are important topics while taking photos. Yuanyang is called not only "the paradise of light and shadow" but also the "World Exposition of Cameras" because photographers display their photographic equipment and judge each others' social status, economic capacity, and photographic skills while waiting to shoot photographs.

4.1 Photographic Equipment

Photographers are keen to discuss photographic equipment, such as cameras, lenses, film, flashlight, and tripods because they believe that these will have a direct impact on the quality of their photos. Cameras and lenses are the two most important factors in photography because the framing scope is different from lens to lens and the physical length of lenses is distinct. They call their lenses either "Changqiang" (long gun) or "Duanpao" (short cannon). The "Changqiang" (long gun) refers to a telephoto lens whose focal length is substantially longer than that of a normal lens, and the "Duanpao" (short gun) refers to a wide-angle lens whose focal length is shorter than that of a normal lens. Photographers usually use a telephoto lens for shooting distant landscapes and employ a wide-angle lens for shooting wide scale⁷). The role of tourists is generally understood to include the "right" to take photos at liberty, therefore, photography becomes a matter of course and is no longer in need of the guide's permission or consent (Cohen et al. 1992: 226). That is to say, by taking these photographic "weapons" with them to Yuanyang, photographers never question that they have absolute freedom of capturing any moment that pleases them.

Meanwhile, photographic equipment has become the indicator for them to determine whether a person is a professional photographer or an amateur. For example, in Yuanyang, it is common to hear comments such as, "look at his camera, he is just an amateur" or "I am so embarrassed to take such a simple camera with me". The definition of professional photographer is "a person who takes photographs, especially as a job" so, whether one is taking photographs as a job or as enjoyment is the key to determining if a photographer is professional or not. However, in Yuanyang, the concept of professional or amateur is different from usual. The term "professional photographers" in Yuangyang refers to those photographers who take photos as a job, or who have professional skills of taking photos as enjoyment, or who have had their photos published. The ability to handle advanced photographic equipment becomes another indication of their photographic skills, thus their professionalism. The top brand professional cameras, such as Hasselblad (Swedish), Linhof and Rollei (German), or Canon and Nikon (Japanese), can be easily found in the shooting spots of Yuanyang.

Furthermore, good photographic equipment indicates a high price. Photographers who

can afford expensive photographic equipment are often considered to be rich or to have a respectable social status in their own community. Hasselblad, Linhof, and Canon mentioned above, are famous camera brands which they usually use. Hasselblad is one of the most famous. The company was established in 1841 in Sweden, and with more than a century of history, Hasselblad cameras are well-known for their advanced design, superior image quality, reliability, and versatility.

Parts	Type	Price (USD)
Body	500 Series	\$450
Lens (wide-angle lens)	FE50mm F2.8	\$2,000
Lens (normal lens)	CarlZeiss Planar 80mm F2.8T*	\$500
Lens (medium telephoto lens)	C150mm F4T*	\$1,000
Lens (telephoto lens)	Sonnar 250mm F5.6	\$1,000
Rollfilm holder	A12/A24	\$200

Table 1 Prices of some photographic supplies (Hasselblad). 9)

If a photographer decides to equip himself or herself with a Hasselblad camera, she or he must buy a body and at least three or four lenses with different ranges. As shown in Table 1, it is obvious that a photographer will need to spend lots of money on these (approximate cost: \$10,000). In addition to the prices listed in Table 1, other photographic supplies, such as films, filters, and tripods, are also essential. Indeed, all of this shows that photography is an expensive hobby.

In January 2007, I met a photographer, Mr. Wang, who came from Hebei Province and had been taking photos of rice terrace fields in Yuangyang for five years. Mr. Wang explained that he was a retired government employee who was fascinated by photography and had published a number of his photographic works in well-known magazines. He had three cameras: a Hasselblad, a Linhof, and a Leica, all expensive and famous brands. In my interview, he told me that he had had to sell his property to buy these cameras, and his wife had almost divorced him because of it. Fortunately, his daughter understood and helped him persuade his wife to stay. He got both emotional and economic support from his family. However, Mr. Zhou, another photographer I interviewed, who had known Mr. Wang for two years, did not believe his story. He estimated that a retired public servant couldn't afford so many expensive cameras. If Mr. Wang's wife agreed to sell their property, "where are they living now?", Mr. Zhou asked me. Mr. Zhou concluded that Mr. Wang couldn't be an ordinary retired government employee; he must be a rich man, though Mr. Zhou could not figure out how Mr. Wang had made his money.

4.2 Waiting for Shooting Photographs

Possessing a set of top brand photographic equipment is a photographer's dream, but she

or he acknowledges that top photographic equipment may not be able to produce the best photos. The individual capabilities of photographers, such as photographic technique and personal sense are essential factors, and there are also external factors—such as photographic equipment and weather conditions. On tour, Bruner points out that many tourists have a "questioning gaze" which is an undefined puzzlement about the authenticity and credibility of what they are seeing (Bruner 2005: 95). However, photographers in Yuanyang are never in doubt about the authenticity of the landscape. As mentioned above, weather is a factor which is impossible to control. No one can predict when and where the beautiful moment will be. On the contrary, how long to stay in one place for a beautiful moment to come is subjective behaviour, and many believe that to keep waiting is the best way of responding to the unpredictable weather. They call this activity *Shou*, waiting in the same shooting spot for several hours, or living in Yuanyang for several weeks or months.

Most tourists stay in Yuanyang only two or three days, which means that they can only wait for that limited period. They get up before dawn, go to the shooting spots, and wait for sunrise to shoot the variety of light and shadow. After the first important shooting time they will continue waiting until the second shooting time which is sunset. Between sunrise and sunset, they shoot the local people, local houses and other landscapes, or go back to their motels for rest. However, in order to get a satisfactory photo, some photographers choose to live in Yuanyang for several weeks or even several months. I must illustrate that those photographers are almost retired or on long vacations. They rent hotels or motels and don't live with the locals like field-working anthropologists. They have some knowledge of agriculture, for example, the season of planting, filling the terraces with water and harvesting, and they have made a lot of friends among the locals. Although they have some local knowledge like anthropologists, they are concerned with sunshine, the sea of clouds and terraces filled with water rather than the locals.

"Long-stay" Tourism is a new fashion of international tourism for the Japanese: the retired go abroad to live more luxuriously or comfortably than they could in Japan. They treat the "long-stay" abroad as a thriving activity (Ono 2007: 145-150). The photographers who "stay long" in Yuanyang have the same opinions as the Japanese "long-stay" tourists. For example, they indicated in their conversations with me that they saw travel as a project of self-development, their world can expand, and they can acquire more knowledge about photography and new experiences in travel. On the other hand, they also can wait for satisfactory photos as a way to prove that their efforts are worth the wait. The photos taken in Yuanyang are considered works of art for most photographers, rather than just a recording of travel memories as they are for most mass tourists. For example, one photographer commented (January 8, 2007), "What I am doing (taking photos) is an art of creation. I am not a tourist who just takes photos for fun. I am going to stay here for one week so as to wait the decisive moment coming this time." The tale emphasizes the distinction of travel activities between mass tourism and photography tourism, and it also seems that photographers try to separate themselves entirely from mass tourists.

During photography, photographers also emphasize their uniqueness named "Sheying Fengge (photographic style)" in their works. For example, as mentioned above, Mr. Zhou told me that he was the earliest to publish a photo album about the location of shooting

spots. Mr. Lin showed me that he was keen on shooting the local people while they were working in the rice terrace fields. Another photographer, Mr. Ma, specializes in capturing the colourful terrace fields. One of his photos recorded the landscape of a golden rice paddy and was published in the well-known American magazine "Science". Photographers always establish their self-identity through their works, which distinguish them from other photographers.

Meanwhile, tourist tales show that they have paid attention to photographic equipment as well as photographic objects. The pleasure that comes from a photography tour is not just in taking photos of destinations, but indeed, displaying photographic equipment and waiting for the decisive moment are also pleasures to them. Tourist tales about photographic equipment, the weather and personal photographic skill mean that a new social relationship is being established among photographers. This relationship is based on the common purpose of shooting, but it has its own standard about judging "professional" or "amateur", speculating on good or bad weather and other factors.

5. Tourist Tales: After Photography

Post-tour stories may be the most interesting of all, because post-tour settings provide new sites of cultural production and new opportunities for situated telling so that the semantic ordering takes place after the conclusion of the tour (Bruner 2005: 26). In this section, I will show how photographers deal with their photos and talk about their travel to analyze photographers' tales after photography.

5.1 Display of Photographs

Photographs are used by photographers to preserve memories of favorite times, to capture special moments, to tell stories, to send messages, and as a source of entertainment. Travel photography is a subcategory of photography involving the documentation of an area's landscape, people, cultures and customs. The Photographic Society of America (PSA) defines a travel photograph as an image that expresses the feeling of a time and place, portrays a land, its people, or a culture in its natural state, and has no geographical limitations¹⁰. After photography, the photos of Yuanyang's rice terrace fields are often displayed in various ways by photographers. Examples of some photographs can be found in famous magazines, like Chinese National Geography (ISSN1009-6337), Photo World (ISSN1002-6770), and on websites, forums or personal blogs on the internet, like http://www.xitek.com/ and http:// www.fengniao.com/, and in a variety of photo competitions, photo collections, and some slide shows by themselves. Using the three keywords-Yuanyang, terrace and photography in Chinese, I have searched in Google Search from 2006 until 2009. There were about 27,400 hits in 2006 (June 25, 2006), 52,100 in 2008 (November 13, 2008), while in 2009 (October 5, 2009), the number increased to 151,000. This also means that information on Yuanyang, terraces and photography propagated quickly over the internet during those few years. Although the beautiful landscapes of rice terrace fields have been published or shown in various ways, the photos are always stereotyped and given titles such as "spectacular", "fairyland", "wonder" and, "ladder towards paradise". The image of "the paradise of light

and shadow" is duplicated by photographers. In other words, the pre-tour narratives are reinforced by the tourists themselves.

Kanpianhui (slide shows) are always organized by some photography groups when they return from their photography tours. Kanpianhui are different from other exhibitions in that they are just spontaneous displays of photos from a photography tour by themselves instead of being organized through a company or corporation. People tend to go out for shooting together based on the same love of photography, and new photographers will take part in it constantly during photographic activities. This social relationship may be composed of two or three or dozens of photographers in what could be called a "photographers' association".

On February 7, 2007, I was invited to take part in a *Kanpianhui* of M Photographers' Association, which is composed of fewer than 40 people, mostly amateur photographers and a few professionals. Most of its members live less than 100km from Yuanyang and because of this convenience of travel, they often visit Yuanyang for shooting rice terrace fields. The *Kanpianhui* was held in a tearoom in the evening, where they showed the photos they had taken during the previous week. There were twelve photographers who came together to display their photos. At first they displayed their photos with a projector in rotation, then everyone commented on the photos and gave some advice on photography skills such as shooting location, viewing angle, and arrangement of photos.

Meanwhile, new cameras and new photographic equipment became the topics of conversation; they agreed that the Canon 1Ds Mark II¹¹⁾ was a very good camera for shooting rice terraces; through this discussion someone even decided to purchase a Canon 1Ds Mark II as his next camera. At last, they made a decision to go to Yuanyang again the following month, if it was not raining at that time.

During this *Kanpianhui*, there was a conversation between tourists which caught my interest. Mr. He, a photographer who works in the Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture government, introduced his adventure while displaying his photos. "Look at this photo, no photographer has ever found this place before, I walked on foot for 2 hours. I almost fell off the mountain. Then I stayed enduring the freezing cold for 2 hours, the view is very difficult to shoot". His tales interested the other photographers, and his photo proved that the spot he described was a good one for photography. "Can you guide us next time?" two other photographers, Mr. Zhang and Mr. Dai, asked him immediately. While displaying their photos, sometimes photographers stress that they were not shot easily, rather than show pride in them. Cohen points out that essential elements for tourists are the pursuit of "novelty" and "change" (Cohen 1974: 544). Tourists not only pursue "novelty" and "change" through their activities, but also construct it through their own tales.

In addition to *Kanpianhui*, on the well-known photography websites, photographers also display their photos, and comment on photos and photographic techniques to each other. Photographers have established a tourist community based on the same hobby of taking pictures of Yuanyang's rice terrace fields. Indeed, every tourist takes his or her own tales in and produces new narratives. Potential tourists can be influenced by experienced tourists in such areas as how to get to the tourist destination or which pieces of photographic equipment are most suitable for photographing rice terrace fields. Experienced tourists can

obtain new information about tourist destinations, new photographic equipment, or comments on their photos from other tourists. As Bruner points out, "All tellings are situated and no story is told in a vacuum, for at the very minimum the teller is also an audience of one" (Bruner 2005:16). An interaction has occurred between the tourists.

5.2 The Next Tour

After photography, photographers are keen to talk together about their next tour. The content of their talk include two choices of destination, a trip to Yuanyang again or one to another shooting destination. When they are deciding whether to choose the former or the latter, their only criterion is whether they can take good photos on their next trip. Photographers have no cause to complain of a failure of photography because in Yuanyang, the unpredictable weather is a natural reason, it isn't concerned with the discussion of "authenticity" in early issues. Whether the travel is pleasurable or not, "lucky" or "unlucky", is determined by nature, namely the weather. During their next tours they may encounter good weather, and thus be able to take better photos. The nature factor (the weather) becomes the best excuse for filling the gap between the dream of "paradise" and the reality of Yuanyang. Meanwhile, the constantly changing landscape makes any moment a chance for shooting and producing the "variation" or creating the "uniqueness" which is different from that of other photographers, although they too have visited there again and again. However, if photographers are tired of taking photos in Yuanyang, they will select another location for shooting, such as Luoping or Dongchuan, which are not so far from Yuanyang, or other new destination for shooting which nobody has visited¹²⁾. That is, within the tourist destination, new "paradises of photography" will be discovered by photographers through their lenses. In fact, the conversation about the next trip among the photographers is held when they are on tour in Yuanyang. It also means that travel never ends; even before the present trip is over, the next one has already begun in the mind.

I will give some details about how photographers revisit Yuanyang as their next trip destination. If they are still not "lucky" and cannot have fair weather, they will have no way to capture the best photo without revisiting. They call the revisit Oin, which means "diligence", and is another solution to the unpredictable and changing weather. Some photographers believe that their success depends on their diligence. They go to Yuanyang frequently to take photos, and try to capture the moment which they missed last time or find a better one, which they are eager to do. They are convinced that if they go to the same shooting spot as often as possible, their chances of capturing a good photo will greatly increase. In Yuanyang, the number of one photographer's revisits may be relatively high. For example, I interviewed sixty photographers and more than 70% have visited there two or more times. Among them, Mr. Lin has visited Yuanyang more than 170 times (from 1998 until February 2007), which is the highest number of visits. He is an official staff member in Kunming and his photos have been published in several famous magazines. He drives his car to Yuanyang on Friday evening and stays there for taking photos until Sunday evening. In my interview with him (on January 15, 2008), he told me, "I am utterly infatuated with the rays of sunshine, the sea of clouds and the rice terraces. I never believe that good photos depend on 'luck', if you are diligent like me, you can shoot good photos soon". He

declared that he would continue shooting "light and shadow" as in his past travel pattern. Yuanyang is also distinguished from other tourist destinations with its higher rate of revisiting. It also provides a new perspective on tourist research.

Tourists to a destination consist of both first-timers and repeaters. In early research, satisfaction has been regarded as one of the preferred evaluation constructs to explain intention to revisit (Oh 1999; Bigne *et al.* 2001). However, based on the 2000-2003 surveys of pleasure tourists in Hong Kong, Um, Chon, and Ro pointed out that rather than overall satisfaction, perceived attractiveness is the most important indicator for contributing to the likelihood of revisiting (Um *et al.* 2006). In my research, the motive for revisiting Yuanyang includes both satisfaction and perceived attractiveness. Satisfaction refers to the fact that photographers are satisfied with the area as "the paradise of light and shadow" for photography. On the other hand, the perceived attractiveness refers to the photographer's expectation of taking better pictures than those taken last time, or those of other photographers. Indeed, if photographers cannot capture satisfactory photos as they expected before starting, another time, another shooting spot, different weather conditions, or changing the space and time might create excellent work next time. Therefore, the tourist tales which are told after photography not only cause pre-narratives (the image of "paradise of light and shadow") to be reinforced and expanded, but also inspire plans for the next tour.

6. Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to illustrate the importance of research related to "tourist tales" by using a case study on photography tourism in Yuanyang, China. I chose this topic because if there are no tourists, there would be no tourism. Bruner points out that, "there are two ethnographies of travel, one of performances in the destination culture, and a second of the traveling unit, which conceptualized as its own site of cultural production, a performance in itself" (Bruner 2005: 17). This article has argued that the "tourist tale" is perhaps one of the most interesting and fundamental frames of discourse through which tourist experiences are analysed.

McCabe and Stokoe have argued that tourists construct identities for themselves in relation to places and that "tourist places" have describable features which allow people to be categorized as belonging to them by virtue of the types of behavior people exhibit in them and/or the physical characteristics of the places visited (McCabe and Stokoe 2004). In this article, photographers construct their identities as photographers differently from mass tourists, through their tales, their travel activities, and their photos. They arrange moving and lodging for themselves, take for granted the photography tour as a way of suffering, revisit the same destination frequently, and strain for the satisfactory photo. However, in regard to the discussion of cameras, photography skills, and photography representation, tourists can acquire pleasure from the photography as communication as well as photographic object and tourist destination. This means that they construct identities in relation to the hobby of photography as well as in relation to "tourist places". Meanwhile, they have also constructed new social relationships through the photographic tour, and they have their own standards to judge "professional" or "amateur", "good weather" or "bad

weather", and how to shoot a good photo with "luck", *Shou* or *Qin* as responses to unpredictable weather.

On the other hand, tourists always acquire their personal special travel experiences which are different from others. A photographer also establishes his or her self-identity through his or her own photos, and is impressed that a photo is unique, based on limited time and space and created by a particular photographer. This is different from not only travel photography, which is just recording a smile and pressing the camera shutter, but it is also distinct from another photographer's photos. However, those photos are always stereotyped and given titles such as "spectacular", "fairyland", "wonder" or "ladder to paradise". In early articles, travel photography was only discussed as a manifestation of non-symmetrical relations between hosts and guests, similar to how tourists produce the "native" through the camera (Yamashita 2001 [1996]) and the tourist's absolute freedom in shooting rights (Cohen et al. 1992). Travel photography was hardly discussed as a linking relationship among tourists. In this article, I have shown that a photo is not only the most important product of photography tourism, but also contributes to the formation of new social relationships that are important for many reasons. In order to capture a better moment, photographers cannot help returning to Yuanyang for a revisit. Indeed, shooting the next photo becomes a catalyst for composing the next trip. This also means that the travel has never ended and the next trip was anticipated in the previous one based on the same hobby and the immediate goal of implementation. The new social relationship has ensured that the next tour can be carried out smoothly and the practices of slide shows and future travels with other members will strengthen their relationship in reverse.

Tourist tales are not limited to those that exist in photography tours. No matter what the form of tourism, any tourist is able to make their own interpretation of the tourist destination and of what they encountered during travel. In the famous globe-trotter travel guidebook, "Tikyuu no Arukikata", in Japan, the editors collect the views of experienced tourists on their past travels to enrich the contents of the guidebook. In the issue of Tanaka on Japanese tours to East and Southeast Asia, the author analyzes tourist tales using the tourist narratives published in the Japanese magazine, "Tabi" (Tanaka 2008; Tanaka this volume). In Arimoto's fieldwork on Japanese backpackers, the writer studies the notes written by travelers in "Nihonjin Yado¹³)" (Arimoto 2006: 117-131). In these articles, tourist tales which are to be published are discussed. However, the present article illuminates the active subjectivities that tourists have shown through an analysis of interview data and their activities. The photographers mainly obtain information through their own social relationships, which are composed of other photographers who have the same hobby. The experienced tourists' tales and opinions are considered more convincing than public media by potential tourists. It is also possible to reframe theory away from conceptualizations of the passive tourist: the tourist constructs the destination image of "paradise" with a camera, reconstructs or enriches the image by adding his or her tale and, finally, transmits the image (Sun 2009).

Bruner makes a threefold distinction about the trip. Firstly, the trip as lived: as it actually happened, the reality; the trip as experienced: consisting of the images, feelings, desires, thoughts, and meaning that emerge in individual consciousness; and, finally, the trip as told: usually a story, but possibly a series of photographs or other forms of expression

(Bruner 1984: 7). I agree with his view that there is influence or mutual interdependence of one on the other within the threefold distinction (Bruner 2005: 19). This article has argued that the "paradise of light and shadow" is a longing for photographers to experience but the actual trip as lived can not ensure that their dreams come true. The gap between the dream of "paradise" and the actual journey can be attributed to weather; a non-human factor. Indeed, by shooting a satisfactory photo or expressing their trip perfectly, the next trip is already beginning.

Notes

- 1) The above figures are derived from the Yuanyang County Bureau of Ethnic Affairs.
- 2) Liu speculates that more than 60% of visitors go to Yuanyang to shoot rice terrace fields basing on her survey from 2003 to 2004 (Liu 2008: 112). And my investigation suggests that the number is more than 70%, especially from November to March.
- 3) Internet, http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/zhuanti/xjzzy/766976.htm. 30 September 2009.
- 4) It is said that French photographer Yann Layma took thousands of photos and made a documentary film named *The Mountain sculptors* in 1992-1993. The documentary has been shown in 38 countries. Because of this documentary, many people came to Yuanyang from abroad (Huang 2007etc.). However, Mr. Ma, who used to be Yann Layma's guide, told me (July 17th, 2006) that Yann Layma was influenced by some photos of rice terrace fields which were published in Singapore newspaper.
- 5) Photographers who drive their cars to Yuanyang came from the adjacent provinces to Yunnan, or adjacent county to Yuanyang. However, I met some photographers who came from Guangdong Province and Hunan Province which are almost 2,000 km away from Yunyang. They all drove their cars themselves for taking photos.
- 6) The above conversation is derived from my fieldwork in December 2006.
- 7) Normal lens: angle of view of the diagonal is about 50° and a focal length approximately equal to the diagonal produces this angle. Wide-angle lens: angle of view wider than 60° and focal length shorter than normal. Telephoto lens or long-focus lens: angle of view narrower and focal length longer than normal.
- 8) Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford University Press 2000.
- 9) The above prices mainly refer to my photographer interviewees and have also been checked online. Internet, http://auctions.yahoo.co.jp. 30 September 2009.
- 10) Internet, http://www.psa-photo.org. 28 September 2009.
- 11) Eos-1Ds Mark II, the Digital SLR that delivers the hair-splitting, super-fine detail of 50MB files. It has all the features and disaster-proof build quality expected from a professional EOS body. For more information, internet, http://www.canon-europe.com. 30 September 2009.
- 12) There are large areas of colewort flower fields in spring in Luoping, and naked red land in Dongchuan.
- 13) Inn primarily occupied by Japanese backpackers.

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